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DATE: 09/13/2011

SUBJECT: Lake Superior Zoo Achieves AZA Accreditation

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Date: Tues., Sept 13, 2011

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Lake Superior Zoo achieves AZA accreditation

After five years without accreditation status, the Lake Superior Zoo was awarded accreditation by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) today.

The accolade places the zoo in the top 10 percent of zoos and aquariums in the United States. The announcement was made at the AZA conference in Atlanta, GA. The zoo's CEO, Sam Maida, and the Director of Animal Management, Peter Pruett, were in attendance.

Maida said he was delighted to see the zoo back in such prestigious standing. Having lost accreditation in 2006, Maida said the staff and community have put countless hours and resources into re-establishing a world-class zoo.

"This is a very happy and proud moment for everyone," he said. "This achievement is the result of the interest, dedication and hard work of many people. The AZA's acknowledgement of our efforts brings us not to the finish line, but to the starting line, where we begin the journey from good to great."

The zoo's Director of Animal Management, Peter Pruett, said he was honored to see the zoo recognized for its exemplary animal care and dedicated enthusiastic staff in every department of the zoo. "I couldn't think of a better way to thank and reward all the staff's efforts and the community's support than by gaining AZA accreditation," he said. "The northland community has yet another reason to proud, there's a world-class zoo they get to claim as their own."

AZA President and CEO Jim Maddy complimented the zoo, saying only "the best of the best" rise to such status. "By meeting high Association of Zoos and Aquariums Accreditation Standards, the Lake Superior Zoo has demonstrated its leadership among zoos and aquariums," he said. "We congratulate the professionals at the Lake Superior Zoo for their hard work."

To become accredited, the zoo underwent a thorough investigation to ensure it has met, and will continue to meet, ever-rising standards, which include animal care, veterinary programs, conservation, education, and safety. AZA requires zoos and aquariums to successfully complete

this rigorous accreditation process every five years in order to be members of the Association.

The accreditation process included a detailed application and a meticulous on-site inspection by a team of trained zoo and aquarium professionals. The inspection team observes all aspects of the institution's operation in areas such as animal care; keeper training; safety for visitors, staff, and animals; educational programs; conservation efforts; veterinary programs; financial stability; risk management; visitor services; and other areas. The inspection team prepares an extensive written report for AZA's independent Accreditation Commission. Finally, top officials are interviewed at a formal Commission hearing, after which accreditation is granted, tabled, or denied.

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Our mission is to provide close-up animal experiences which inspire connections to wildlife and action toward conservation in our region and around the world.