



Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium



Omaha, Nebraska

Climate Action Plan spurs organizational alignment

Project Summary

We're proud to have worked with Nebraska's largest tourist destination for the past twelve years. In 2023, we created the Zoo's first Climate Action Plan that combined both mitigation and climate adaptation strategies into a dynamic and flexible plan. The Climate Action Plan incorporated input from several sources, including but not limited to Zoo staff from all levels, best practices at other zoos, site visits, and energy, water, and waste data. Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium has a long history of prioritizing sustainability, and we were thrilled to lead this participatory process helping ideate a more sustainable and climate resilient future.

Our work with the Zoo started in 2012 with the Zoo's first Sustainability Master Plan. Once the Master Plan was finalized, we turned our attention to implementation and engagement, which has kept us and our key stakeholders at the Zoo busy. We won grants to ramp up recycling efforts, conduct a composting study, and install a solar photovoltaic system. We also helped the Zoo set up a Green Revolving Fund and have supported multiple operational energy efficiency upgrades through the Energy and Water Management Team.

SERVICES PROVIDED

- Climate Action Plan
- Energy & Sustainability Action Plan
- Staff & Visitor Engagement
- Online Pledge Tool
- Online Dashboard Tool
- Revolving Loan Fund Design
- Climate and Sustainability Strategy Implementation
- Grant Writing
- Solar Photovoltaic Project Management
- Climate Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment
- Sustainability Executive Governance Facilitation

PROJECT DETAILS

Date: 2012 – Present

[Sustainability Progress Dashboard](#)

Challenges

1. As a community leader, the Zoo needs to communicate its climate ambitions to an audience unfamiliar with the impacts of climate change.
2. The Zoo has had significant leadership changes in recent years, with the majority of the senior leadership team stepping into new roles.
3. Without a dedicated sustainability coordinator on staff, the Zoo needed an outside partner to hold the center on sustainability strategy and efforts.

Solutions

1. In order to communicate effectively about climate change, we worked with Zoo leadership to use language from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) that is based in science and data.
2. As a long term partner of the Zoo, Verdis Group has met frequently with new leadership to discuss the role of sustainability at the Zoo and provide historical context.
3. We have leveraged the time and talents of staff from across the Zoo to help fill the role of one sustainability coordinator through facilitated discussions, as well as with the Sustainability Leadership Committee.

“ By making it a point to prioritize sustainability in our organizational practices, we can lead by example in our community. We're grateful to have Verdis as a partner in helping us achieve these important goals.”

- Jason Herrick, Vice President of Conservation and Science, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium

Impact

As a result of our collaboration, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium received the Green Award in 2021 from AZA in recognition of their incredible sustainability successes to date. The Zoo benefits from \$800,000 in estimated annual savings and \$200,000 in new grants obtained.

As part of its conservation mission, the Zoo is saving energy and water and reducing waste. These efforts go beyond simple economic savings. With these strategies, the Zoo is creating a healthy planet for animals and people for generations to come.

Our Expertise in the Zoo and Aquarium Industry

Zoos and aquariums are adopting sustainability goals at a record pace. Verdis is committed to guiding inclusive processes that accelerate climate action at zoos and aquariums, as we have done for over a decade. Our clients include Dallas Zoo, St. Louis Zoo, Seattle Aquarium, National Aquarium, and dozens more. Verdis is a commercial member of the AZA and WAZA, with Steering Committee representation on AZA's Green Scientific Advisory Group. Verdis has presented at national AZA conferences for over 6 years. The strategic tools we provide to zoos and aquariums include executive engagement, baselining, benchmarking, planning, implementation, and our Net Zero Pathway. We also partner with the Aquarium Conservation Partnership to offer sustainability services to its members.

To learn more, visit verdisgroup.com or connect with us at info@verdisgroup.com.