



LEE C. EHMKE

Director / CEO, Minnesota Zoo

President, Minnesota Zoo Foundation

Since assuming the position of Director of the Minnesota Zoo on August 28, 2000, Lee Ehmke has energetically addressed the need to plan for the Zoo's future. Under his leadership the Zoo has developed a 10-year Strategic Plan, with an overarching goal of becoming one of America's Top Ten Zoos. The Strategic Plan is being implemented—in part—though the physical redevelopment of the Zoo as outlined in its Facilities Master Plan. The Minnesota State

Legislature has responded positively to the vision these plans embody—in recent years, \$45 million in capital funding has been provided to improve the Zoo, a level of support unprecedented in the Zoo's 29-year history.

Ehmke has spearheaded the effort to build attractive and educational new exhibits, including *Meerkats of the Kalahari* (2001), *Tiger Lair* (2002), *Lemurs: Ghosts of Madagascar* (2004), *Creatures Beneath the Canopy* (2005) *Africa: Summer on the Savanna* (2006), and most recently the renewed Minnesota Trail (2007). He has also guided growth of the Zoo's educational programming and conservation outreach initiatives, in coordination with a comprehensive effort to create a new brand identity for the Zoo. He has become the primary spokesperson for the Zoo at the State Capitol, with the media and in the community. As President of the Minnesota Zoo Foundation, the Zoo's non-profit support organization, Ehmke is deeply engaged in efforts to generate private financial support of the Zoo and its mission.

Prior to coming to the Minnesota Zoo, Ehmke was the Director of Planning & Design at New York's Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), headquartered at the Bronx Zoo. In his 12 years at WCS, Ehmke led the design and managed construction of numerous award-winning Bronx Zoo projects. Most notably, he served as the lead designer and project manager for *Congo Gorilla Forest*, the Bronx Zoo's signature exhibit, which opened to international acclaim in 1999.

Ehmke was also active in the planning of two WCS-supported projects aimed at connecting increasingly urban African communities with their native wildlife. The Uganda Wildlife Education Centre in Entebbe, Uganda and the Nairobi Safari Walk in Kenya were developed using modern techniques of zoo design and interpretation to encourage grass-roots support for wildlife conservation.

Ehmke's initial education was in environmental law (J.D. Hastings College of the Law, 1983), after which he practiced as a member of the California Bar Association with the California Coastal Commission and the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund in San Francisco. Returning to graduate school to study environmental design, Ehmke received a Masters in Landscape Architecture from the University of California at Berkeley in 1988. While at Berkeley, he worked for the California State Coastal Conservancy planning and implementing wetland restoration projects, and was involved in developing a master plan for the San Francisco Zoo.

Ehmke is an active member of numerous professional organizations, including the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (Honors and Awards Committee Chair), The Conservation Breeding Specialist Group of the IUCN (Steering Committee), and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.