

NEWS RELEASE

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Virginia Aquarium Challenges Virginia Zoo for Plastic Free July

Virginia Beach, VA - The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center has challenged the Virginia Zoo to a friendly competition to raise awareness of Plastic Free July, encouraging the community to take small steps to reduce personal plastic waste.

The Virginia Aquarium and Virginia Zoo will compete for the most points earned by their team's efforts to reduce their plastic use. A cooperative effort, members of the public are invited to join by signing up for either the [Aquarium](#) or [Zoo](#) team on PlasticFree.Ecochallenge.org. Starting in July, participants should record their actions online daily, such as ditching the plastic straw, switching to paper grocery bags, or refilling reusable water bottles. The participant who earns the most points on each team will win a behind-the-scenes tour at their team's facility!

Each week participants will be challenged with a different action.

Week One: While celebrating July 4th, avoid plastics items by using bamboo plates, utensils, and straws. Items like these can be found at local grocery stores or online.

Week Two: Use refillable water bottles and cups. Save money and the planet by avoiding buying plastic bottles and drinks.

Week Three: When grocery shopping, use reusable bags. Be mindful of the number of plastics used in packaging your grocery products. Support companies and products that use recycled packaging.

Week Four: Celebrate with bubbles not balloons at your next event. Balloons pollute and can be fatal for wildlife if ingested.

Week Five: Avoid using straws at a restaurant (bring a reusable one or decline the plastic straw). Bring your own reusable container for leftovers instead of the restaurant single-use plastic containers.

With a mission to inspire a more sustainable future, the Virginia Aquarium has participated in Plastic Free July since 2018. As a plastic-bottle and straw-free facility, the Aquarium is committed to reducing its environmental footprint by eliminating single use items and ensuring any plastic items used have a second life, from recycling personal protective equipment (PPE), such as booties and gloves, to recycling chip bags and candy wrappers. A recent example is the repurposed billboard and wetsuit products that are available for sale in the [Aquarium's store](#). The Aquarium's plastic packaging from retail and café areas is recycled and made into benches guests can enjoy during their visit. The Aquarium also engages in comprehensive composting programs, including onsite and offsite composting of animal food waste, food scraps, and café packaging.

The Virginia Aquarium is focused on keeping its carbon footprint as light as possible and has joined forces with 26 other aquariums across the United States in a commitment to become carbon neutral by the year 2045.

[Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center](#)

The [Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center's](#) mission is to connect people to the marine environment, inspiring a more sustainable future. The Aquarium aspires to be a driver in conservation, education, tourism, and sustainability, leading the charge to save wildlife and their ecosystems. Owned by the City of Virginia Beach, the Aquarium operates as a city department in partnership with the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation. The Aquarium is proud to be an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquarium, and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

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.

Virginia Zoo

The Virginia Zoo, located in Norfolk, Virginia, is home to more than 700 exceptional animals representing over 150 fascinating species. Founded in 1901 and residing on 53 beautifully landscaped acres, the Virginia Zoo has demonstrated a commitment to saving and protecting the world's wildlife by inspiring a passion for nature and taking conservation action at home and around the world. The Virginia Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is recognized as a global leader in education, recreation, science, wildlife conservation, and animal care and welfare. For more than a century, the Zoo has connected adults, families and school children with the natural world and its wildlife. To learn more, visit virginiazoo.org.

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