BUDGET SUMMARY

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Adopted Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures					
Personnel Costs	9,535,469	12,786,163	10,983,762	11,174,290	190,528
Operations Costs	7,757,384	8,035,511	9,550,473	9,899,251	348,778
Debt & Depreciation	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Outlay	2,419,052	1,114,002	572,805	552,797	(20,008)
Interdepartmental Charges	702,117	848,617	896,103	1,037,831	141,728
Total Expenditures	**$20,414,023**	**$22,784,293**	**$22,003,143**	**$22,664,169**	**$661,026**
Revenues					
Other Direct Revenue	18,458,417	19,039,400	21,932,797	22,668,006	735,209
Total Revenues	**$18,458,417**	**$19,039,400**	**$21,932,797**	**$22,668,006**	**$735,209**
Tax Levy	**$1,955,606**	**$3,744,893**	**$70,346**	**($3,837)**	**($74,183)**
Personnel					
Full Time Pos (FTE)	162.10	165.10	168.10	168.10	0.00
Overtime $	117,643	191,124	309,076	312,072	2,996
Seasonal/Hourly/Pool	661,715	1,251,257	1,583,235	1,663,539	80,304

Department Mission:
Inspire people to conserve wildlife and wild places.

Department Vision:
A world where wildlife and people thrive.

Department Description:
Milwaukee County Zoo is organized into five key divisions that work collaboratively to support the mission and daily operations of Wisconsin's largest zoological park. These divisions include: Administration and Finance, Marketing and Communications, Facilities, Animal Management and Health and Operations. Each division plays a vital role in advancing the Zoo's strategic priorities, which are guided by three key commitments: Care - Enhancing wellbeing and pursuing the highest standards in veterinary care, husbandry and zoo habitat design; Connect - Immersing people in nature and creating memorable, educational experiences that inspire empathy and environmental action; and Conserve - Saving wildlife and wild places here and across the globe by leading and partnering on conservation projects. Together, these divisions support the Zoo's mission to inspire people to conserve wildlife and wild places.

Major Changes

- The Milwaukee County Zoo and the Zoological Society of Milwaukee's strategic plan is anchored in three key commitments: Care, Connect and Conserve, which are supported by three Foundational Principles: Culture, Community Impact and Financial Strength and Stewardship. These commitments and principles align with Milwaukee County's strategic focus areas:
- Creating Intentional Inclusion, Bridging the Gap and Investing in Equity. The 2026 budget reflects and incorporates these County focus areas through the following: Creating Intentional Inclusion - The Zoo's Flex Pricing Plan continues to enhance affordability and accessibility. In 2024, the Zoo offered 33 accessibility programs, representing a community value of $1,680,094 and reaching 17% of total visitors. The Zoo is com- mitted to fostering a more inclusive community by strategically marketing to broader and more diverse audiences, and by expanding outreach to underrepresented groups, including Native American, Hmong, and Hispanic/Latine communities. In partnership with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM), the Zoo continues to expand its joint accessibility initiative, Access MKE Zoo, to provide increased access for individuals and families facing barriers.

