



Contact: Brianne Barrett
marlo marketing/communications
617-375-9700

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stone Zoo Begins Construction on New Black Bear Exhibit *Two rescued black bears will go on exhibit Memorial Day weekend*

Stoneham, MA; February 11, 2008 – Stone Zoo is excited to announce the construction of a black bear exhibit, which will be the new home to two adolescent black bears from Tennessee. The exhibit, which is being designed to replicate the bear’s natural habitat, is scheduled to open Memorial Day weekend.

Zoo New England’s Stone Zoo is entering a period of dramatic growth – one that will build on this beloved institution’s rich history, while transforming this “local gem” into a leading example of what a modern zoo can, and should, be. Stone Zoo is taking a big step forward toward reaching this goal with the new black bear exhibit.

The exhibit will be located on the same site that was previously home to Stone Zoo’s beloved polar bear, Major, who passed away in 2000. Zoo New England is building a naturalistic habitat for the black bears – using the foundation of Major’s former home, filling in the moats and creating an engaging and stimulating space for the bears. The exhibit is located within the zoo’s Yukon Creek section, an area of the zoo highlighting North American animals including bald eagles, Canada lynx, gray fox and porcupine.

The bears are two-year-old brothers that join Stone Zoo from the Appalachian Bear Rescue (ABR) in Tennessee. The bears’ care is being managed by the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA), which oversees the permit of ABR for rehabilitating bears for release back into the wild. Both bears were confiscated as cubs in the state of Georgia in 2006. Soon after arriving at ABR, it was determined that the bears could not be rehabilitated for release back into the wild. If a suitable home had not been found for the two bears, they would have been euthanized.

“We are pleased to be able to provide a home to these two black bears at Stone Zoo. New England has a large population of black bears in the wild and the separation between their habitat and ours is shrinking. By building this new exhibit and giving a much-needed home to these bears, we hope to educate people about these incredible animals and the ecosystem we all share,” said John Linehan, President and CEO of Zoo New England.

The two bears, which weigh approximately 250 pounds, are part of a species whose overall wild population is stable at this time. According to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Bear Taxon Advisory Group, a moratorium has been issued on all captive breeding of the black bear species in AZA facilities in order to encourage zoos to accept “rescued” bears in place of expanding

the captive-born population. The highest priority in placing bears is given to orphaned cubs held by appropriate government agencies, their designees or licensed wildlife rehabilitators.

Commodore Builders are the construction managers for the project, which is budgeted at \$750,000. ZNE has already secured \$500,000 in private funding. Lead donors to the project include ZNE Board of Directors Chair Grace Fey and her husband Ted, a bequest from the estate of longtime Stone Zoo visitor Ernestina Vinet, and another anonymous donor. Fundraising efforts are ongoing.

In celebration of this new exhibit, ZNE will present the wildly popular tasting event, *A Wild Affair*, on June 21. This will mark the fourth annual *A Wild Affair* – an event that attracts hundreds of attendees and Stone Zoo supporters from Stoneham and the surrounding communities.

###

Zoo New England manages the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston and the Stone Zoo in Stoneham. Both are accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Zoo New England's mission is to inspire people to protect and sustain the natural world for future generations by creating fun and engaging experiences that integrate wildlife and conservation programs, research, and education.