



Aquarium collection sustainability - planning for the future

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Public aquariums and zoos exhibit over 3 500 fish and aquatic invertebrate species. In 2011, North American aquariums alone held over 424 500 individual fishes and invertebrates. Acquiring these animals from the wild is logistically difficult and expensive and new legislation requires compliance with ever more permits and procedures. To address the sustainable acquisition of animals by North American aquariums, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) established the Aquatic Collection Sustainability Committee.

The Committee has completed an action plan that outlines both issues and actions that should be taken to ensure the viability and sustainability of aquatic collections. Actions include working with government agencies, setting priorities for sourcing species, working with artisanal fisheries, improving breeding techniques, ensuring that fish feed is sustainable, and encouraging aquarium management to support these efforts.

An approved list of sustainable suppliers of wild and cultured aquatic animals is being developed to assist AZA members. The action plan is also being adopted by AZA zoos and by the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and is being considered the European Association of Zoos and Aquariums. This should encourage collaboration in the acquisition and conservation of species by aquariums and zoos.