**COLUMBUS ZOO AND ITS PARTNERS RECEIVE TOP HONORS AND CONSERVATION AWARD**

Top Honors were received by both the Columbus Zoo and *the Wilds* in the North American Conservation Award category for the Freshwater Mussel Conservation and Research Center (FMCRC). This award recognizes exceptional efforts by AZA institutions toward regional habitat preservation, species restoration, and support of biodiversity in the wild. The FMCRC is a unique and dynamic partnership between the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, *the Wilds*, The Ohio State University, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department.

The FMCRC was opened in 2001 along the banks of the Scioto River near the Columbus Zoo to assist in the propagation and conservation of highly endangered freshwater mussel species. The primary goals of the Center are to: 1) establish brood stock of target endangered species; 2) conduct basic conservation research on mussels including host identification, phylogenetic analyses, and health parameters; 3) culture and propagate newly transformed mussels for eventual introduction to the wild; 4) translocation of targeted endangered species; 5) offer temporary refuge to mussels removed from situations where there have been environmental disasters; and 6) provide educational outreach opportunities for the citizens of Central Ohio.

*The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is home to more than 9,000 animals representing 675 species and provides more than $1 million annually to support over 70 conservation projects worldwide.  A recreational and education destination that includes the 22-acre Zoombezi Bay water park and 18-hole Safari Golf Club, the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium hosts more than two million visitors annually and was named the #1 Zoo in America by USA Travel Guide.  A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the Columbus Zoo has earned Charity Navigator’s prestigious 4-star rating. For more information and to purchase advance Zoo admission tickets, visit* [*www.columbuszoo.org*](http://www.columbuszoo.org/)*.*

[](http://www.columbuszoo.org/)

For more wildlife experiences, visit our friends at the Wilds - [www.thewilds.org](http://www.thewilds.org/)

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquarium

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