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*An international organization dedicated to conservation through public display, education, and research*

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### **AMMPA Statement on SeaWorld Decision To End Its Killer Whale Program**

ALEXANDRIA, VA—Alliance for Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA) member SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment today announced the killer whales in its care will be the last generation of orcas at SeaWorld, and the company will end all orca breeding as of today. Kathleen Dezio, AMMPA President & CEO issued the following statement about the announcement:

“We respect SeaWorld’s right to make the business decisions it believes are in its best interests, and we understand the circumstances that must have factored into this difficult decision. For more than two-and-a-half years, SeaWorld has been savagely attacked with misinformation and lies promulgated in the deceitful film *Blackfish*, and by its animal rights supporters through coordinated social media attacks, protests, petitions and other tactics. No company, no matter how great, could withstand such a withering, prolonged and well-funded assault without sustaining damage to its reputation and bottom line. However, when such pressure campaigns succeed, they can have very serious and unfortunate consequences.

This decision means that in 30 or 40 years, after the last of SeaWorld’s orcas have passed away, future generations of American children will no longer be able to see and experience the awe-inspiring physicality and intelligence of these apex predators up close and be inspired to help conserve them in the wild. Much of the significant scientific research SeaWorld has conducted over the years that has taught us most of what we know today about orcas and cannot be done in the wild will come to an end, and the cutting edge technology and veterinary knowledge of whales SeaWorld now maintains and employs in its rescue and rehabilitation work with wild cetaceans will also be impaired.

The organizations behind the assault on SeaWorld, calling on it to end its public display of killer whales, are not just opposed to killer whales in human care. They are part of an animal rights movement that does not believe there should be any animals at all in human care for any reason—not in zoos and aquariums, not as service animals, not in sports, movies or the circus, and not even as pets. For this reason, it is unlikely their pressure

campaigns will end after this decision. Instead, they will step up their assaults on other species of animals on public display in zoos, aquariums, and marine parks.

SeaWorld is a principled company and leader in the zoological community, and we are confident it will continue to be one of the world's leading animal advocates. At the same time, we are saddened by the inevitable future consequences of this decision. The attacks on zoos, aquariums and marine parks must stop before these institutions are no longer able to help animals threatened and endangered in the wild.

If the anti-SeaWorld campaign that culminated in today's announcement was really all about orcas, we call on animal rights groups that participated in it to immediately end their assaults on all of the other species in zoos and aquariums and instead focus their formidable financial resources on helping animals in the wild threatened by toxins, disease, marine debris entanglement, ship strikes, scarcity of prey, and a host of other threats. SeaWorld has done its part, now they should, too.

The Alliance continues to support the development of breeding programs for cetaceans and other marine mammals to optimize genetic diversity, maintain a sufficient population to serve conservation, education and research commitments, and minimize the need to collect from the wild.

SeaWorld is an accredited member of the Alliance, admired throughout the zoological community for the tremendous passion, dedication and expertise of its staff, its world class animal care, and its five decades of scientific research, rescue and rehabilitation work, and public education and conservation work on behalf of animals. No institution in the world has contributed more than SeaWorld to a scientific understanding of orcas, and no one has done more to motivate millions to care about preserving them in the wild. SeaWorld takes exceptional care of all of its animals, including its orcas, resulting in its animals thriving and living as long as or longer than those in the wild.”

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*The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks & Aquariums is an international association and accrediting body for marine parks, zoos and aquariums dedicated to the highest standards of care for marine mammals and to their conservation in the wild through public education and scientific research. Collectively, Alliance members represent the greatest body of expertise and experience in marine mammal husbandry and in-water interactive programs in the world.*

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