- The Zoo has established a goal of awarding 22% of time and materials contracts to Targeted Business Enterprises (TBEs), in alignment with County equity and inclusion targets.
- Bridging the Gap - During the annual exit survey, guests are asked, "Why do you visit the Zoo?". The most common response is "To be with family and friends". The Zoo will continue to support this through a safe, welcoming environment and outstanding guest services.
- Internship programs will continue in 2026 within the Animal Management and Health Division. A new partnership launched in 2025 with Cristo Rey High School and the Zoological Society of Milwaukee brought four student interns into the administration and Finance, Marketing and Communications, and Facilities divisions. This program will continue through the 2025-2026 school year, providing career exposure and job training for local youth. The Zoo actively gathers and incorporates feedback from guests and community members to ensure it remains a welcoming and inclusive destination for all.
- Investing in Equity - The 2026 budget is designed to increase attendance and revenues, reducing reliance on tax levy support. Attendance is projected at 1,302,379 visitors, representing a two percent increase of the 2025 Budget and a five percent increase over 2024's actual attendance. The Zoo is planning to introduce new events in 2026 to attract a wider audience and expand its community engagement. The 2026 Marketing Strategy continues to prioritize Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion goals. It targets 20% of impressions to diverse and underrepresented audiences, and 15% to new audiences, to boost attendance and broaden engagement. Special emphasis will be placed on promoting the renovated Rhino habitat. The Zoo's Flex Pricing Model continues to balance revenue optimization with accessibility. In 2024, it enabled 33 accessibility programs that reached 208,842 guests, 17% of attendance, providing a measurable community impact valued at over $1.6 million. The Zoo and ZSM remain committed to serving children and families experiencing high economic need through ongoing joint programming and outreach initiatives. An updated economic impact study completed in 2025 revealed that the Milwaukee County Zoo contributes an estimated $227.9 million in total direct and indirect economic impact on the four-county region. This includes $75.1 million in earnings and 2,810 jobs. The Zoo remains a significant economic driver, playing a vital role in the financial health of Milwaukee County and its surrounding communities.
- In 2026, the Zoo will feature a special exhibit on Pollinators, highlighting the essential role bees, butterflies, and other pollinating species play in sustaining ecosystems and global food supplies. This immersive, conservation-focused exhibit will offer interactive experiences and educational programming designed to engage guests of all ages. Through hands-on activities and interpretive displays, visitors will learn about the challenges pollinators face and discover how individual actions can help protect these critical species.
- The Zoo remains focused on updating habitats to meet or exceed standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), while also enhancing the overall guest experience.
- The 2026 Budget positions the Zoo for continued growth in attendance and revenue across key areas, including admissions, society memberships, group sales, revenue-sharing contracts and leases, special exhibits, and events. At the same time, it ensures the delivery of exceptional animal care and supports the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the Zoo's buildings and grounds.
- The 2026 Capital Budget Request includes the following projects:
- Zoo Front Entrance: The Zoo is requesting $17.6 million to renovate its outdated main entrance to improve safety, guest experience, operational efficiency, and financial sustainability. Currently, vehicle-based admission causes major traffic congestion on Bluemound Road and nearby freeways, leading to long wait times, visitor frustration, lost revenue, and frequent complaints. Staff cannot adequately assist guests, and the first impression is often negative. Key benefits of the renovation include 1) Improved Safety and Security - Guest admissions will move inside Zoo grounds, eliminating traffic backups and creating a single, secure entry point. Perimeter fencing will also be enhanced; 2) Increased Revenue - Faster entry reduces guest drop-off and boosts ticket sales. Early engagement enables upselling and better customer service; 3) Enhanced guest experience - A streamlined, welcoming entry reduces stress, improves accessibility, and allows staff to assist with directions and purchases. Multilingual signage and inclusive resources improve communication. The project will also reduce long-term staffing and maintenance costs through more efficient operations. More than an infrastructure update, this renovation is a strategic investment in the Zoo's future, solving long-standing issues and transforming the guest arrival experience.
- Zoofari Building Roof & HVAC Replacement Design Funds: The Zoo seeks funding to design replacements for the building's failing HVAC system and deteriorating roof, both critical to keeping the revenue-generating facility operational. The building's three 30-year-old air handling units are well beyond their 20-year lifespan, increasingly unreliable, and costly to maintain. Their failure disrupts rentals and threatens revenue. Replacing them with a single, energy-efficient rooftop unit is the most cost-effective solution. The roof, installed in 1990, is now with three deteriorated layers, is leaking in multiple areas, causing interior damage and repeated service disruptions. Temporary fixes over the past six years have proven unsustainable. Approximately 90% of the roof surface is in poor condition and requires full replacement. The Zoofari Building generates $80,000 to $100,000 annually through rentals and also

houses leased warehouse space. Roof and HVAC failures not only risk event cancellations but could also damage leased inventory, triggering Zoo liability. Design funding is essential to protect this key revenue source and ensure the building remains fully operational for events, rentals, and storage.

- Oceans Connections Pool Area Demolition Design Funds: The Zoo seeks $50,000 in design funds to demolish the defunct sea lion show pool, which is beyond its useful life and is no longer in use after a service contract ended. The pool and surrounding area are in disrepair and pose safety and health risks. The project includes demolishing the pool, filling it in, upgrading fencing to a privacy structure, and adding gravel or concrete where needed, avoiding replacement of existing asphalt or green space. Leaving the pool as-is risks water retention, mosquito breeding and public safety due to its 20-foot depth. A pre-demolition inspection for hazardous materials and potential stormwater management needs will be addressed a part of the project.

