

## SAFE Frequency Asked Questions February 2018

### ***How is the transition of SAFE to a member-led program going?***

The transition is happening! We have four new SAFE Species and members are pulling together colleagues and developing proposals for more. We are working with the original “SAFE Signature Species” to make sure they have the appropriate leadership team in place so they can develop their next three-year plan using the new format and will be doing a workshop at the midyear meeting to help both them and the new species programs think about their leadership. All of the programs will be using the member-led format by the beginning of 2019.

### ***Can you summarize the process for us?***

To become a SAFE Species, “program partners” with at least two years’ experience working with the species/taxa work together on a single submission to propose a SAFE species. If the proposal meets the eligibility criteria, the program partners will develop a 3-year plan for AZA SAFE activities that include measurable field conservation and public engagement objectives. AZA SAFE program teams will also include non-AZA stakeholders, including both national and international stakeholders.

### ***Where can I get the proposal materials if I am interested in working with others to start a new program? Who can propose a SAFE species?***

Download a proposal form and related information from AZA’s SAFE Species [webpage](#)

Any two AZA members can work together to propose a SAFE species program. These members should have conducted, or supported, conservation work on the target species or group of related taxa for a minimum of two years. They should also be committed to advancing an existing recovery or conservation plan as well as increasing AZA member involvement in the conservation of the species to at least five AZA member organizations. While the Program Leader must be an individual AZA member, the programs will work with a diverse set of collaborators that may include private entities, government agencies, other NGOs, universities, etc.

### ***What are the criteria for a SAFE species?***

- Two or more AZA facilities (with a goal of increasing to five or more)
- A focus on endangered or threatened species, listed internationally or in the range country(ies)
- An existing recovery or conservation action plan has been developed for the species
- Partners are committed to develop a program plan focused on projects with clearly articulated measurable, specific conservation and public engagement outcomes
- Partners commit to re-examine and update their program plans every three years, to evaluate, adjust, and maintain progress. Program plans can be adapted within the three-year period, as conditions warrant.

### ***How do I get involved if I don’t want to start a new SAFE program? Can I get involved in existing programs? How?***

Yes! In a nutshell, go to the AZA [website](#) and contact the program leader for that species.

All SAFE Species programs are listed on the AZA website, as are proposed SAFE Species programs under review by the Field Conservation Committee (FCC). The program leaders are also identified on the website. If a program already has completed a 3-year plan, then that will be available for you to explore the program’s goals and which priority projects have been identified. You can assess what might be a good fit for your institution and your staff. If the SAFE Species program is relatively new, the website will have information about the date when the program plan is expected—or you can contact the program leader.

***What has SAFE accomplished – is it making progress? What about the vaquita program?***

- Yes, it is making great progress! Read through the [2016](#) and [2017](#) SAFE Annual Reports to follow the progress made to date.
- There are plans available for six SAFE Species –African penguins, cheetahs, giraffe, sharks and rays, western pond turtles, and vaquita, with more to be submitted before AZA's 2018 Mid-Year Meeting. Each of the teams working on these species would welcome additional colleagues to come onboard.
- There has been a great deal of public engagement work – we promoted 17 public Focus Days in 2017; and more than 6 million viewers were reached through the Facebook Live Marathon with Animal Planet.
- There are a number of examples that show our progress in the wild. Through the Invest in the Nest Kickstarter campaign, we raised enough money to produce over 2,000 artificial nests for African penguins. The nest project was featured on an episode of Sea Rescue in February.
- In 2017, we raised over \$1 million for vaquita that helped support a heroic effort to save this species – and we haven't given up. Furthermore, our contribution helped convince the Mexican government to provide an additional \$3 million for the effort.

