



GROUNDBREAKING CELEBRATION SET FOR JULY 11 FOR NEW PACIFIC SEAS AQUARIUM

35,000-square-foot building is due to open in the summer of 2018, replacing aging North Pacific Aquarium; Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium project is the largest capital undertaking in the 109-year history of Metro Parks Tacoma

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 28, 2016

TACOMA, Wash. – New aquatic species like scalloped hammerhead sharks, green sea turtles and spotted eagle rays are just two years away for Tacoma and Puget Sound residents who have been dreaming for years of a new aquarium.

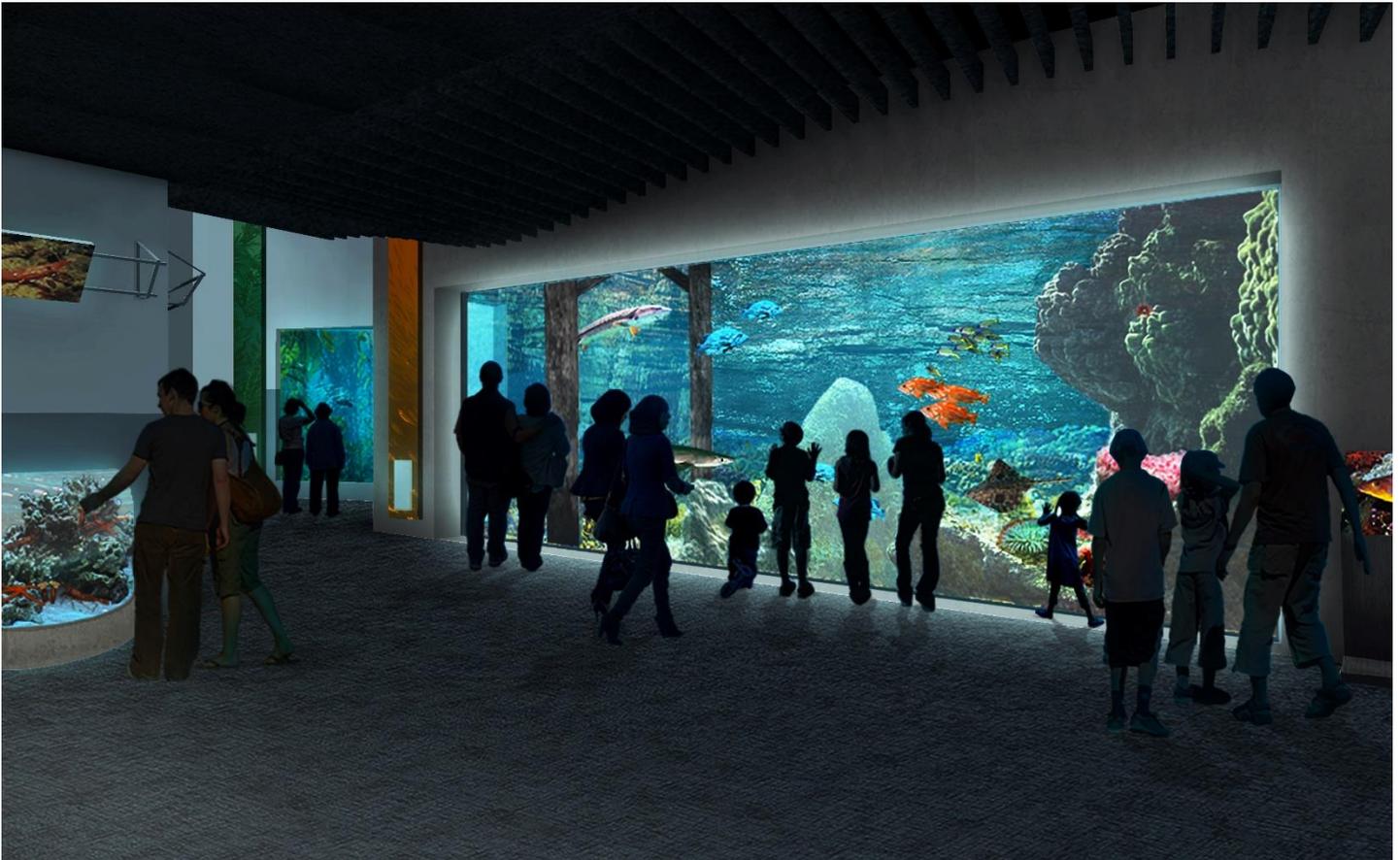


Just imagine these animals – and others - swimming gracefully in a 250,000-gallon aquarium exhibit with an expansive window that arches over the heads of visitors, giving them the feeling of immersion in the waters of Baja California.

The exhibit, to be called Baja Bay, will be the showpiece of the 35,000-square-foot, \$51.6 million Pacific Seas Aquarium, which will replace the now 53-year-old North Pacific Aquarium.

