



SEATTLE AQUARIUM

Strategic Plan 2011-2030

Our Mission: Inspiring conservation of our marine environment

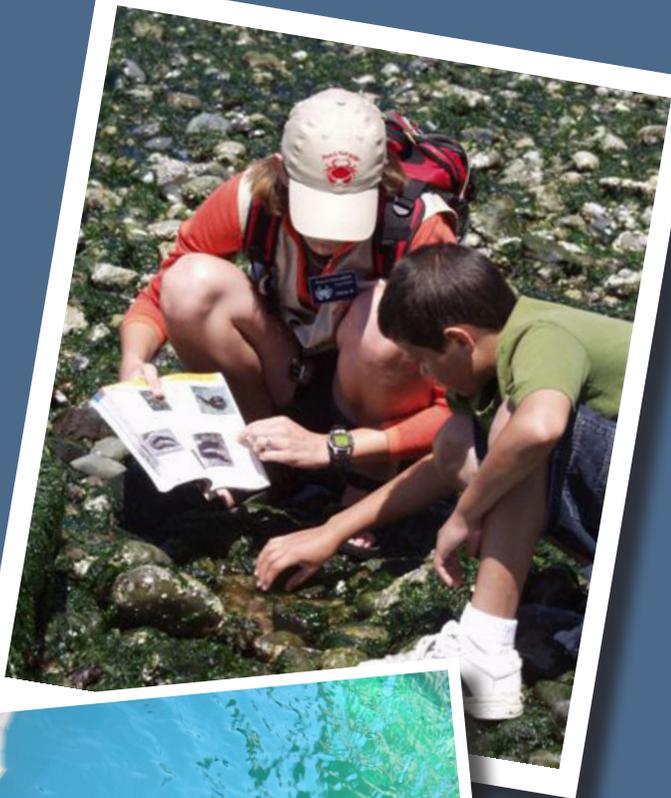
In water is life. As we need healthy oceans to sustain us, so must we sustain the oceans. The world's oceans give life to all of Earth's creatures. They cover more than two-thirds of the Earth's surface. They are home to most of the living organisms on the planet. They produce half of the life-giving oxygen we breathe. And they feed 60% of the world's population.

It doesn't get more important than that.

Unfortunately, many do not grasp this. Fortunately, in the oceans there is also mystery, majesty and magic. It is the mission of the Seattle Aquarium to connect these dots – to move people to awareness, education, inspiration, and commitment to the critical role oceans play in our very existence, starting in Puget Sound.

How? The Seattle Aquarium is among the top 10 aquariums in the nation in attendance while emerging as a leader in marine conservation education, especially as a window on Puget Sound itself. To become truly effective at its mission, however, the Seattle Aquarium must dramatically increase its impact. We exist to inspire people, both young and old, to conserve our marine environment by imparting new knowledge in every visitor about the life dwelling within Puget Sound and the broader oceans as well as what can be done to help preserve them.

This is serious business. With the oceans at risk, it is our imperative.



We presently reach and teach 800,000 children and adults a year.

With our region expected to grow in population, the Aquarium needs to grow to be able to reach and inspire more people. If the Aquarium does not grow, it will actually be having less impact than it does now, even as adverse pressures on the marine environment increase.

The purpose of this plan is to dramatically increase the reach of our mission – especially the number of people who love, understand, and support conservation of our marine environment.

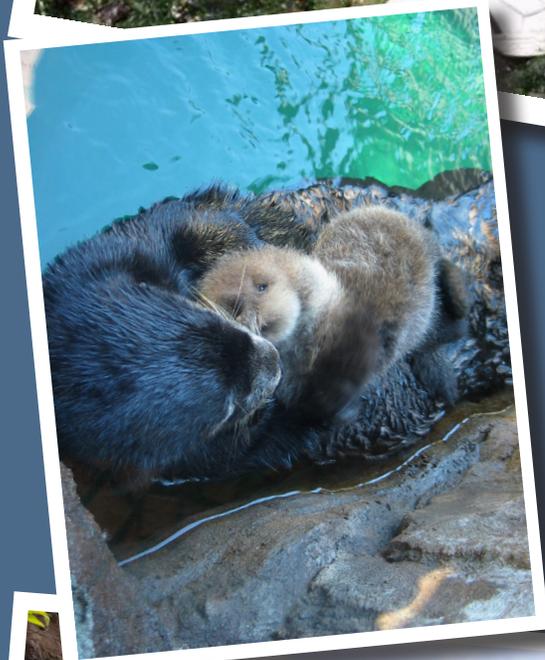
We intend to:

