

**THE CENTRAL FLORIDA ZOO'S ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

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Executive Summary

The Central Florida Zoo is the leading recreational facility for tourists in Seminole County. The Central Florida Zoo effectively provides the traditional functions of conservation, education, and recreation to both residents and visitors to Central Florida. The Zoo also generates sizable economic contributions to the Seminole County economy. The economic benefit of the Zoo to both County households and businesses are realized directly by employing and conducting its business within the Community. Other ways in which the Zoo impacts the local economy is through the expenditure of wages earned by Zoo employees, expenditures made by local firms that supply the Zoo, and by attracting out-of-region visitors.

This document attempts to explain some of the contributions and attributes of the zoo, which help reinforce the following summary points regarding The Central Florida Zoo:

The Central Florida Zoo ...

- **is an important economic engine**
 - ✓ over 30,000 visitors per month in March and April 2008
- **creates and supports jobs in Seminole County**
 - ✓ employs over 100 workers
- **helps local businesses that supply the zoo**
 - ✓ direct purchaser of goods and services from local vendors
- **is a good neighbor**
 - ✓ at its present site since July 4, 1975
- **is a good investment**
 - ✓ a successful non-profit that contributes to public service
- **is a partner to Seminole County education**
 - ✓ Over 75,000 school children participate in formal education programs every year
- **is the premier tourist destination in Seminole County**
 - ✓ continues to grow as Seminole County's premier recreational and educational attraction

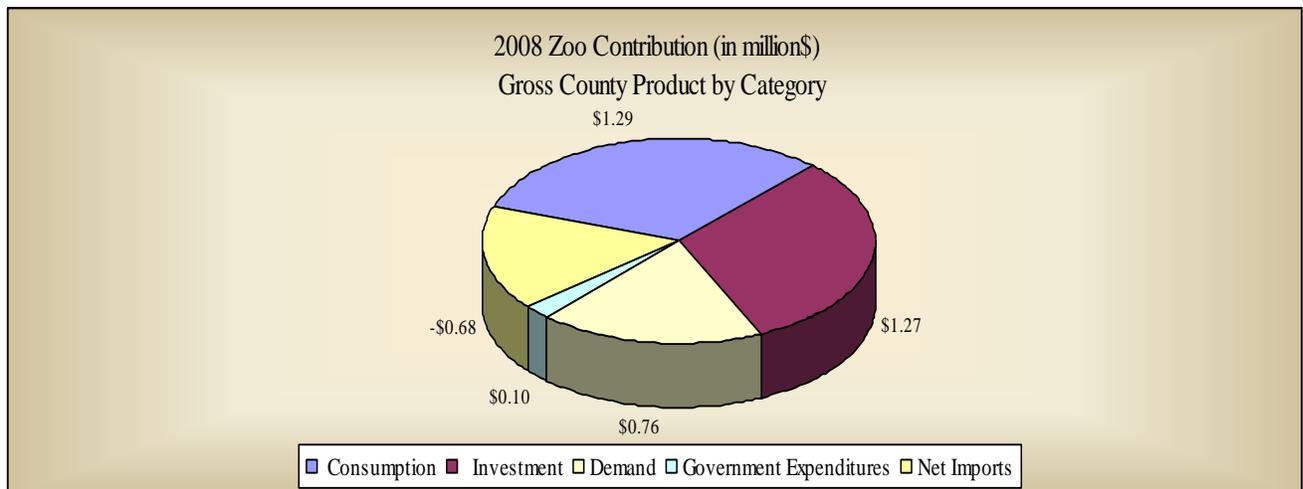
Zoos are no longer menageries for human entertainment only, but living museums. Every year, the Central Florida Zoo serves as a living classroom for thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds. The Zoo provides educational programs for the young and old alike. Beyond the

recreational and educational aspects, the Central Florida Zoo is committed to excel as a regional resource for the seven counties that make up the Central Florida area.

Perhaps the best description of the philosophy of the Central Florida Zoo may be found in the mission statement: *The Central Florida Zoo is dedicated to the conservation of wildlife and to engaging and educating our guests by sharing knowledge and celebrating our natural world. The Zoo is committed to excel as a dynamic regional resource providing a unique interactive experience with the natural world.*

Economic Impacts of the Central Florida Zoo

Economic Impact	2006	2007	2008	3-year Total
Total Employment	102	104	99	102 (Average)
Total Gross County Product (Million Chained 2000\$)	\$3.17	\$3.28	\$3.08	\$9.53
Personal Income (Million Nominal \$)	\$1.90	\$2.27	\$2.40	\$6.57
Real Disposable Personal Income (Million Fixed 2000\$)	\$1.34	\$1.49	\$1.52	\$4.35
Demand (Million Fixed 2000\$)	\$5.60	\$6.26	\$5.99	\$17.85
Output (Million Fixed 2000\$)	\$5.85	\$6.06	\$5.72	\$17.63



Highlights

- On average, the zoo has one-hundred and two jobs tied to its operations. These jobs include:
 - Employees that work *directly* for the zoo,
 - Employees that depend on the operation of the facility by supplying the different products and services needed by the zoo.
- In the last three years, the zoo brought in \$6.57 million in personal income to the residents of Seminole County.
 - This translated into \$4.35 million in real disposable income available for consumption and investment.
- In the last three years, the zoo generated nearly \$17.85 million in aggregate demand for goods and services both directly and indirectly associated with the facility.
- In the last three years, the zoo's total economic impact on all measures of output was \$17.63 million (over \$5.5 million per year).