The following contracts are included in the 2026 Budget in lieu of separate review and approval from the County Board during the fiscal year:

Vendor	Contract Description	Contract Amount
Dino Don, Inc.	2026 Special Exhibit - Pollinators	$300,000
Dino Don, Inc.	2027 Special Exhibit Deposit	$30,000
Mary Kazmierczak dba MEK Consulting LLC	Library Services	$25,000
McClure International Consulting LLC	Elephant Foot Care Services	$24,500
Mold-A-Rama Inc.	Plastic Mold Vending Machine (Revenue Contract)	$139,066
O8O Leasing LLC	Hurricane Vending Machine Agreement (Revenue Contract)	$20,000
VenuPlus, Inc. (Venu+)	Medallion and Penny Press Agreement (Revenue Contract)	$35,805
DNP Imagincomm America DBA Innovative FOTO Corp	Photo Booths (Revenue Contract)	$34,980
2-Story Creative LTD	Website hosting, maintenance	$43,200
Scooterbug Inc.	Mobility carts and scooters (Revenue Contract)	$140,000
2 - Story Creative LTD	Marketing and Advertising Campaigns	125,000

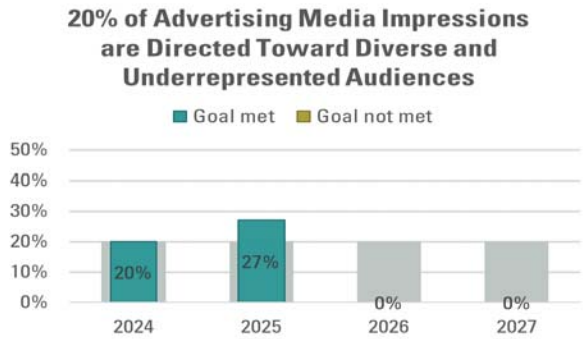
ZOOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

Continuously Maintain Professional Accreditation and Licensing

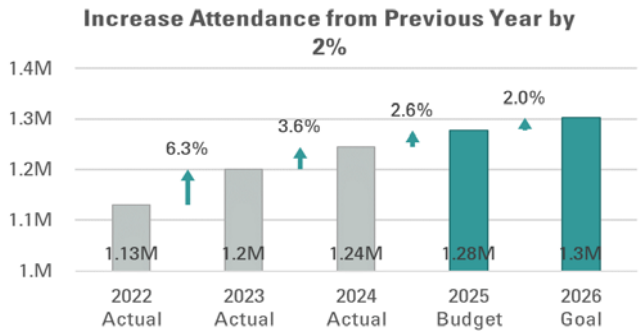
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Assoc. of Zoos & Aquariums	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
USDA License	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

AZA-accredited institutions must undergo the accreditation process every five years. While the Zoo has successfully been accredited in 2024, it is required to stay current with the evolving rigorous standards. The Zoo's goal is to continuously maintain the AZA standards. A USDA license is valid for a three-year period and requires annual inspections.

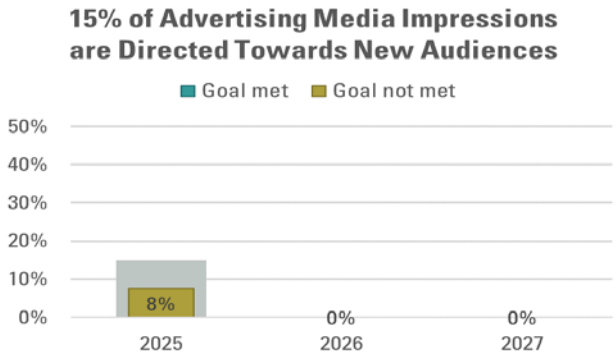
There are 276 AZA standards across these categories: Animal Wellbeing, Care & Mgmt.; Veterinary Care; Conservation; Education & Interpretation; Scientific Advancement; Governing Authority; Staff; Support Organization; Finance; Physical Facilities; Safety/Security; Guest Services; Master & Strategic Planning; AZA Standards for Elephant Mgmt. Care.



