



THE ELEPHANT MANAGERS ASSOCIATION
300 Parkside Avenue, Buffalo NY 14214-1999

January 29, 2010

St. Lucie County Board of Commissioners

Dear Commissioners,

We are writing to express our concern over the conditions imposed by the St. Lucie County Board of Commissioners on the site plan for the National Elephant Center (TNEC) in response to activist pressure to place a ban on the use of elephant guides in the proposed elephant facility.

The Elephant Managers Association (EMA) is an international nonprofit organization of professional elephant handlers, administrators, veterinarians, researchers and elephant enthusiasts. The EMA is dedicated to elephant welfare through communication, husbandry, research, education and conservation. Further, our membership is heavily populated with individual members and institutional members from the facilities who support the development of TNEC and would seek to utilize it to benefit their elephants in the future. Many of these elephants are managed under established and approved techniques and programs, which utilize the training guide as a regular part of their management.

For many years, the EMA has worked tirelessly with state and federal regulatory agencies, as well as professional organizations such as the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians (AAZV), and the American Veterinarian Medical Association (AVMA), on matters relating to elephant care and management. It is our strong opinion that the action by the St. Lucie County Board of Commissioners runs counter to years of work and efforts by professionals to promote and ensure responsible elephant management.

This action will also open the door to further uninformed and baseless attacks on an animal profession from extremist groups who have demonstrated no real knowledge about how to provide for the well being of elephants in a professional capacity. These activist groups seek to abolish any use of animals in all areas such as, for the benefit of research (i.e. medical), human consumption and even household pets. By allowing these groups to dictate the management of zoological institutions, the Commissioners may also have to concede in regulations of the cattle or any animal industry in St. Lucie County.

St. Lucie County's ill advised decision to require a ban on elephant guides also ignores the existing, and widely accepted, professional industry standards such as the EMA Guidelines for Elephant Care and Management, the EMA supported Elephant Husbandry Resource Guide, an elephant care manual published by the International Elephant Foundation, the AVMA policy statement regarding the use of guides and tethers, and federal regulations under the Animal Welfare Act – which all support the training guide as one of many species specific

management tools. With respect to techniques or tools used in the management of elephants, guides are safe, humane, and professionally acceptable for use in responsible elephant management. For the St. Lucie Board of Commissioners to imply otherwise is professionally offensive to the EMA members who successfully and expertly care for elephants every day.

We urge the St. Lucie Board of Commissioners to reconsider its position in light of the information presented by the elephant and zoological community. We are available to answer any questions and provide additional information that might assist in your review of this matter

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Smith", with a long, sweeping underline.

Andrew Smith
President

EMA Board of Directors:
Joanne Smith, Perris, CA
Jessica Scallan, Tulsa, OK
Mike McClure, Baltimore, MD
Harry Peachey, Columbus, OH