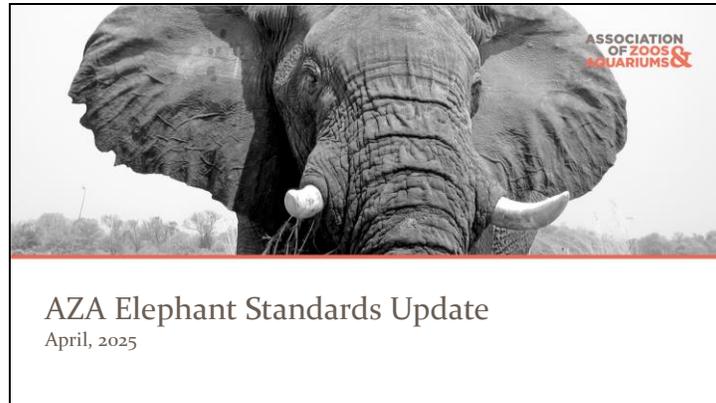


Slide 1



Over the past year, a dedicated working group has been diligently reviewing and revising the current AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care.

Today, several members of that working group are joining us on this webinar to share insights into our review process and to discuss the next steps as we move forward.

Thank you for your continued commitment to elephant care and wellbeing.

Slide 2

Overview

- Revising the Standards: The Why and How
- Phase 1: Simplify Current Standards
- Phase 2: Propose Revisions to Standards
- Next Steps and Reflections



We'll begin with a brief recap of the AZA Elephant Strategy and discuss why this revision process was initiated, as well as how the working group approached the task. From there, we'll walk through Phase 1, which focuses on simplifying the current standards to improve clarity and consistency.

Next, we'll move into Phase 2, where we'll share the proposed revisions and the rationale behind those changes.

Finally, we'll wrap up with a look at next steps, along with some reflections on the process and what's ahead for the AZA Elephant Standards.

Slide 3

AZA Elephant Strategy



Strategic Priorities:

1. Assuring that Elephants Thrive in Our Care
2. Collective TAG-Led Decision Making
3. Clear Expectations and Effective Accountability
4. Centralized Resources and Information
5. A Unified Voice for Elephants



In July 2023, the AZA Board of Directors approved the AZA Elephant Strategy—a foundational document that acknowledges the sustainability crisis facing AZA elephant populations and the urgent need for change. This strategy represents the AZA community’s commitment to driving a paradigm shift—not only to secure a sustainable future for elephants in our care, but to ensure they truly thrive.

From this strategy, five key priorities were identified:

- Assuring that elephants thrive in our care
- Collective, TAG-led decision-making
- Clear expectations and effective accountability
- Centralized resources and information
- A unified voice for elephants

Slide 4

Priority 1: Assuring that Elephants thrive in Our Care

Goal: Review and revise AZA standards and processes to assure elephants thrive in AZA care.

- Activity 1: Define "optimal care" and "thriving" for AZA elephants.
- Activity 2: Review the AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care and develop recommended revisions to AZA's current standards to align with the collective definitions of "optimal care" and "thriving."



Today, we're focusing on the first goal under Strategic Priority 1 of the Elephant Strategy: reviewing and revising the AZA standards and processes to ensure elephants thrive in AZA care.

Our aim is to share the ongoing work of the Elephant Standards Revision process and to highlight how we plan to continue engaging the AZA community throughout each step of this important effort.

Activity 1: Defining “Optimal Care” and “Thriving”

<u>Optimal Care</u>	<u>Thriving</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive care tailored to individual elephant needs• Provide quality habitats, space, and appropriate social groups• Provide opportunities for elephant to make choices in their day• Routinely monitor, assess, and address elephant wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience quality care 24/7; 365 days/year• Experience positive physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing throughout all stages of life• Demonstrate behavioral diversity representative of the species• Develop resilience to successfully interact with environments and cope with change/stress events



To begin this process, we gathered input from a broad group of stakeholders (n = 141), including elephant care staff, members of the AZA Elephant TAG and SSP, Directors and CEOs of elephant-holding facilities, and representatives from the AZA Animal Health Committee, Animal Welfare Committee, and Animal Population Management Committee.

Together, these stakeholders helped define what “optimal care” and “thriving” mean for AZA elephants. While each term includes 13 distinct elements, we’re highlighting a few key themes from both definitions here.

