

NEWS RELEASE

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Virginia Aquarium CEO Elected to WAZA Council

Virginia Beach, VA – The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) announced their 2023-2025 council elections which includes Cynthia Whitbred-Spanoulis, president and CEO of the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center. Seventy one percent of WAZA members voted from a pool of 34 candidates. In the final count, 15 members were elected for council, with their term starting on October 12, 2023.

“I am thrilled the Virginia Aquarium’s recently adopted strategic plan outlines our vision; to be a driver in conservation, education, tourism, and sustainability, leading the charge to save wildlife and their ecosystems; and serving on the WAZA board will allow us to broaden our reach and build partnerships and relationship with the world’s leading zoos and aquariums,” said Cynthia Whitbred-Spanoulis. “I look forward to serving in this new capacity and continuing to share our dedication for animal welfare, conservation, and sustainability.”

WAZA is the global alliance of regional associations, national federations, and zoos and aquariums, dedicated to the care and conservation of animals and their habitats around the world. The WAZA council helps lead the organization’s vision and promote cooperation between leading zoos and aquariums. With 400 members around the world, WAZA encourages the highest standard of husbandry and commits its member to tackle global issues such as the illegal wildlife trade, coral-reef restoration, marine litter, sustainable palm oil and climate change.

Whitbred-Spanoulis has been with the City of Virginia Beach since 1996, serving as the President and CEO of the Virginia Aquarium since 2017. Prior service includes her role as Deputy Director of the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center and City of Virginia Beach History Museums, and her service with the Department of Aquarium and Museums. Additionally, Whitbred-Spanoulis was the Strategy and Performance Coordinator for the City of Virginia Beach’s Department of Economic Development. In that role, she was responsible for the coordination, marketing, media advertising, public relations, budgeting, and special projects within the department.

Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center

The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. The Aquarium is also a member of World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The Virginia Aquarium's mission is to connect people to the marine environment, inspiring a more sustainable future. It is located at 717 General Booth Boulevard, just south of Rudee Inlet in Virginia Beach.

The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, supports the work of the Virginia Aquarium. The Foundation procures and maintains the Aquarium's exhibits, including the animals and habitats. It is also responsible for annual and capital fundraising, administration and funding for the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Program, conservation and scientific research efforts, and the Aquarium's mission-related education programs. You can be a part of our mission by making a [tax-deductible donation](#) to support our programming.

About WAZA

Since 1935, the goal of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) has been to guide, encourage and support the zoos, aquariums and like-minded organizations of the world in animal care and welfare, environmental education and global conservation.

WAZA is the global alliance of regional associations, national federations, zoos and aquariums, dedicated to the care and conservation of animals and their habitats around the world. The membership consists of nearly 400 leading institutions and organizations around the world, and this number continues to grow.

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