



## **The difficulties of building world-class aquariums simultaneously and assessing Korean aquarium industry**

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For 25 years after the first aquarium opened in Korea in 1985, only two more aquariums were introduced. Recently steady economic growth has resulted in more aquariums being opened. Yeosu Expo Seaworld opens in May 2012 and is South Korea's first world-class aquarium, featuring 350 species and 33,000 animals including Beluga Whales. It is followed by Jeju Ocean Life Park in July 2012, featuring 450 species and 42,000 animals including Whale Sharks.

Opening these two aquariums almost simultaneously has been a huge challenge, especially with limited manpower and resources. It has required efficient management of staff, thorough planning, regularly monitoring, tight budgeting, and good communication. The Korean aquarium industry has been isolated from the global aquarium community, but now with five aquariums and more opening in the next few years, the industry is ready to take play a more significant role in the international community and participate in conservation activities. We are making our improved infrastructure count by educating students and informing the general public through rich programmes. Through research cooperation and sharing programmes, we hope to step into the international community and ultimately play significant roles.