Slide 6

Activity 2: Review the AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care

Working Group:

- Sharon Joseph, Elephant Strategy Project Manager
- Jennifer DiNenna, AZA
- Candice Dorsey, AZA
- Craig Hoover, AZA
- Amos Morris, Accreditation Commission
- Chris Pfefferkorn, Board of Directors/Accreditation Commission
- Dwight Scott, Board of Directors
- Lisa Peterson, Board of Directors
- Luis Padilla, Board of Directors
- Adam Felts, Elephant TAG
- Vernon Presley, Elephant TAG
- David Hagan, Elephant TAG
- Sarah Armstrong, Elephant TAG
- Norah Fletchall, ACM Project Manager



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Once the definitions for ‘optimal care’ and ‘thriving’ were established, we convened a diverse and experienced group to lead the review and revision of the AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care. This working group includes Directors, Elephant TAG members, elephant managers, members of the AZA Accreditation Commission and Board of Directors, as well as AZA staff, bringing together a wide range of expertise and perspectives to guide this important work

Phase 1: Reducing and Simplifying AZA's Elephant Standards

<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure the Elephant Standards are concise, clearly defined, and aligned with the community's vision of 'optimal care' and 'thriving,' while also providing objective clarity for both facilities and Accreditation inspectors.	<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove elephant standards sufficiently covered elsewhere in the AZA Accreditation Standards.• Remove redundant standards within the Elephant Standards.• Ensure the standards are aligned with definitions for 'optimal care' and 'thriving.'• To regroup and reorder standards by topic for improved flow.
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This working group met regularly to review and refine the AZA Elephant Standards. Our goal has been to ensure that these standards are clear, concise, and aligned with the community's shared vision of 'optimal care' and 'thriving' for elephants in human care.

The primary purpose of this effort has been to create well-defined and objective standards that provide clarity for both facilities and Accreditation inspectors. By refining these standards, we aim to enhance consistency, usability, and effectiveness in guiding elephant care across AZA-accredited institutions.

This working group focused on four key areas:

- Removing Redundant Standards – Any standards already covered under the broader AZA Accreditation Standards were eliminated to avoid unnecessary repetition.
- Eliminating Duplicates – We identified and removed standards that were repeated within the Elephant Standards themselves.
- Ensuring Alignment with Core Definitions – We evaluated each standard to ensure it reflects our definitions of 'optimal care' and 'thriving' for elephants.
- Reorganizing for Clarity and Flow – Finally, we regrouped and reordered the standards by topic to improve structure, readability, and practical application.

Slide 8

**Phase 1: Reducing and Simplifying
AZA's Elephant Standards**

Results

- Reduction from 72 to 36 standards.
- Standards were reorganized to create a more streamlined document, enhancing clarity and ease of interpretation.

Credit: Robbie Clark,
Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute



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As a result of this process, the number of Elephant Standards has been streamlined from 72 to 36, making them more focused, effective, and easier to interpret. This work represents a significant step forward in ensuring that AZA-accredited institutions continue to uphold the highest standards of elephant care, while also making the accreditation process more transparent and accessible.

Phase 2: Proposed Changes

1. No longer requiring Directors to take PEM I.
2. At least semi-annual ECP performance check-ins required.
3. Must have access to soft substrates at all times.



Credit: Dallas Zoo



A few proposed changes to the standards include:

1) Directors taking PEM-1 is no longer required: We recognized that PEM I is beneficial for all elephant care roles including Directors, veterinarians, curators, and keepers; however, as space is limited, keepers should be prioritized. Additionally, the level of detail regarding animal management is not relevant for all levels, such as directors, since they are not the ones caring for the animals on a daily basis.

2) At least semi-annual ECP performance check-ins required: AZA definitions of optimal care and thriving require elephant institutions to provide safe working conditions and procedures for ECPs and support for ECPs to build knowledge and skills. One of the best methods of ensuring occupational safety is to continuously monitor the safety proficiency of ECPs. Requiring semi-annual check-ins allows managers to better evaluate performance and progress in this area.

3) Must have access to soft substrates at all times: Access to soft substrates at all times advances optimal care. Providing these environmental conditions contributes to physical and behavioral health and wellbeing. Providing a variety of soft substrates also promotes behaviors such as dusting, digging, wallowing, and resting.

Phase 2: Proposed Changes

4. Focus on individual social and wellbeing needs instead of minimum numbers.
5. Management and treatment plans for all elephants, not just geriatric elephants.
6. Requiring that weights/body scores be routinely collected and use to inform management decisions.



Credit: Chad Davis from Minneapolis



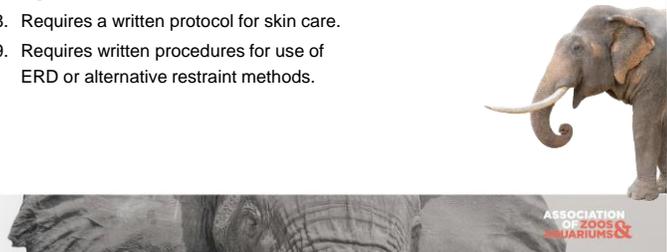
4) Focus now on individual social and wellbeing needs as opposed to minimum numbers: AZA definitions of optimal care and thriving require elephant institutions to provide elephants with optimal opportunities to engage with other elephants. Behavioral profiles, direct observation, and wellbeing assessments can be used to evaluate social compatibility and whether or not an elephant is in a situation that meets its social needs. Facilities that are not currently meeting these needs must have a time-bound plan to remedy the situation.

5) Management and treatment plans for all elephants, not just geriatric elephants: Providing comprehensive care tailored to individual elephant needs is important for all elephants, regardless of their life stage.