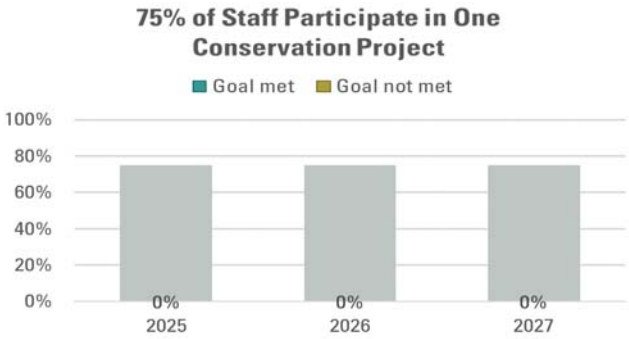
The data shown is through May 31, 2025.



Attendance growth projection is determined on an annual basis during the budget preparation stage.



This is a new goal starting in 2025. Data shown is through May 31.



This is a new goal starting in 2025.

Strategic Program Area: Administration & Finance

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	5,213,860	3,765,858	3,899,604	3,818,049	(81,555)
Revenues	76,928	51,174	308,737	323,495	14,758
Tax Levy	5,136,932	3,714,685	3,590,867	3,494,554	(96,313)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	13.60	12.60	11.60	11.60	0.00

What We Do With It: Activity Data

Activity	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Accessibility Days	178	123	139	100
Accessibility Programs	30	30	30	30
Zoo Attendance	1,201,843	1,244,762	1,276,843	1,302,379

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Average Visitor Spending (Total Revenue/Total Attendance)	$15.36	$15.30	$17.18	$17.41
AZA Accreditation Status	Unaccredited	Accredited	Accredited	Accredited

Strategic Overview:

The Administration and Finance strategic program area provides effective leadership, guidance, and oversight for all Milwaukee County Zoo operations, aligning efforts with the County's and the Zoo's strategic goals. This division ensures organizational excellence through direct oversight of a wide range of essential functions, including: Accreditation compliance and standards, financial and capital project planning, business analytics and cash management, accounts payable and receivable, personnel and payroll administration, information technology systems, contract review and administration, program evaluation and performance measurement, community engagement, oversight of the Operations Division, coordination and facilitation of the Guest Experience Committee, management of diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion initiatives, oversight of school field trip programs, partnership management with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee, continuous process improvement and government affairs, oversight of Service Systems Associates LLC (the Zoo's concession and retail partner) and general administrative services and office operations. Additionally, this division is responsible for determining all Zoo pricing strategies, ensuring a balanced approach to accessibility, revenue generation and market responsiveness.

Strategic Implementation:

The Milwaukee County Zoo partners with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee's Education Department to provide seven programs serving children and their families attending schools with high economic need. In 2024, 13,911 students were served from Milwaukee Public Schools, non-MPS schools in Milwaukee County and various other public and private schools. This partnership continues in 2026.

Flex Pricing, implemented in April of 2022, has proven to be an effective strategy for increasing admission revenue while providing guests the flexibility to choose visit dates that align with their budgets and schedules. This dynamic pricing model also allows the Zoo to adjust daily admission rates in response to market conditions and external factors. The 2026 budget maintains current top admission rates, with no planned increases. Instead, focus will continue to market the discounts for online ticket purchases, aiming to streamline entry at admission gates, boost attendance and maximize revenue, particularly during peak season. The maximum admission price will be applied more frequently to same-day ticket purchases. The Zoo retains the ability to lower prices at any time as market conditions warrant. For more information on the revenue impact of the 2026 Flex Pricing plan, refer to the Strategic Program Area Operations Section.

Free days (one Saturday in October to March), Special Events (Mother's Day free for moms, Father Day's free for dads, Military Day, etc.), Frosty Free week (last week in December) and Promotional Days ($4 on the 4th of July) are not affected.

Milwaukee County residents will continue to receive reduced admission prices on Wednesdays. The rates for 2026 increase by $0.50 to $12.00 for adults/seniors and $9.50 for Children. To provide Milwaukee County residents with the flexibility to visit on a weekend at a larger discount, the Wednesday rate is offered one Sunday each month in April, May and September.

School field trip admission fees increase $0.50 across all categories.

The Executive Zoo Director or designee maintains the authority to discount or waive fees and provide one more free admissions day during the months of January, February, March, October, November and December.

The Administration and Finance Division's overall budget is reduced by $96,313 over 2025 due to the following changes: Personal Services reduction of $38,116, Utilities increase $56,210, reduction of $100,000 in credit card fees due to the Zoo's new point-of-sale system, increase of $10,000 in Billboard revenues and miscellaneous reductions of $4,407.