Baja Bay is expected to be home to hammerhead sharks, green sea turtles, spotted eagle rays and other sea creatures native to the waters between the Baja California peninsula and mainland Mexico. At 250,000 gallons, it will be the largest exhibit in the new Pacific Seas Aquarium at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. The aquarium is due to open in the summer of 2018.

Construction is slated to begin next month, and a groundbreaking celebration is scheduled at 10:30 a.m. July 11. The Pacific Seas Aquarium is due to open in the summer of 2018.



The Northwest Waters exhibit of the Pacific Seas Aquarium will include a 75,000-gallon space for highlighting Pacific Northwest marine life, including sharks, flounder and rockfish.

SEAS THE DAY!

What: Groundbreaking for the new Pacific Seas Aquarium at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, followed by a day of fun activities at the zoo.

When: 10:30 a.m. on Monday, July 11

Where: Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, 5400 N. Pearl St., Tacoma.

Activities:

- **10:30 to 11:30 a.m.:** Parade of Aquatic Species to the construction site, followed by a brief ceremony and “groundbreaking” by a group of children wearing sea-animal costumes.
- **10 a.m. to 2 p.m.:** Zoowide celebration for visitors including a variety of aquarium-related activities such as Peering at Plankton; the North Pacific Aquarium Community Tank Feed; a Stingray Feed; the Stingray touch experience at Stingray Cove; the Watershed Wonders activity; a Jelly Keeper Talk; Sea Science Superheroes; hands-on activities in the Marine Discovery Center; and the opportunity to try on a collection of jellyfish hats.

ALL ACTIVITIES ARE FREE WITH ADMISSION TO THE ZOO | WWW.PDZA.ORG

The Pacific Seas Aquarium, funded through a voter-approved bond issue, is the biggest capital project in the 109-year history of Metro Parks Tacoma.

“We are building an aquarium that will introduce generations of visitors to the wonders of the world’s oceans,” said Erik Hanberg, president of the Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners.

“The voters of Tacoma approved money for this project in a 2014 bond election,” he added. “We are confident that the finished project will not only meet - but very likely surpass - their expectations. There will definitely be a “wow” factor in this long-wished-for new aquarium.”

Turner Construction, which has a deep knowledge and long history in aquarium construction around the world, is the General Contractor/Construction Manager on the Pacific Seas Aquarium.

The structure will rise on a plot of land between the zoo's Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater and Rocky Shores area, which is home to marine mammals like Pacific walrus, California sea lions, harbor seals and sea otters.

It will include the sea animals Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium visitors have grown to love in the North Pacific Aquarium, plus exciting new species and exhibits intended to broaden the experience of visiting the aquarium well beyond the shores of Puget Sound.

That means there will be a home for the very popular Jellies exhibit that opened last year; new spaces for a giant Pacific octopus and animals like rockfish, king crab, prawns, orange sea cucumbers, plumose anemone and other species.

What visitors now know as the Marine Discovery Center will morph into a new, expanded Tidal Touch Zone, with emphasis on hands-on and up-close experiences for people of all ages. But the focus will undeniably be on the families, young children and schoolchildren who will be the guardians of the world's oceans in the future.

There also will be a Tidal Surge area with moving wave action to welcome visitors to the aquarium; a Schooling Fish exhibit; a Giant Spider Crabs exhibit; a window into the world beneath the Tacoma Narrows bridges; a tank that showcases deep-dwelling ocean animals; a Coastal Kelp Forest; Estuary Tank; educational and laboratory space; several conservation stations; and the Waves of Change area where visitors can learn to become stewards of the oceans.

"The Pacific Seas Aquarium will not only replace the outdated North Pacific Aquarium, it will build a new legacy of ocean conservation among visitors to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium," Deputy Director John Houck said. "We expect our visitors to enjoy the very colorful exhibits showcasing animals from Puget Sound to Baja California," he added. "And we believe they will leave with a new commitment to helping the world's oceans, which are facing threats from overfishing, pollution and climate change."

The aquarium is also the largest project under the umbrella of Destination Point Defiance, a long-term comprehensive planning initiative to enhance the experience and honor the character of Point Defiance Park.

Work is getting underway this summer on several Destination Point Defiance projects, including major improvements to the waterfront and peninsula next to the park's Pearl Street entrance, and a Tacoma Public Schools-funded Environmental Learning Center to be built on zoo grounds.

The initiative eventually will include upgrades to Five Mile Drive viewpoints, a new "loop trail" to separate pedestrian and vehicle traffic, improvements to the Japanese Garden and Pagoda surroundings and upgrades to Owen Beach. More information is available at www.destinationpointdefiance.org.

###

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).

Contacts:

Kris Sherman, 253-404-3800; 253-226-6718 or kris.sherman@pdza.org

Whitney DalBalcon, 253-404-3637 or whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org