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DATE 11/11/2020

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## **Rhinos at San Antonio Zoo Now Exploring Giraffe Savanna Doubling the Size of The Savanna**

It's been nearly 6 years in the making and the first time in the zoo's 106-year history. In early 2015 the zoo was redesigning 'The Savanna' where giraffes, zebras, and other African species now call home. The long-term plan for the habitat was always to introduce the rhinos to the entire savanna. The giraffe savanna project is one of many transformations the zoo has undergone in recent years and opened in the fall of 2015. Following on the "hoofs" of the reimagined savanna for giraffes in 2018, the rhino savanna was expanded and renovated, creating more than double the space rhinos previously had access to roam at San Antonio Zoo.

In between the two savanna habitats and nearly hidden in the historic walls is 'The Savanna Crossing' as the zoo now calls it. This connection point has been used for decades for vehicle access, but in 2015, new zoo CEO Tim Morrow asked the question that changed the area's long-term plan. He asked, "What if we just leave those doors open and allow the animals on each side to roam back and forth." The rest, as they say, is now history.

Earlier this week, after much planning, design, construction, and most importantly, training, both rhinos passed through 'The Savanna Crossing' into the giraffe savanna for the very first time. While very cautious and just peeking in on Monday, Reyna and West had explored the entire area by Tuesday. The giraffes, Alan, Cosmo, and Brayden watched the rhinos from inside their giraffe barn yard area, along with two ostriches. The rhinos got into the pool, which was strategically built with broad stairs specifically with rhinos in mind, then spent the day exploring the habitat, even coming nose to nose with the giraffes and nose to beak with the ostriches. Each of the species seemed very curious about their new savanna mates, and overall introductions went well. Zebras have been moving back and forth between the giraffe and rhino habitats since summer of 2018, acclimating to both species and areas.

"We've been patiently but excitedly waiting for this day for over five years. We're hopeful that these introductions will continue to be successful and that soon guests will see rhinos, giraffes, zebras, cranes, storks, ostriches, and more species roaming together," said Tim Morrow,

President & CEO San Antonio Zoo. "Creating larger and more natural habitats has been our focus as we continue to modernize the zoo; this new habitat concept provides multiple species more space to roam, on top of rhino habitat expansion which had previously doubled their own space."

Guests visiting the zoo in the coming weeks will have the best opportunity to view rhinos in the giraffe savanna in the mornings. The zoo will be giving constant updates on their social media channels.

Morrow added, "We speak almost daily about respecting the past but forging the future of the zoo and these creative ways of connecting habitats within historic walls is a great example of that."

#### About San Antonio Zoo

San Antonio Zoo®, operated by San Antonio Zoological Society is a non-profit organization committed to securing a future for wildlife. Through its passion and expertise in animal care, conservation, and education, the zoo's mission is to inspire its community to love, engage with, act for and protect animals and the places they live. The zoo welcomes more than a million visitors each year and is open year-round. San Antonio Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Zoological Association of America, and Humane Certified by American Humane.

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