The economic impact of the Central Florida Zoo was calculated using REMI Policy Insight. The model is the world's leading regional economic and policy analysis model. The East Central Florida Regional Planning Council's version of the model is customized for the six counties of the East Central Florida region. The model can be used to calculate the economic and demographic effects that policy initiatives or projects may have on a local economy.

Other Impacts of *The Central Florida Zoo*

The previous section of this study quantified the local economic contributions of The Central Florida Zoo. While the direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of the zoo's operation are sizable, it is important to note that the zoo also contributes to the local community in other important ways. The purpose of this section is to identify and discuss these less tangible impacts in order to more fully appreciate the zoo's overall importance.

a. Quality of Life Contributions

Seminole County has been one of the fastest growing communities in Florida. By the County's centennial celebration in 2013, Seminole County is projected to be home to approximately 500,000 residents. The rate of population growth, however, is expected to slow as vacant land diminishes and the County begins to shift into an infill and redevelopment mode of growth.

Nonetheless, most of the current residents, and those who will move here in the future, want the same thing, a desirable quality of life. Seminole County, through a series of actions, has been able to sustain a high quality of life for its residents. Due to quality of life factors, Seminole County is recognized as a destination of choice for both households and business.

Seminole County statistics speak volumes to the effectiveness of various programs and initiatives undertaken by Seminole County Government and partners, such as the Central Florida Zoo. For instance, Seminole County:

- is a top 100 school district as ranked by Money Magazine
- has the third highest household income in Florida
- has the third most active international airport in Florida
- has a model parks and trail system
- has property values which have increased by 180.2 percent during the past decade (1997-2007)
- holds the 5th highest taxable value in Florida based on value per square mile. Each square mile, on an average, in Seminole County contains \$97,437,722 of taxable value.

Many attempts have been made to measure quality of life. In the end, however, the ability to assess and rank 'quality of life' is dependent on many variables, and most are difficult to measure. The Central Florida Zoo enhances Seminole County's quality of life through its contributions to the economy, education, conservation, leisure, tourism, and fun. The below sections briefly touch on prominent categories directly impacted by the presence of The Central Florida Zoo.

b. Education

The Central Florida Zoo is a partner to the Seminole County Public School System. The educational outreach provided by the Zoo, while difficult to quantify monetarily, provides Seminole County Schools with an educational advantage that helps ensure long-term economic growth. Over 75,000 school children participate in formal education program every year, fostering an appreciation for animals and the importance of biodiversity.

c. Leisure Services

Research suggests that high-quality and diverse leisure activities provided in a community positively impact the community's economy. The presence of The Central Florida Zoo expands

the leisure opportunities available to members of the community, thereby contributing to making Seminole County an ideal place to live, work and play.

The Central Florida Zoo was founded in Sanford in the 1920's. Since that time, the Zoo has become the largest tourist attraction in Seminole County, with an annual attendance of 260,000 and growing. With over 400 animals, the Central Florida Zoo creates an environment that displays the importance of preserving our wildlife through conservation and research, at the same time, providing a unique interactive experience with the natural world.

d. Animal and Plant Conservation

Conservation of animals is paramount; many endangered species entrusted to the Zoo's care may soon be extinct in the wild. Captive breeding programs may be their only hope for survival. Species Survival Plans (SSP) coordinated through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), are attempting to maintain genetic diversity to ensure healthy, vigorous animals to reproduce now and in the future. The Central Florida Zoo participates in 11 SSPs, which include the cheetah, red-ruffed lemur, Asian elephant, Aruba Island rattlesnake, African black-footed cat, siamang gibbon, lesser spot-nose guenon, black-handed spider monkey, cotton-top tamarin, Grand Cayman rock iguana, and clouded leopard.

The Zoo has long been a community resource for education and conservation of rare and endangered animals, and the Zoo's botanical collections further emphasize the value of plants in the Zoo's effort to promote the protection of whole ecosystems. The gardens are interspersed throughout the Zoo and include over 800 plant species, highlighting many of the native plants found in Florida, as well as many endangered flora. These plants create a beautiful, lush landscape for the enjoyment of visitors and the plant collection will show examples of plant diversity and their relationships to the animals that depend on them, providing an educational opportunity not found in most botanical gardens.

The importance of the Zoo to Animal and Plant Conservation is immense. As an accredited zoo, a landmark study conducted by Falk et al. (2007) touches on several other points regarding a visit to an accredited zoo:

Key Results from Falk, et al. (2007):

- "Visits to accredited zoos and aquariums prompt individuals to reconsider their role in environmental problems and conservation action, and to see themselves as part of the solution.

- Visitors believe zoos and aquariums play an important role in conservation education and animal care.
- Visitors believe they experience a stronger connection to nature as a result of their visit.
- Visitors bring with them a higher-than-expected knowledge about basic ecological concepts. Zoos and aquariums support and reinforce the values and attitudes of the visitor.
- Visitors arrive at zoos and aquariums with specific identity-related motivations and these motivations directly impact how they conduct their visit and what meaning they derive from the experience. (Falk. et al. (2007)).”

Conclusions

The Central Florida Zoo is much more than a place for visitors to observe animals. Through its many interactions with the local economy, the zoo is an effective economic driver in Seminole County. Moreover, the zoo adds to the community’s quality of life by enhancing education, leisure opportunity and environmental sustainability. Unfortunately, it is difficult to accurately measure and assess the value of these community benefits.

REFERENCES

Falk, J.H.; Reinhard, E.M.; Vernon, C.L.; Bronnenkant, K.; Deans, N.L.; Heimlich, J.E., (2007). Why Zoos & Aquariums Matter: Assessing the Impact of a Visit. Association of Zoos & Aquariums. Silver Spring, MD>