



# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **SHEDD EMBARKS ON MAJOR TRANSFORMATION OF OCEANARIUM, AQUARIUM**

*Engaging Animal Programs, World Class Exhibits, New Guest Amenities Top Renovation Plans*

**CHICAGO (May 21, 2008)** – Today Shedd Aquarium shared exciting new details about the major renovation planned for the Oceanarium, its popular 17-year-old marine mammal habitat. Shedd officials presented the highlights of the transformation to complete scheduled routine maintenance, enhance guests' experience, create engaging exhibits, offer impactful educational programs and make the quality of Shedd's superb animal care even better.

During this transformation, the Oceanarium will temporarily close for nine months after the Labor Day weekend (Sept. 2), and is scheduled to re-open in early summer 2009; however, the Aquarium will remain open during the renovation time period. *Wild Reef*, *Amazon Rising*, the Caribbean Reef, Waters of the World in the original Aquarium, the Great Lakes Invasive Species exhibit, and the 4-D Theater, which anchor the Shedd experience, will also reveal new wonders, some of which have never been seen before at Shedd.

"Shedd's Oceanarium is one of the most successful conservation-based marine mammal facilities in the world. While we remain committed to the very essence of the Oceanarium experience, the renovations allow us to further strengthen our commitment to being the preeminent aquarium in the world," said Ted Beattie, President and CEO of Shedd Aquarium. "We are making the Oceanarium and Aquarium enhancements to provide an even better quality of life for the animals in our care, to better connect people with animals and to make a visit to Shedd even easier and more enjoyable for our visitors."

For the first time since its opening in 1991, major renovations will be made to the popular, 3-million-gallon saltwater Oceanarium. All five pools will be recoated, animal habitats will receive routine maintenance, and the latest technology in animal life support, heating and cooling systems will be installed. During this nine-month process, the beluga whales, Pacific white-sided dolphins and other animals will be temporarily relocated to partnering aquariums and zoos accredited by the same organizations that accredit Shedd: the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA). To ensure consistency of care, Shedd trainers will live with the belugas, dolphins and other animals while they are at their temporary homes in other cities.

"Animal care is the top priority at Shedd Aquarium and this is a tremendous opportunity to raise the bar even higher when it comes to caring for our beloved animals," said Ken Ramirez, vice president of animal collections and training at the Aquarium, who was brought in to oversee the marine mammal program when the Oceanarium was first built. "Usually after a major exhibit is built, people often ask if you had the chance to do it over again what would you do. I can honestly say 'not much' when it comes to our successful Oceanarium, but this is a unique

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chance to further enhance our habitats and guest experiences to guarantee that the Oceanarium remains one of the premier marine mammal facilities in the world.”

During the Oceanarium’s temporary hiatus, Shedd will introduce new features and elements to enhance the aquarium-going experience for visitors. The award-winning shark exhibit, *Wild Reef*; *Amazon Rising*; the Caribbean Reef; Waters of the World; the Great Lakes Invasive Species exhibit; and Chicago’s only 4-D Theater will have brand new elements to discover. A mesmerizing dive presentation will be conducted in the shark habitat of *Wild Reef*. The animal encounters program will expand and introduce new animals throughout the original galleries, giving guests unique up-close experiences. Rare behind-the-scenes tours of the Aquarium will be available and visitors can participate in an innovative interactive program called “Aquist for a Day.” Guests will rediscover their favorite parts of the Aquarium, from quirky sea turtle Nickel swimming in Caribbean Reef to the Aquarium’s veteran crowd-pleaser, Granddad, the oldest living fish in a public aquarium in the world.

Construction plans for the \$50 million Oceanarium renovation are already in motion. Crews are currently installing an elevator in the north lobby of the Aquarium. Also in the original Aquarium, Shedd will add a guest services suite in the main foyer, complete with new restrooms, lockers, a nursing station, family washroom and expanded membership space. Round-the-clock concierge service will also be provided. To accommodate large school groups, a new group entrance and orientation center on South Terrace will be introduced called Group Gateway. Enhancements to the Aquarium’s food services will also be made to increase seating capacity and improve ambiance.

In addition to providing the best to its guests, Shedd is making improvements to create the best for the environment, equipping the building with new green features and conservation elements. Staff offices certified as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) are being constructed in one central location to free up more than 20,000 additional square feet for expanded future guest areas, exhibit and program space. Additional green streaks include plans to amplify Shedd’s Great Lakes Conservation Initiative and *Listen to Your Lakes* public awareness campaign with eco-friendly education programs and activities. For instance, to affirm its Congressional designation as a Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center, Shedd is in the early stages of developing Great Lakes exhibits and programming, further expanding its commitment to protect the Great Lakes.

For 78 years, the John G. Shedd Aquarium has lived its mission to connect the public to the living world, striving to inspire guests to make a difference. Since 1991, nearly 33 million have experienced Shedd’s dedication to education and conservation by visiting the Oceanarium. These exciting changes and renovations will galvanize Shedd’s commitment to its beloved animals and millions of visitors from all over the world. Detailed plans for this significant renovation will be revealed later this summer, before the Oceanarium temporarily closes on Sept. 2, 2008. Regular updates and information about the transformation are available at [www.sheddaquarium.org](http://www.sheddaquarium.org).

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*Shedd Aquarium is supported by the people of Chicago and the State of Illinois.  
Shedd Aquarium is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the  
Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums.*