Strategic Program Area: Marketing and Communications

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	3,118,874	3,196,110	3,685,126	3,710,440	25,314
Revenues	4,029,751	4,011,276	4,963,524	5,271,179	307,655
Tax Levy	(910,876)	(815,166)	(1,278,398)	(1,560,739)	(282,341)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	0.00

What We Do With It: Activity Data

Activity	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Advertising Expenditures	$788,486	$696,263	$761,400	$762,300
Group Sales Revenue	1,666,476	1,823,708	1,801,014	1,925,800
Number of Public Special Events	25	18	25	27
Number of Sponsorships	30	22	23	25
Social Media Followers	400,400	411,747	450,000	455,000

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Attendance at Public Special Events	261,864	260,951	287,316	288,978
Attendance for Special Exhibit	99,991	154,310	184,099	140,534
Guest Educational Value Survey - Extremely or Very Educational	93%	95%	90%	90%
Guest Experience Survey - Extremely or Very Satisfied	99%	97%	90%	90%
Sponsorship Revenue	$315,839	$342,054	$441,500	$513,750

Strategic Overview:
The Marketing and Communications (M&C) strategic program area is responsible for promoting the Milwaukee County Zoo and enhancing its public image through a variety of outreach efforts. This division manages programs and materials that market the Zoo through general advertising, media relations, social media engagement, community events, sponsorships, promotional campaigns, public special events, and private event rentals. Staffed by both full-time and seasonal employees, the M&C team focuses on increasing public awareness, visitation, and overall enjoyment of the Zoo. These efforts directly support the Zoo's strategic goals by driving attendance, strengthening community connections, and generating revenues through expanded visibility and engagement.

Strategic Implementation:
The 2026 marketing strategy aims to increase Zoo attendance by two percent, reaching a target of 1,302,379 visitors. To support this goal, marketing efforts will spotlight the renovated Penguin and Rhino habitats and introduce new public events designed to attract a broader audience. Aligned with the Zoo's new strategic plan, a comprehensive promotional approach will be implemented, incorporating targeted advertising, strategic social media campaigns, influencer partnerships and digital outreach. The strategy will also emphasize online ticket sales to encourage advance purchases and enhance the guest experience by reducing entry wait times and streamlining front gate operations.

The budget continues to support a more inclusive community by strategically marketing to a broader, more diverse audience, ensuring that all communities feel welcomed and represented at the Zoo.

The M&C division revenues are projected to increase by $370,654 in 2026. This includes a $40,522 revenue reallocation from the Operations Division, shifting general parking revenue to a la Carte event to better align event-based revenues. Group Sales revenue is expected to rise by $124,786, driven by an expanded marketing campaign focused on increasing rentals and advertising. New public events are projected to generate an additional $51,000 in admission revenue. Zoo-wide sponsorship revenue is also anticipated to grow by $67,500 in 2026, due to the addition of new events and a strategic reassessment of the program to better align values with market rates and strengthen partner engagement.

Strategic Program Area: Facilities

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	4,199,043	5,971,176	5,534,172	5,974,589	440,417
Revenues	104,835	233,055	233,312	238,340	5,028
Tax Levy	4,094,208	5,738,121	5,300,860	5,736,249	435,389
Full Time Pos (FTE)	51.00	48.00	50.00	50.00	0.00

What We Do With It: Activity Data

Activity	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Dollars Spent on Asset Maintenance	$2,166,818	$2,001,199	$935,409	$993,219
Number of Energy Savings Projects	4	13	5	5
Number of Work Orders Completed	790	476	950	950

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Electricity Usage Reduction	-3.30%	-5.40%	-5.00%	-5.00%
Guest Survey - Excellent or Very Good Cleanliness	98%	98%	90%	90%
Natural Gas Usage Reduction	-10%	-8%	-5%	-5%
Percentage of Time and Material Contracts Awarded to Targeted Business Enterprises	85.00%	64.00%	65.00%	22.00%
Water Usage Reduction	-0.70%	8.40%	-5.00%	-5.00%
Work Orders Completed in a Timely Manner	81%	71%	90%	90%

Strategic Overview:

The Facilities strategic program area is responsible for maintaining the Zoo's buildings, grounds, and overall cleanliness of the Zoo, and supporting the management of capital improvement projects. The condition and appearance of the Zoo's physical environment play a vital role in visitor satisfaction and encouraging repeat attendance. This division oversees a wide range of operational functions, including mechanical systems, preventative maintenance programs for equipment, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning), minor electrical and plumbing repairs, housekeeping, horticulture, forestry management, and general cleaning services. The Zoo's expansive 190-acre park includes 62 buildings requiring HVAC maintenance and an additional 137 structures needing ongoing upkeep. Facilities also coordinate volunteer efforts from local businesses and community groups, offering opportunities for public engagement while enhancing the Zoo's appearance and operations.