As we know, species conservation is not a guarantee. Although we know that the rescue effort was ultimately not successful at maintaining vaquita in human care, it wasn't for want of trying. Thanks to the support from AZA, an amazing team was put together that included **the** experts from around the world. If this team couldn't do it, nobody could. Never before had vaquita been safely captured nor transported, and the team accomplished these and many other firsts. But we haven't given up – the SAFE program continues to work on other measures to help save vaquita and has led to an unprecedented partnership among zoos, aquariums, agencies and other conservation groups – all working together. Although we may yet be unsuccessful at saving the vaquita, the bottom line is that if we didn't try, would we still be able to look at ourselves in the mirror?

***How are the SAFE Founders Circle funds being used?***

- SAFE Founder's Circle funds supported the development of the action plans for five of the original SAFE species but not implementation of those plans. Some limited, unrestricted FC funds will also be used to transition some of the additional original SAFE Species programs into the new SAFE model, but again, will not be used for project plan implementation. Implementation of the action plans created by the SAFE project teams has primarily been supported by donations from AZA institutions, along with limited corporate and crowd-sourced funds.
- Most of the funds are being used to develop and implement the national communication effort, which will incorporate content from the SAFE Species programs and help tell the great stories of our zoo and aquarium members' conservation efforts.

***Will AZA be raising money for the projects?***

- Project teams will drive fundraising for implementing their program plans, but AZA will help by providing consulting support and related training. AZA will also continue to pursue strategic fundraising opportunities – like we did with the Kickstarter campaign for African penguins.
- And it's not just the project team raising funds – but also their institutions. If a zoo or aquarium is a program partner for one or more SAFE Species, we hope the organization will engage their development (and marketing, and education, and public relations, and front line) teams to make those species' conservation a priority.

***What specialties do you want on Program Teams? Is it limited to people with conservation and science backgrounds?***

One of the goals of SAFE is to increase engagement in conservation across our entire community; SAFE is intended to be truly multidisciplinary. We hope that the program teams include representatives from diverse backgrounds – from animal programs, public relations, marketing, education, fundraising, professional development and more – both from member zoos and aquariums and from AZA committees.

***When is the deadline to propose a SAFE Species program?***

Proposals will be reviewed by the Field Conservation Committee as they are received. Each submission will be assigned an FCC Liaison to shepherd the proposal through the review process, ask follow-up questions or provide feedback to submitters, and to assure that a decision on the proposal is made within two months of submission. The three-year Program Plan is due to the FCC Liaison six months after approval of the proposal.

***Why would I create a SAFE Species program?***

The primary benefits for creating a SAFE Species program include:

- Clear opportunities for member involvement in meaningful, collaborative field conservation
- SAFE Species are AZA’s conservation stories
- Structural elements appeal to donors
  - Clear vision and process
  - Strong measures of success
  - Ties to larger conservation movement
  - Number of partners
- Multiple AZA partners may be leveraged to increase financial and in-kind support
- Access to training and best practices, raising conservation skills across AZA community
- Conservation planning assistance provided by staff and leveraged from members
- Short-term Program Plan linked to existing recovery plans will increase success

***How is AZA planning to measure whether the SAFE program is a success, i.e. whether this program is leading us toward real conservation impact?***

We will know that SAFE is successful by assessing it in three ways: by evidence that we have halted or slowed the decline of SAFE species, by demonstrating that we have activated the public on critical conservation issues, and by increasing understanding of AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums in conservation.

More specifically, we have developed a set of Measures of Success that we want to detect in the SAFE program in 5 years, and in 10 years, in addition to having meaningful stories to tell about SAFE Species each year:

*Measures of Success 2017–2022*

- ❖ 100% of members involved in field conservation
- ❖ Contribute >\$1 billion to support field conservation
- ❖ Partners/stakeholders inspired to contribute additional \$1 billion+
- ❖ 30+ SAFE Species
- ❖ AZA community works together for conservation
- ❖ AZA members recognized as leading conservation organizations
- ❖ Increased support from those zoos and aquariums with the SAFE species under their care

