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July 10, 2017

Audubon Aquarium Joins Coalition to Tackle Growing Plastic Pollution Threat

19 Aquariums from coast to coast shift away from single-use plastic products and packaging, rally consumers to build market demand for innovative alternatives

(New Orleans, La.) – Audubon Aquarium of the Americas has joined forces with aquariums across the United States to address plastic pollution - one of the gravest threats facing ocean and freshwater animals. Today, the Aquarium Conservation Partnership (ACP) announced the launch of a nationwide consumer campaign and a business commitment to shift away from single-use plastic among their visitors, in their communities and beyond.

“The public trusts aquariums to do what’s right for the health of the ocean and for ocean wildlife,” said Julie Packard, executive director of the Monterey Bay Aquarium. “We’re just beginning to understand the full impacts of ocean plastic pollution on ecosystems, marine life and human health. But we already know enough to say that now is the time to act.”

Through the national “In Our Hands” campaign, the ACP hopes to empower their 20 million visitors and millions more in their communities to drive a national shift away from single-use plastic and toward innovative alternatives. The campaign includes a website that inspires visitors to make positive everyday behavioral changes and raise awareness of the issue.

“By using our collective voice, we can educate and inspire visitors and our communities to make a major impact on a pressing issue that threatens the health of wildlife and our ocean,” said Ron Forman, Audubon Nature Institute President and CEO. “The solution to plastic pollution is in our hands.”

All 19 aquariums are also supporting this shift away from single-use plastic within their own businesses. As of today, all ACP members have eliminated plastic straws and single-use plastic take-away bags in their institutions. In hopes of additional plastic reduction, the aquariums have also committed to:

- Significantly reduce or eliminate plastic beverage bottles by December 2020
- Showcase innovative alternatives to single-use plastic in their facilities

- more -

“As leaders in aquatic conservation, aquariums are expected to walk their talk, and that’s exactly what this partnership is meant to do,” said National Aquarium CEO John Racanelli. “We are uniquely qualified to set an example for others—in reducing our plastic footprint, encouraging sustainable operating practices, and inspiring hope in a public that is hungry to be part of the solution. We’re right where we should be.”

About 8.8 million tons of plastic enter the ocean each year worldwide – roughly a dump truck full of plastic every minute of every day. In the United States alone, plastic waste averages more than 200 pounds per person each year. If nothing changes, by 2025 the flow of plastic into the ocean is expected to double.

But it’s not just the ocean that’s affected: Plastic pollution in lakes and rivers has been found at levels as high, or higher, than in oceanic gyres that concentrate plastic trash. Today, there are an estimated one billion plastic particles floating on the surface of Lake Michigan alone.

The Great Lakes are the largest surface freshwater system on the Earth, making up approximately 21 percent of the world’s supply of surface freshwater. Additionally, more than 3,500 species of plants and animals live in the Great Lakes basin.

"Approximately 22 million pounds of plastic flows into the Great Lakes each year - in Lake Michigan alone, it is equivalent to 100 Olympic-sized swimming pools filled with bottles," said Shedd Aquarium President and CEO Dr. Bridget Coughlin. "Small actions can turn into big solutions, and we believe the 24 million people in the United States who rely on this beautiful, massive resource for their drinking water, jobs and livelihoods want to be part of that wave of change. We look forward to working together in these commitments."

The Aquarium Conservation Partnership was first championed by Monterey Bay Aquarium in California, National Aquarium in Baltimore and Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, in collaboration with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Coalition partners are located in 16 states and include:

California: Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach; California Academy of Sciences/Steinhart Aquarium in San Francisco; and Monterey Bay Aquarium

Connecticut: Mystic Aquarium in Connecticut

Florida: The Florida Aquarium in Tampa

Illinois: Shedd Aquarium in Chicago

Kentucky: Newport Aquarium in Kentucky

Louisiana: Audubon Nature Institute/Aquarium of the Americas in New Orleans

Maryland: National Aquarium

Massachusetts: New England Aquarium in Boston

Nebraska: Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium in Nebraska

- more -

New York: Wildlife Conservation Society/New York Aquarium in New York City

North Carolina: North Carolina Aquariums

South Carolina: South Carolina Aquarium in Charleston

Tennessee: Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga

Texas: Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi

Virginia: Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center in Virginia Beach; and

Washington: Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma; and Seattle Aquarium

This summer, the aquariums will focus on raising awareness and sparking consumer action, and sharing their own success stories to highlight the many ways they've cut back on single-use plastic in their operations.

They are working with business partners to showcase innovative alternatives to single-use plastic products, and will collaborate with vendors to accelerate design of new products and materials. They are also finding ways to use less plastic packaging in gift store items, and scaling back on single-use plastic in their cafes and restaurants.

The aquariums are also using their collective voice – at the local, state and national level – to support policies that reduce the flow of plastic pollution into the ocean, rivers and lakes. Beyond sponsoring clean-up events and education programs, many have backed successful efforts to stem the use of plastic shopping bags and plastic microbeads found in personal care products.

[About Audubon Nature Institute](#)

Audubon Nature Institute operates a family of museums, parks and research facilities dedicated to celebrating the wonders of nature. Through innovative live animal exhibits, education programs, and scientific discovery, Audubon makes a meaningful contribution to preserving wildlife for the future. Audubon Nature Institute flagships include Audubon Park, Audubon Zoo, Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, Entergy Giant Screen Theater, Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium, Audubon Louisiana Nature Center, Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center, Woldenberg Riverfront Park and Audubon Wilderness Park. Ron Forman is President and CEO of Audubon Nature Institute.

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