



# *COUNTY OF ORANGE*

## *RESOURCES & DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT*

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**DATE:** June 8, 2007

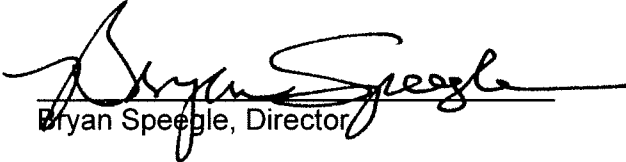
**TO:** Theresa Stanberry, CEO Budget Office

**FROM:** Director, Resources & Development Management Department

**SUBJECT:** Revised Response to Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations on the Report Entitled "Orange County Zoo"

Attached is RDMD's revised response to the findings and recommendations on the Grand Jury Report entitled "Orange County Zoo." We have provided responses to Findings F-2 and F-3 and Recommendations R-2 and R-3 as requested.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Debra Lakin at (714) 834-5593.

  
Bryan Speegle, Director

cc: Brian Wayt, County Executive Office

## RESPONSE TO FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF GRAND JURY REPORT ON *ORANGE COUNTY ZOOS*

### FINDINGS

F-2. There are no public restrooms and drinking fountains inside the Orange County Zoo (OCZ). The public is not well served (especially children) when the restrooms and drinking fountain are not readily accessible.

### RESPONSE

***Disagrees partially with the finding.*** RDMD/HBP agrees there are no restrooms and drinking fountains inside the OCZ. However, RDMD/HBP does not agree that the public is not well served because there is a public restroom located approximately 100 yards from the OCZ entrance. Visitors to the zoo are easily able to exit and re-enter the zoo by showing stamped hands to verify that they have paid the entrance fee.

F-3. The Orange County Zoo has a declining attendance which will ultimately require more funding from the citizens of Orange County or it will be closed.

### RESPONSE

***Disagrees partially with the finding.*** RDMD/HBP agrees that for periods of time, paid attendance may decrease. However, many factors contribute to attendance, including weather, economics and trends in leisure activities. A zoo program is built over time, thus there may be periods of low attendance in the lifetime of the program. The OCZ is funded by a combination of fees, HBP funds, contributions and grants. The OCZ is not subsidized by the General Fund and, based on current costs and revenues, we do not foresee there would be a future need to subsidize the OCZ.

The attendance data provided by zoo staff to the Grand Jury was limited to paid admissions and did not include visitors who enter the zoo for free such as school children participating in "Inside the Outdoors," an outdoor educational program operated by the Department of Education at Irvine Regional Park. The paid admissions for Fiscal Year 2005/2006 (102,296) should be increased by 31,000 free admissions for a total of 133,296 total visitors.

While HBP partially disagrees with the finding, HBP will monitor the attendance and opportunities for increasing the public awareness of the Zoo. The HBP

Strategic Plan includes recommendations for increasing public awareness of all HBP facilities and for increasing attendance at parks.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

R-2. Make the Zoo grounds of the Orange County Zoo more user friendly by providing a public restroom and a drinking fountain inside the zoo.

## **RESPONSE**

***The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*** A new public restroom and drinking fountain meeting all federal and state standards would cost in the range of \$400,000. Since there is a restroom located approximately 100 yards from the entrance of the zoo, the relative priority for building a new restroom to serve just the OCZ visitors is low compared to deferred maintenance needs in the regional parks. As noted before, there is a hand stamping procedure in place allowing for re-entry into the zoo when a visitor needs to use the restroom. This is adequate at present. HBP will continue to analyze the priority and opportunities to fund a restroom and drinking fountain within the zoo as a part of future budgets and grant programs. When relative priority justifies or grants/contributions permit a new restroom, HBP will include it in the capital projects budget.

R-3. Develop ways to increase Orange County Zoo patronage, i.e. by providing better signs and maps to the public depicting the OCZ's location within the park, and promoting the park's attractions to entice more visitors.

## **RESPONSE**

***The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*** The HBP Strategic Plan recognizes the need for better promotion of HBP facilities and activities. The HBP Strategic Plan is scheduled to be presented to the Board of Supervisors for approval in August 2007. HBP staff will be ordering new directional signs for parks including the zoo to improve directions to parking and the entry to the Zoo.

The OCZ currently promotes hours, volunteer opportunities, activities and programs in the [www.ocparks.com](http://www.ocparks.com) web site. The information is updated monthly. The Irvine Park Railroad, a park concession, has a link on their web site advertising the Zoo ([www.irvineparkrr.com](http://www.irvineparkrr.com)). The Zoo activities are also advertised on the website for the Orange County Zoological Society, [www.oczoo.com](http://www.oczoo.com). A Zoo brochure is being designed, including a map of the exhibits, to be used for promotional purposes. Additional opportunities to attract visitors to new and refurbished exhibits are being addressed in the Orange

County Zoo Master Plan that is in the initial draft stage. This document should be completed within the next twelve months.