6) Added component about using weights/body scores to inform management decisions: Body condition and weight are two important measures of overall elephant health and need to be part of a comprehensive care and management plan. There is no point to recording weights and body scores if that information isn't used to inform management and care decisions.

Phase 2: Proposed Changes

7. Focus on goal-based enrichment, day and night.
8. Requires a written protocol for skin care.
9. Requires written procedures for use of ERD or alternative restraint methods.

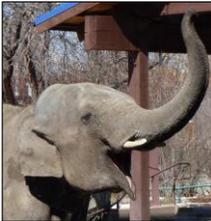
An illustration of an elephant's head and trunk on the right side of the slide. At the bottom of the slide, there is a horizontal strip showing the back of several elephants. In the bottom right corner of this strip, the logo for the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) is visible, consisting of the text 'ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS' in a sans-serif font with a red ampersand.

7) Focus now on goal-based enrichment, day and night: Focusing on goal-based enrichment ensures that enrichment plans are addressing the behavioral and physical needs of the elephants and result in required outputs.

8) Requires a written protocol for skin care: As the AZA definitions for optimal care and thriving require that elephants be free of illness, injury, or disease, it is important to establish and maintain a skin care program and to properly document any issues that arise.

9) Requires written procedures for the use of ERD or alternate restraint methods: To ensure safe working conditions and consistent procedures for ECPs and veterinary staff, it is important that ERD protocols, or alternative restraint methods, be documented and followed.

Phase 2: Proposed Changes



10. Reproductive assessments for bulls must include attempts to collect semen to analyze breeding potential.

11. Contribute to elephant conservation or research - changed from "should" to "must."

Credit: Greg Goebel from Loveland CO



10) Reproductive assessments for bulls must include attempts to collect semen to analyze breeding potential. It is increasingly important to have semen collection be part of the reproductive assessment. Having bulls trained for semen collection will allow for viable bulls to become potential semen donors for assisted reproduction attempts.

11) Contribute to elephant conservation or research- changed from 'should' to 'must': Elephant conservation and research efforts are critical to affording elephants in AZA care and in the wild opportunities to thrive. As part of the elephant strategy, we, the AZA community, need to do what we can to advance elephant research and conservation.

Behavioral Components

Goals:

- Refine Components: Ensure relevance and clarity.
- Enhance Understanding: Define the intent behind each behavior.
- Guide Training: Provide a suggested timeline for implementation.

Outcomes:

- These components are building blocks for optimal elephant care.
- Strengthening them supports a thriving elephant population.



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The Elephant TAG/SSP, with input from a number of stakeholders over the last two-three years, has taken a critical look at the behavioral components list. In looking at the trends data collected in the annual report, we felt that the number of components and the lack of true definition was a concern on building capacity within the elephant community. We wanted to confirm we had the right components. We wanted to provide more clarity on what the behavior component was to build capacity and understanding of the intent for each one. We wanted to provide a suggested timeline on when it should be trained.

The behavioral components are building blocks to provide optimal care for our elephants. An important step in building a thriving elephant population.

Long Term Planning

Strategic Priority 3: Clear Expectations and Effective Accountability.

Activity 3.1.1: Support each facility in the development of a written long-range elephant strategic plan (to be updated with each Accreditation cycle) that defines how it will align with and be engaged in, at all levels, the Elephant TAG/SSP planning process to build a sustainable population.



Long-term planning will include developing resources to support, more soon

The idea behind this is to clearly illustrate how each facility will be working internally to support the overall strategy for years to come. This information is probably already in the hands of holders – in their facility’s campus plans (formerly master plans), business plans, strategic plans. Currently information is mainly gleaned from an institutional collection plan (on how many animals believed could be held) with this info being funneled to the TAG/SSPs for planning purposes.

A more robust elephant strategic plan will hopefully ensure that hopes and dreams for the future are based in the best data available. More tools and support will be developed as part of the overall elephant strategy and rolled out in similar fashion.



The fall of 2019 began initial discussions that led to assembling the Elephant Sustainability Task Force in 2021 and approving the Elephant Strategy in July 2023. This effort has involved so many people and countless hours of work and discussion. And that is just so we could BEGIN the actions approved in the Strategy.

Next steps will include:

- Submit proposed standards to the Accreditation Commission in May, then to the Board of Directors in July. the new standards will be discuss more at the Annual Conference.
- Additional next steps include developing resources to support these initiatives/ changes: Inspector resources and training, resources and tools for long-range planning, communications toolkit, and the Elephant Animal Care Manual.
- If you have questions or feedback, please send them to animalprograms@aza.org by Monday, April 28.
- AZA staff will develop an FAQ document to address repeated questions and comments.

I [Joe Barkowski] have been very lucky to work along side so many amazing colleagues in the continuing development of this Strategy. Like so many, I have been able to watch this evolution wearing many hats – a Task Force member, Animal Population Management Committee member and not least of all, an animal manager whose facility has a 70-year history of elephant care. For anyone just beginning their journey with us and this process, we encourage you to reach out, ask questions, get involved and support a future where elephants thrive in our care. I would like to thank everyone who has helped get us to this point as well as my fellow presenters.
