



BERGEN COUNTY
NEW JERSEY

A County of **Vision** • A Region of **History**

Bergen County Zoological Park



**Zoo Director
Bergen County Zoo
Paramus, New Jersey**

Employment Status: Full-Time

Experience Required: Experience equivalent to seven (7) years at the senior management level at an Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoo or attraction.

Minimum Education Requirements: Bachelor's Degree required.

Department: Administration

Direct Supervisor: Director of the Department of Parks & Recreation

Supervisory Responsibilities: All Zoo staff

Primary Work Location: Office Setting

Certification: Valid New Jersey driver's license. Successful completion of pre-employment background check, a physical examination, and a drug test. Must take and pass annual TB tests.

Bergen County is seeking a new Zoo Director to lead the Zoo and its staff and volunteers. In this capacity, the new Zoo Director will usher in a new era of leadership with a compelling, forward-looking vision and reinvigorate the Zoo while exceeding animal welfare and conservation standards and maintaining a high level of guest satisfaction. The new Zoo Director will position the Zoo to become reaccredited by the AZA – a standard that the Zoo enjoyed until 2023. County leadership is fully committed to providing the resources and support necessary to become an AZA member institution once again.

Background

Bergen County is home to nearly one million residents and is less than 15 miles from New York City, making it part of the New York Metropolitan Area. As the most populous county in New Jersey, Bergen County ranks among the top counties in New Jersey in terms of income, with a median household income of nearly \$115,000.

The Bergen County Zoo was established in 1960 and is a treasured County and community resource. It is a 12-acre zoological park that sits within the 130-acre Van

Saun County Park. The Zoo is frequently cited as visitors' favorite part of the Park. The Bergen County Zoo was the first zoo in New Jersey to seek AZA accreditation in the mid-1980's.

The Zoo is a "New World" zoo, exhibiting wildlife from North and South America. Zoo guests have the unique opportunity to view such rare and unusual species as Baird's Tapir, Andean Condor, Golden Lion Tamarin, and many others. In addition to its unique animal collection, the Zoo also offers guests several rides for a fee including a train and a carousel (which sits just outside of the Zoo's boundary).

The Bergen County Zoo is owned and operated by Bergen County. The Bergen County Zoo is managed by the County Parks Department and the Zoo Director reports directly to the Director of the Department of Parks & Recreation. The Friends of the Bergen County Zoo is the volunteer-managed nonprofit fundraising entity providing capital and operating support (retail/gift operations) to the Zoo. The Friends of the Bergen County Zoo is overseen by a 10-member Board of Directors. Today, there are approximately 1,500 household members of the Friends.

In 2023, the Zoo welcomed 173,500 paid guests during the eight months that the County charges an admission fee to the Zoo. In addition, over 60,000 individuals participated in education programs while over 40,000 individuals attended Zoo special events and made "free" off-season visits.

In FY 2023, the Zoo generated close to \$2 million in operating revenues from admission fees, education programs, events, and fees from the train and carousel. The Zoo's FY 2024 operating budget (ending December 31st) included slightly over \$3 million in total operating expenses, supporting 32 full-time Zoo employees, plus per-diem and seasonal staff members. The County's operating expense investment in the Zoo in FY 2024 represents approximately a \$1 million increase over FY 2023 as the County continues its investment in the Zoo as a valued community resource.

Bergen County has committed regular funding to support facilities enhancements at the Zoo. The County allocated \$4.5 million for capital improvements at the Zoo in FY 2023. In FY 2024, \$3.875 has been allocated for several Zoo projects. Looking ahead, from FY 2025-2029, the County projects an additional \$15 million in capital improvements for the Zoo. While future funding has not been appropriated today, the budget projections illustrate the County's ongoing support and commitment to improving and investing in the Zoo.

The Zoo does not have a current facility concept plan or strategic plan, although it is anticipated that the new Zoo Director will lead these initiatives with Zoo staff as part of the AZA reaccreditation process. The new facility concept and strategic plans will create a compelling vision for the Zoo and serve to integrate the Zoo's operating and facility improvement investments.

