



Lake Superior Zoo Forest Discovery Zone

Legacy Proposal for FY14/15 Biennium

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



The Lake Superior Zoo is among those fortunate zoos in the country with a beautiful and diverse natural setting. Kingsbury Creek, after cascading down the hillside from the area of Proctor, meanders through zoo grounds as it makes its way to the St. Louis River. The elevated hillside adjacent to and southwest of the creek offers a changing topography complete with bedrock outcroppings, majestic mature trees, and a diverse ecosystem including a variety of plants and animals. It is nature's classroom.

The proposed Forest Discovery Zone encompasses an area of the hillside northwest of our wolf exhibit and deer yards and will make this magnificent forest available to our visitors. It will provide people of all ages, but especially children, an exciting adventure in a safe, yet natural, area. Besides the unique learning experience, we are planning on developing parallel play elements for visitors to mimic the activities of animals, such as climbing, digging, crawling through tunnels, and swinging. We envision combining the elements of education, exploration and recreation in a manner that will be fun and memorable. Through the use of animal exhibits, the natural landscape, and interpretation by our environmental educators, people will receive an experience that will help them better understand and appreciate nature as they interact with it in their daily lives.

The Forest Discovery Zone would be developed over two years and include these improvements:

- Approximately 1000 feet of new 10 foot high perimeter fencing.
- Site preparation, pathways and access.
- Restroom facilities.
- Campground and gathering area.
- Parallel play activity structures and areas.
- Exhibits and displays.
- Interpretive signage.

The WPA pavilion renovation, partially funded by Legacy grants, was impacted not directly by the flood waters, but by the overall impact of the flood. It was delayed, but will be completed this summer. As a way to connect and extend the educational programming in this building, it is proposed to construct a rope course up and through the Forest Discovery Zone. This will be a challenging experience designed for teens and adults. Besides the physical and emotional experience, it will include environmental education from a unique perspective along the course.

For nature's classroom to come alive for our visitors, the Lake Superior Zoo respectfully requests \$570,000 over the FY14/15 biennium based on estimated budget. The Forest Discovery Zone will offer our community and visitors from around the region a new and exciting way to learn about animals, forest ecosystems, and conservation. Besides connecting with the majesty of the animal kingdom, they will truly experience nature's relationship to the well-being of us all.