

A brief bio about our new WAZA President, Dr. Lee C. Ehmke



*Director / CEO, Minnesota Zoo
President, Minnesota Zoo Foundation
President, World Association of Zoos and Aquariums*

Serving as Director / CEO of the Minnesota Zoo since August 2000, Lee Ehmke has led the institution toward its strategic goal of becoming a world-leading zoo. Following a course charted by two strategic plans and a long-range physical master plan, major steps have been taken toward this vision. The State Legislature has responded positively to the vision these plans embody—in recent years, over \$60 million in capital funding has been provided to improve the Zoo, a level of support unprecedented in the Zoo's 35-year history. Private capital support, earned revenue, attendance and membership have also increased dramatically.

Ehmke has spearheaded the effort to build attractive and educational new exhibits, including Meerkats of the Kalahari (2001), Tiger Lair (2002), Lemurs: Ghosts of Madagascar (2004), Creatures Beneath the Canopy (2005), Africa: Summer on the Savanna (2006, 2009, 2013), the renewed Medtronic Minnesota Trail (2007), Russia's Grizzly Coast and the Central Plaza (2008), Woodland Adventure (2009),

Faces of the African Forest (2010), the Heart of the Zoo, Phase 1--featuring the Target Learning Center, Cargill Environmental Education Center, 3M Penguins of the Africa Coast (2011), and Black Bears (2012). He has also guided growth of the Zoo's educational programming and conservation outreach initiatives, together with developing a contemporary brand identity for the Zoo. He is the primary spokesperson for the Zoo at the State Capitol, with the media and in the community. As President of the Minnesota Zoo Foundation, the Zoo's non-profit support organization, Ehmke is deeply engaged in efforts to generate private financial support of the Zoo and its mission.

Prior to coming to the Minnesota Zoo, Ehmke was the Director of Planning and Design at New York's Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), headquartered at the Bronx Zoo. In his 12 years at WCS, Ehmke led the design and managed construction of numerous award-winning Bronx Zoo projects. Most notably, he served as the lead designer and project manager for Congo Gorilla Forest, the Bronx Zoo's signature exhibit, which opened to international acclaim in 1999.

Ehmke was also active in the planning of two WCS-supported projects aimed at connecting increasingly urban African communities with their native wildlife. The Uganda Wildlife Education Centre in Entebbe, Uganda and the Nairobi Safari Walk in Kenya were developed using modern techniques of zoo design and interpretation to encourage grass-roots support for wildlife conservation.

Ehmke's initial education was in land use law (J.D. University of California Hastings College of the Law, 1983), after which he practiced as a member of the California Bar for a variety of environmental organizations. Returning to graduate school to study environmental design, Ehmke received a Masters in Landscape Architecture from the University of California at Berkeley in 1988. While at Berkeley, he worked for the California State Coastal Conservancy, planning and implementing wetland restoration projects, and was involved in developing a master plan for the San Francisco Zoo.

Ehmke is an active member of numerous professional organizations, including the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (Field Conservation Committee, past Honors and Awards Committee Chair), The Conservation Breeding Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (Treasurer, Strategic Committee) and is currently the President of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

Bio and Photo: Anon