- *Achieve attendance at the level of the top-5 U.S. aquariums*
- *Be recognized globally for leadership in marine education*
- *Grow annual attendance to 1.5 million*
- *Be a primary economic contributor to Seattle's waterfront and downtown*

To accomplish goals, we must:

- *Refresh our exhibits*
- *Expand our exhibit space*
- *Expand our programs*
- *Earn the allegiance of the community and millions of dollars in new donor support*

This plan sets out the concrete steps we will take. If we succeed, support for protecting and recovering Puget Sound will increase, and if we fail, it will decrease. And since water is life, succeed we must.



Background:

Over 21 million visitors have passed through the Aquarium's doors since it opened, including almost 1.5 million school children. Most have come in multi-generational family groups, in which each member obtains a new understanding of our world's oceans and their wondrous inhabitants. Many have gone on to study related topics at school. Some have become marine biologists themselves. Others have joined us as volunteers, or even staff members. It is our hope and intention that all, influenced by our mission, have been moved to better understand, cherish and care for our own Puget Sound and the majestic oceans beyond.

Our Vision:

The Seattle Aquarium aspires, through its example, to help define the role of a great aquarium in the 21st century as a catalyst for public engagement in the wonder, science and future vitality of the oceans and Puget Sound. We intend to be a leader in each component: life sciences, interpretive exhibits, educational outreach, research, public policy and economic impact.

“The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy cited aquariums as a key focal point to increase ocean awareness and action. The Seattle Aquarium is stepping up to their responsibility in exemplary fashion. The Puget Sound need is urgent.”

- William D. Ruckelshaus, *past member, U. S. Commission on Ocean Policy; former co-chair, Puget Sound Partnership*



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

ANIMALS:

Energize each visitor's experience with the power and impact of the Aquarium's marine animals in all their natural awe and magic.

Be the best possible stewards of our animals by collecting and managing our marine animal collection under the most stringent industry standards of ethics and care.

Impact the general visitor experience through greater, more in-depth staff/volunteer contact.

Insure that guests have a magical, fun experience through upgrading older exhibitry to modern standards, taking advantage of opportunities to "re-face" exhibits with current graphics, technology, story lines and visitor circulation and amenities.

Build new exhibits to elevate the visitors' experience by presenting animals in exciting natural habitats with opportunities for visitor engagement through close proximity and human interpretive experiences.

Use a variety of new, flexible technologies to change how we interact with, and educate guests.



OCEANS:

Connect people to the life-sustaining oceans through a focus on Puget Sound and the Pacific Ocean.

Integrate the stories and messaging of the Northwest waters and tropical exhibits to reflect the connections of Puget Sound to the Pacific Ocean and to global ocean issues and health.

Support the health of wild populations and habitats through field conservation and the management of sustainable captive populations.

Align the Aquarium research effort with the Puget Sound and Pacific Ocean focus and stories.



COMMUNITY:

Insure that we are inclusive and welcoming to all segments of community.

Strive to have our audience reflect the diversity of our region including underserved populations and all age groups.

Develop an aggressive communications strategy to provide an inclusive outreach and community engagement and action program.

Make programs and services relevant, accessible and affordable to all community groups.

Align business practices with our race and social justice goals.



LEADERSHIP:

Provide leadership across our community as the region's premier platform for marine conservation education and ecosystem understanding.

Use our facility and our programs to strengthen linkages with aligned public and nonprofit institutions and organizations in the marine conservation and education community.

Cultivate efforts to become a more valued, expert resource on issues of Puget Sound, Northwest and Pacific sea life and species.

Operate an efficient facility that emphasizes a range of green conservation activities.

“We are still early in our understanding of the oceans and Puget Sound, and of the interactions among oceans and humans that impact the health and survival of both. The Seattle Aquarium is a key partner with the College of the Environment, at the crossroads of ocean-based science, education and public action.”

- Lisa J. Graumlich, *Dean, College of the Environment, University of Washington*

EDUCATION:

Be the best at conservation education.

Educate our visitors so that they are motivated to act beyond our walls.

Enhance the compelling value of informal learning in school group experiences.

Upgrade our messaging to visitors, donors, members outside of their on-site Aquarium experience so that they are empowered to act through understanding marine conservation issues.