The Bergen County Zoo is dedicated to improving the employee experience in a team-oriented environment. The Zoo is committed to proactive management practices and promoting professional growth opportunities for staff. The Zoo seeks leadership qualities that foster trust, facilitate robust internal and external relationships, and that expand the visibility and impact of the Zoo in the local and regional community.

This position is full-time and offers an amazing opportunity to grow and strengthen a treasured county and community asset. A competitive total compensation package includes medical, prescription, mental, dental, vision, life, and long- and short-term disability benefit options, as well as participation in the New Jersey Public Employee Retirement system and voluntary defined benefit plan options.

Essential Job Functions

As the leader of the Bergen County Zoo reporting to the Director of the Department of Parks & Recreation, the Zoo Director is responsible for advancing the mission and vision of the Zoo through comprehensive oversight and management of the Zoo's operations, experiences and programming; passionate advocacy of conservation issues; and active engagement of all stakeholders.

With responsibility for the overall management of the Zoo, the Zoo Director will determine and execute plans and strategies that will support operations, promote visitation, and provide the highest standards of care for the animals while advancing visionary goals and sharing critical conservation messages. External communication, the nurturing and development of key partnerships, and cultivating donor relationships will be a critical function of this position. It will be the responsibility of the Zoo Director to ensure that future plans align with the Zoo's mission and goals and are fully integrated into a funding scenario that supports the Zoo's viability and sustainability.

The Zoo Director will work to firmly establish and expand the Zoo's reputation as a high-quality zoological organization, conservation advocate and community asset. This reputation will be enhanced and bolstered through the development of thoughtful and thorough plans for future facility and programming needs. As a priority, this will include reaccreditation as an AZA facility.

The Zoo Director will be instrumental in building strategic partnerships with organizations, educational institutions, corporations, vendors, and other cultural/recreational nonprofits. These strategic partnerships are critical to advancing the Zoo's mission, reach and impact and to determining potential new sources of revenue for the Zoo.

The Zoo Director will nurture and contribute to a collegial, positive culture among and between Zoo staff, motivating high productivity and engagement by conveying passion for and belief in the Zoo and its overarching conservation message.

The Zoo Director, working collaboratively with the Friends of the Bergen County Zoo, will seek to engage the community in supporting the Zoo with both operating and capital improvement funding.

Key Qualifications & Experience

- Strong professional zoo experience with a deep understanding of and appreciation for the highest standards of animal care, guest experiences, and conservation education programming, including:
 - at least 10 years of professional zoo experience with 7 years in a senior management position.
 - significant experience with financial and business management.
 - a thorough knowledge of Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) standards and protocols is strongly preferred.
 - experience and proven success in strategic planning, facility planning and fundraising.
- Proactive and decisive leadership capabilities with a proven record of establishing, expressing and realizing organizational priorities through:
 - proven ability to develop and articulate a vision with strong communication skills – both written and verbal.
 - experience in and desire to motivate staff to achieve shared goals, build and manage collaborative teams, and empower senior management to lead their teams with confidence.
 - proven ability to employ good judgment, confront challenges and make hard decisions.
- Solid interpersonal skills and an outgoing, positive public presence to advance awareness, understanding and appreciation of the Bergen County Zoo as the organization's chief spokesperson and as a storyteller, motivator, relationship-builder, ambassador, and champion.
- Sound business and financial acumen and judgment.

- Dynamic leadership style in directing zoo operations and pursuing organizational goals with a commitment to fostering a positive culture through collaboration and creativity.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Bergen County has retained the consulting firm, Relevant Strategies & Solutions (RS&S), to assist in identifying and reviewing qualified candidates.

The RS&S team of Rick Biddle, Managing Partner, and Catherine Grace, Director of Consulting Operations, will be working to identify the “right fit” candidates for the Bergen County Zoo.

Review of candidate applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Qualified candidates should submit a cover letter and resume to: jobs@rssconsultantsllc.com.

Bergen County is an Equal Opportunity Employer as defined by the EEOC.

All inquiries and correspondence received will be confidential.