



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Chris Jacobs

## Jacobs, Buffalo Zoo Announce Launch of Reptile House Renovation

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(Buffalo, NY) – New York State Senator Chris Jacobs, Buffalo Zoo President & CEO Nora Fletchall, and Board Chairman Jonathan Dandes announced the beginning of construction on the Donna M. Fernandes Amphibian and Reptile Center (A.R.C.).

Fundraising for the \$3.7 million project began in 2015. A significant allocation of state dollars that Jacobs was able to secure completed the fundraising campaign. Zoo officials said they

are now ready to break ground and the Reptile House is closed until construction is complete.

“The Buffalo Zoo is a tremendous regional asset that I am privileged to have in my district, and I am very pleased to have secured the \$150,000 needed to complete the funding for the new Amphibian and Reptile Center,” said Senator Jacobs. “This new facility will add to the Zoo’s reputation as a world class destination and I look forward to its opening next year.”

Originally built in 1942 by Marlin Perkins, the Zoo’s Reptile House was deemed the finest in the nation when it opened. With its infrastructure and animal exhibits dating back to the 1940s, it is time for some much need upgrades. Renovations will include a new roof, heating and ventilation systems, several new and renovated naturalistic habitats, and interactive education elements. This update to the building is a way for the Zoo to preserve much of the innovative exhibit design that Marlin Perkins had built with the original Reptile House while also recognizing the importance of and need for modernization.

“We are grateful to the State of New York and to Senator Jacobs for securing \$150,000 of state funding towards this much needed project,” said Buffalo Zoo President/CEO, Norah Fletchall. “This funding, along with the generous support of many other private donors will allow us to continue to highlight reptile and amphibian species, including those native to our region.”

Zoo officials also noted their excitement about bringing new species to Buffalo with the completion of the renovations. Among the new species will be the largest living lizard in the world, the Komodo dragon, and the longest venomous snake found in the Western Hemisphere, the Bushmaster. These new habitats provide the highly specialized combination of temperature, lighting, humidity, and structures needed for these species to thrive. Emphasis will be placed on mixed species exhibits, such as the Ecuadorian Stream

and Australian Stream where many different species of reptiles, amphibians, and even fish will live together. The project will enable the Zoo to continue with vital conservation efforts involving hellbenders, Puerto Rican crested toads, and Panamanian golden frogs, to name a few.

With demolition slated to start in May, the Buffalo Zoo also thanked Canisius College for helping house the Zoo's current amphibian and reptile collection. Animals are also taking up residence at the Zoo's Veterinary Hospital and Education Building until renovations are complete. The project is estimated to reach completion in the late Spring of 2019.