Create engaging marine programs that both entertain and educate families allowing parents and children to bond, learn, and discover together.

WATERFRONT:

Build our role as an authentic and uniquely Seattle aquarium at the center of the City's great new Waterfront, serving the entire Puget Sound region.

Continue our deep involvement in the public participation and planning processes for the Elliott Bay Seawall and for the Central Waterfront redevelopment, articulating and advocating for the Aquarium's operating needs, regional public access and future expansion.

Make the Aquarium the single most compelling and fun element in the new Waterfront.

Enhance - via advocacy - all important linkages to the surrounding areas (Pike Place Market, Steinbrueck Park, nearby marina and cruise ship terminal, downtown Seattle, etc.).

PEOPLE:

Support the Aquarium's goals and strategies by investing in our people to build a superior staff and volunteer work force that insures we have the right people in place with the requisite workplace skills, attitudes and behaviors and who are motivated and committed to the mission.



Develop innovative human resource policies, procedures and practices that support the Aquarium's strategic intent as it relates to recruitment, training, staff development.

Create an environment that attracts the most highly skilled, talented and committed people who reflect the diversity of the Pacific Northwest, to join our staff and volunteer ranks.

Encourage innovation, individual initiative, team building, and accountability at all levels in the organization in support of our mission.



“Reconnecting people to the waterfront while deepening their relationship with it, is the vision of our waterfront redesign effort. The Seattle Aquarium’s mission is tied to this vision, and we view the Aquarium as key to a wonderful new waterfront.”

- James Corner, *design project lead, Waterfront Seattle; Principal, james corner field operations*

RESOURCES:

Generate expanded financial resources to support our strategic goals and manage the Aquarium more efficiently as a nonprofit organization.

Earned Revenue: Create attendance growth through alignment with the new Waterfront redevelopment, increased regional population, facilities refreshment and expansion, and effective marketing activities.

Systematically maintain and expand revenues from attendance, membership and visitor services.

From the 2010 800,000 annual visitation level, grow to 1.1 million by 2020, and 1.5 million by 2030.

Community Support: Build a balanced fundraising program targeted to meet 20% of the institution’s annual operating budget.

Build successful grant programs in education and research from the current rolling 5-year average of \$600,000 to \$1million by 2017.

After our major gifts and planned giving programs have matured, assess readiness to define, staff and launch an endowment campaign of a scale to provide a meaningful funding stream.

Management and Fiscal Control: Manage the Aquarium budget to produce a 5% operating surplus.

Build cash reserves to meet business seasonality and security for unforeseen risks to a level of 2-3 months operating expense, or \$2-\$3 million. As an intermediate step, obtain an operating line of credit for at least \$1 million to cover seasonal working capital requirements.

Manage the Aquarium’s business operations to improve the core operations of the Aquarium. Allocate 2-3% of operations revenue annually to refresh the facilities.

Provide the flexibility to invest in innovation, new opportunities and programs.

Future Aquarium Development

The Aquarium is actively engaged in the Central Waterfront and Elliott Bay Seawall planning process based upon replacement of the Alaskan Way Viaduct with the new SR 99 tunnel creating new public spaces along the waterfront. As these plans are clarified, the Aquarium will submit amendments to its Strategic Plan outlining its plans for facilities and growth.

In the meantime, Aquarium planning is based upon the existing Central Waterfront Master Plan which was amended by City Council Resolution 30717, adopted by Seattle City Council November 22, 2004 with the Mayor concurring. This plan provides for operation of the Aquarium on Piers 59 and 60, and expansion to the south of Pier 59 using overwater coverage now utilized by Waterfront Park.

Facilities Outlook:

Pier 59:

Redevelop the entire Western end of Pier 59 to open up the view to Elliott Bay and construct dramatic new exhibits extending our Pacific Ocean stories.

Attendance impact: potential additional growth of 250,000 visitors.

Pier 60:

Upgrade Pier 60 exhibitry for structural integrity, animal health and visitor experience coupled with appropriate marketing. Upgrade messaging and graphics in older exhibits.

Attendance impact: potential additional growth of 50,000 visitors.

Expansion beyond existing footprint:

Expand the Aquarium beyond Piers 59-60 to provide new programming and visitor capacity in keeping with the growth of the region's population and the vital new Waterfront public spaces.

Assure integration with the new Central Waterfront Plan. Tie building plans to the new shoreline and public design and spaces.

Potential additional growth of attendance to the 1.5 million visitor range.

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