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THREE CALIFORNIA SEA LIONS ARRIVE AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM, BUT THEY WON'T BE ON EXHIBIT JUST YET

TACOMA, Wash. – Three California sea lions arrived at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium a few days ago, and two of them – both females – are expected to go on exhibit in late spring or early summer. The third, a 718-pound male, will wait for completion of renovation work in the zoo's Rocky Shores area before he makes his public debut.

In the meantime, the three are living in behind-the-scenes pools and getting accustomed to their new home.

The male, named Chinook, is 16 years old. The two females are each about 12 years old and weigh around 160 pounds. None is releasable back to the wild.

Chinook is returning to the Northwest after several years away. He was captured near the Bonneville Dam and relocated in an effort to save stocks of salmon returning up the Columbia River to their spawning grounds.

The two females, who will soon receive names from Point Defiance Zoo keepers, are expected to trade space with walrus Joan and Basilla in the largest Rocky Shores pool once staff members have gotten to know them and they've become accustomed to their new home.

Construction on a new sea lion exhibit is due to commence later this year in the area where the seal pool now stands. A date has not been set for its completion. The renovation work will be done with funds from a Metro Parks Tacoma bond issue approved by voters in 2014.

Rocky Shores is home to a number of marine mammals, including Pacific walrus, harbor seals, Northern and Southern sea otters, and California sea lions.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).

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