Strategic Implementation:

A key goal of this division is implementing a successful preventive maintenance program that establishes consistent practices to improve the performance, safety, and longevity of Zoo buildings and equipment. By extending the useful life of assets, this program reduces the need to capital replacements, improves operational efficiency by minimizing downtime, and lowers energy costs through more efficient equipment performance. To support this key goal, repair and maintenance accounts increase $57,810.

The increase in Personal Services is primarily attributed to the implementation of the December 2025 HR Compensation Study changes, which adjusted pay ranges to better align with market rates. Additionally, a portion of vacancy and turnover savings previously allocated to the Facilities Division has been reallocated to the Administration and Finance Division, contributing to the overall increase. Seasonal labor budget increases slightly by $1,838 to help support Zoo operations.

An appropriation of $35,000 is included in the 2026 Budget as the first installment of a five-year plan to replace all garbage cans throughout the Zoo. This initiative aims to create a cleaner, more cohesive brand appearance, improve operational efficiency and support expanded recycling efforts.

Fleet Management crosscharge increases by $143,637 from $654,677 to $798,314.

The remaining budget represents cost-to-continue funding and accounts for anticipated market-driven price increases.

Strategic Program Area: Animal Management & Health

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	5,518,285	7,394,603	6,293,048	6,493,880	200,832
Revenues	117,989	121,436	170,091	187,617	17,526
Tax Levy	5,400,296	7,273,168	6,122,957	6,306,263	183,306
Full Time Pos (FTE)	78.75	81.75	82.75	82.75	0.00

What We Do With It: Activity Data

Activity	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Dollars towards Conservation/Research	$312,214	$352,802	$366,918	$376,300
Number of Species in Collection	358	366	360	325
Number of Specimens in Collection	2,275	2,195	2,280	2,100
Value of Staff Time on Conservation Messages	$46,203	$93,519	$293,060	$300,554

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Participation in AZA Species Survival Plans	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Percentage of Budget towards Conservation and Research	2%	2%	3%	3%
Reduce the Number of Exhibits that Appear Empty with No Reason	14%	15%	10%	10%

Strategic Overview:

The Animal Management and Health strategic program area is responsible for the expert care and management of the Zoo's diverse animal population. This includes ensuring the health and wellbeing of over 2,100 animals, spanning more than 325 species of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates, through species-appropriate nutrition, safe and enriching environments and comprehensive preventative and clinical veterinary care. Animal habitats are designed to support natural behaviors while also serving as dynamic spaces for educational and engaging guest experiences that foster connections to wildlife and wild places. These experiences play a vital role in advancing the Zoo's Conserve key commitment by inspiring stewardship and promoting public awareness of global biodiversity challenges. This program area also facilitates collaborative opportunities with approved local, regional, national and international researchers conducting behavioral, cognitive and psychological studies. These partnerships contribute to broader conservation science and enhance the Zoo's role as a leader in animal wellbeing and research-based care.

Strategic Implementation:

Personal Services increases by $58,208, reflecting an additional 2,940 hours to expand Seasonal Zookeeper staffing. This investment provides critical support to the Animal Management and Health Division by reducing the strain on full-time Zookeepers during periods of staff shortages, including FMLA leave, sick days, time off and vacancies. The added hours will help ensure consistent and appropriate staffing levels across the Zoo, directly contributing to the continuity and quality of animal care. This increase also supports workforce development by establishing a clear "career ladder" from internship to full-time employment. Qualified interns will gain access to seasonal roles with expanded responsibilities, providing valuable hands-on experience and strengthening the pipeline of future full-time Zookeeper candidates, while reflecting the County's values of Inclusion, Influence and Integrity.

