

Land of the Jaguar Groundbreaking Set for May 23

Date set for groundbreaking of New South American Attraction at the Jacksonville Zoo, which will be completed by spring 2004.

Jacksonville, Fla. – The Jacksonville Zoo announces the groundbreaking of their next big exhibit, *Land of the Jaguar*, for Thursday, May 23, at noon at the Zoo. Mayor John Delaney will be on hand to officially begin construction on this exciting new exhibit.

"The Jacksonville Zoo continues to evolve into a first class zoo for Jacksonville. The Land of the Jaguar attraction will act as an anchor for our Zoo and our community," Mayor John Delaney said.

The new attraction, a unique neo-tropical attraction featuring jaguars, is scheduled to open in spring of 2004. The overall price tag of the Zoo's premier attraction is 15.4 million and will cover about four acres on Zoo grounds.

The money for this project came largely from the Zoo's inclusion in Mayor John Delaney's Better Jacksonville Plan referendum, which passed in September 2000. The majority of the \$10 million given by the city, plus additional funds raised with our capital campaign, will go towards this project and continue to develop the Zoo into a top rate attraction for Northeast Florida.

The exhibit will focus on a neotropical rain forest setting that can be found in Central or South America. It will include animals and plants that are indigenous to the rain forests of that region. Although this attraction will highlight the jaguar, other animals that guests will encounter include golden lion tamarins, tapirs, capybaras, giant river otters, anteaters and a variety of reptiles, fish and bird species. Guests will view these animals in their natural habitats. Some of the animals may be viewed amidst ruins from the "Temple of the Jaguar", and roaming in tropical environments such as waterfalls, pools filled with fish and sunning logs.

CLRdesign, Inc., a Philadelphia-based architect company that specializes in zoo design, has been contracted for the design, which is close to finalization. Jacksonville based Stellar Group has been hired as the construction managers for this project.

The Jacksonville Zoological Gardens is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to inspiring discovery of the earth's wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. The Zoo is a proud member of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA). We are easily accessible from I-95, exit 124A, or from the Dames Point Bridge, exit Heckscher Drive West. Open daily. <http://www.jaxzoo.org>