

— CONSERVATION/LEGISLATIVE UPDATE —

Florida HB 1117 Vetoed As Unnecessary

On 6 April 2012, Governor Rick Scott vetoed HB 1117, the Conservation of Wildlife Bill. Known as the “Jurassic Park Bill” by its critics, the proposal had been introduced early in the year by Rep. Shawn Harris. The bill would allow AZA-accredited, Florida state zoos and aquariums to lease state land, with cabinet approval, for breeding non-native species. Carnivores and primates were prohibited and the bill called for detailed disaster planning.

According to reporting by Bruce Ritchie for the *Florida Current*, the Florida Association of Zoos and Aquariums (FLAZA) had said the action was necessary to “prevent extinction of elephants, giraffes and other African herd animals by giving them space to roam.” Earlier in the year, Larry Killmar, President of FLAZA and Vice President of Lowry Park Zoo, was quoted in the *Tampa Bay Times* saying that without room for breeding populations, the zoos are “like a shoe store with no warehouse. Our inventory is everything that is on display.”

Opponents of the bill included the Florida Wildlife Federation, Defenders of Wildlife, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and Audubon of Florida. Those in opposition said that the public lands should be used to conserve native wildlife. Before Governor Scott vetoed the bill it had sailed through both the House (113 for, 2 against) and Senate (39 for, 1 against).

While critics of the bill have claimed victory the veto is not an outright refusal to have state land used for *ex-situ* conservation. In Governor Scott’s veto letter he stated “The authority sought by the bill already exists in current law and is therefore unnecessary. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund and the governing boards of the five water management districts may currently authorize the use of state-owned and district-owned lands, respectively, for any use not inconsistent with the State Constitution and Florida Statutes.”

The National Elephant Center in Florida will not be influenced by this action. The 225 acres in Indian River County are being leased from privately-owned lands, formerly citrus groves. Groundbreaking for Phase One of the National Elephant Center began early in April. The first phase will include four linking pastures which together will provide more than 20 acres for an estimated nine elephants.

Sources:

Flsenate.gov and flgov.com

Florida Current, 30 March & 6 April 2012

Tampa Bay Times, 7 April 2012

The National Elephant Center

Bad “Medicine”

Using DNA sequencing, technology researchers at Australia’s Murdoch University have found endangered animals, as well as toxic plants, contained within multiple samples from seized traditional Chinese medicines. Among the animal traces found were CITES trade-restricted species such as the Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) and saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*), the latter of which is listed as critically endangered on the IUCN red list.

Source: *Nutrition Horizon*, 16 April 2012



Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*)



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