Personal Services increases by $43,697 to reflect the addition of a new Zoological Medicine and Surgery Resident position, established as a 2025 current-year action. This position is jointly funded, with 50% of the costs reimbursed by the Zoological Society of Milwaukee. The remaining position cost is offset by other reductions, resulting in a zero net impact on the budget.

Personal Services also includes a reduction of $25,783 due to lower starting salaries for new hires compared to the higher wages of retired employees.

Animal food costs increase $61,500 based on past experience and current market conditions.

The Zoo has a goal of contributing the equivalent of three percent of its operating budget to conservation and research efforts. This is realized through dollars expended and in-kind value of staff time to participate in field conservation, education, staff programs and training, green practices, and scientific research. For 2026, the goal is $676,854.

Additional Program Details:
Specimen Expendable Trust Account (Org 0319). The Specimen Fund exists for the purpose of recording receipts from the sale of animals. Disbursements are made for the purchase of animals and related expenditures such as freight and express charges on the shipment of animals. For 2026, expenditures and revenues total $86,650.

Conservation/Research Program Trust Account (Org. 0330). The Conservation/Research Trust account was created to record donations and contributions that support conservation, research and green practices. The account allows for expenditure authority to support these functions in addition to supporting other expenses for the benefit or improvement of the Zoo and to support the Zoo's mission. For 2026, expenditures and revenues total $286,000.

The following changes to FTE's are included in the 2026 budget:

1.0 FTE Zoological Medicine & Surgery Resident was created in 2025.
1.0 FTE of Zoo Area Supervisor is abolished.

Strategic Program Area: Zoo Operations

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	2,363,961	2,456,545	2,591,193	2,667,211	76,018
Revenues	14,128,914	14,622,459	16,257,133	16,647,375	390,242
Tax Levy	(11,764,953)	(12,165,914)	(13,665,940)	(13,980,164)	(314,224)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	12.00	13.00	13.00	13.00	0.00

What We Do With It: Activity Data

Activity	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
General Admission Revenue	$7,417,973	$7,720,699	$9,480,829	$10,127,848
Revenue Partner Commissions	$3,186,791	$3,301,403	$3,483,652	$3,522,464
Society Membership Revenue	$3,418,870	$3,397,075	$3,472,121	$3,541,563
Zoo Rides Revenue	$2,078,035	$2,069,682	$2,309,389	$2,228,551

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Guest Survey - Excellent or Very Good Food Service	85%	93%	90%	90%
Guest Survey - Excellent or Very Good Service at Gates/Admissions	97%	98%	90%	90%
Guest Survey - Excellent or Very Good Service at Retail Outlets	95%	99%	90%	90%
Guest Survey - Excellent or Very Good Service at Ride Locations	97%	98%	90%	90%

Strategic Overview:
The Operations strategic program area provides leadership and oversight for key functions that support the guest experience, including customer service, reception, radio dispatch, safety, security and coordination of the Zoo's Safety Committee. The division plays a central role in revenue generation, managing core attractions such as admissions, parking, the train, Zoo Expeditions, carousel, special exhibits, Virtual Reality experience, skyride, zip line and ropes course. Operations also oversees all revenue-generating contracts and leases with third-party vendors, ensuring compliance, performance, and alignment with the Zoo's financial goals.

Strategic Implementation:
Funding for seasonal positions increases $12,505 to support revenue-generating operations.

The 2026 seasonal exhibit will feature an outdoor display of robotic pollinator creatures. Admission remains at $4 per person, with the exhibit running from May through the October Free Admission Day.

Admission revenue increases $513,864 from $6,362,412 to $6,876,276 due to the following: $419,419 from a projected attendance increase of two percent to 1,302,379 guests, $8,000 from a $0.50 increase in County Resident Wednesday rate, and $86,445 resulting from a $0.50 price increase in field trip admissions.

The 50/50 membership split with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee increases $69,442 from $3,472,121 to $3,541,563 to align with the Zoo's two percent attendance growth goal.

Additional Program Details:
Railroad Expendable Trust Fund (Org 0320). The Railroad Fund exists for the purpose of recording the receipt of all revenue derived from the operation of the Zoo's miniature passenger railroad. Expenditures include personnel costs for engineers and operators, repair and maintenance of locomotives and other commodities and supplies and for the benefit or improvement of the Zoo and to support the Zoo's mission.