*Measures of Success 2023–2028*

- ❖ Contribute >\$1.5 billion to field conservation
- ❖ Partners/stakeholders inspired to contribute additional \$1.5 billion+
  - A 10-year field conservation investment >\$5 billion
- ❖ Field conservation is a cultural norm and professional obligation for AZA members
- ❖ 50+ SAFE Species
- ❖ Demonstrated conservation impacts for SAFE Species
- ❖ Increase in conservation involvement of zoos and aquariums with the species under their direct care
- ❖ A shift in positive public opinion about member aquariums and zoos
- ❖ Increased support from those zoos and aquariums with the SAFE species under their care

***What happens if multiple facilities apply for the same species?***

- SAFE was created in part because data showed a lot of uncoordinated conservation effort across the AZA community, which decreased both efficiency and efficacy.

- We encourage members to see if a program for their species of interest already exists and, if not, to network their colleagues to see if others are thinking of proposing that species. Together, we hope they connect with a recovery plan that allows each partner to contribute their own expertise.
- This is also a responsibility at the director level. We're asking that directors post about their interest and engagement in SAFE Species in the director's community within the AZA Network and talk with one another as their institutions begin thinking about proposing a SAFE species.
- It's also a director's responsibility to help their teams think collaboratively. This is an opportunity for directors to be engaged, to help our conservation professionals be inclusive. Directors have the obligation to play a leadership role in inclusivity.
- It is possible there will be times when multiple programs exist for the same species (e.g., if multiple countries have national recovery plans being implemented), but we expect this to be the exception rather than the rule, and encourage collaboration to maximize impact. Even species whose ranges include multiple countries may still be best served by a single program if the primary threats are the same throughout the range.
- As a community, we want to prioritize the most important and urgent species along with the most effective conservation actions; we also want to make sure we don't spread ourselves so thin so that we are not able to make real impact, so collaboration is key.

***Does SAFE allow for a taxonomic approach, rather than species-specific?***

Absolutely. One current example exists is sharks and rays, where the plan addresses threats that impact a number of shark and ray species, rather than just one. African vultures is a new SAFE species program and developed their program plan around a multi-species action plan for African-Eurasian vultures that will focus on a number of African vulture species and includes members that have worked in an array of African countries on vulture conservation.

***Does SAFE allow for policy actions and not just direct, on the ground, field efforts? Does policy count as field conservation?***

Any actions linked to a recovery plan are appropriate for consideration, and we fully recognize that some actions may be policy related – think ivory or shark fin bans, local light ordinances along sea turtle nesting coasts, etc. Policy and advocacy directly related to a species' conservation has always been recognized and included in AZA's annual field conservation survey.

***Is SAFE still "big and bold"?***

- SAFE is now even bolder than it was when we first described it to the membership in late 2014 – we are talking about a cultural shift and a professional obligation. These shifts could revolutionize our entire community, as well as the perception of us by the general public, government agencies, academics, and the larger conservation community. As such, we could be key drivers to conservation.
- We have identified 5 and 10-year measures of progress that are achievable – and could even be blown away if we keep our eyes on the goal – and could bring tremendous resources and energy to conservation.
- We are growing SAFE and bringing more species into the mix, offering a greater diversity of opportunities for engagement and making it easier for all members to become involved in an effort that connects their individual missions and priorities – *their stories* – to the stories of an array of species.
- The focus on strategic planning, collaboration, and capacity building will grow conservation throughout our community, so that we are less reliant on the leadership of a few and can honestly speak to a community-wide commitment.
- For the first time, in 2016 the AZA community contributed crossed the \$200 million threshold for conservation. We want to maintain and grow that commitment - we have established goals of contributing \$1 billion over five years, and leveraging another \$1 billion from partners. And then in the following five years, we have established even greater goals - \$1.5 billion, and then \$1.5 billion being leveraged. This would allow us to say that AZA zoos and aquariums have contributed \$5 billion dollars over ten years – something for which any conservation organization would be proud.