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## **Lincoln Park Zoo Applauds Federal Government Decision to Consider Reclassifying Chimpanzees Living in the US as Endangered**

*(Chicago, Sept 1, 2011)*– Lincoln Park Zoo applauds the federal government’s announcement today that it will evaluate a petition to list chimpanzees living in the United States as an endangered species. A decision to do so would improve the welfare and conservation of the species, which is endangered in the wild.

According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, wild chimpanzees are severely endangered and could become extinct within 10 to 50 years if current trends continue.

“Chimpanzees are the only species that are endangered in the wild, but not recognized as endangered in the US,” explained Steve Ross, PhD, assistant director of the Fisher Center for the Study and Conservation of Apes at Lincoln Park Zoo. “Providing captive chimpanzees with the protections that come with endangered status is an important step to curtailing private ownership of this species and the exploitation by the media entertainment industry.”

Lincoln Park Zoo joined several other animal conservation and welfare organizations in a petition to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) earlier this year requesting the status of chimpanzees be re-classified as endangered.

“The Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Lincoln Park Zoo have been involved with this initiative since its inception and hope that this change will result in improved captive care for chimpanzees across the country and improved protection for them in the wild,” explained Kevin Bell, President & CEO of Lincoln Park Zoo.

A recent scientific study by Ross, who is also the founder of Project ChimpCARE, revealed that the use of chimpanzees by the entertainment industry in movies, commercials and greeting cards is contributing to widespread misunderstandings about the species which can impact the public's conservation attitudes and decisions. That study was published in July in PLoS One, the open-access journal of the Public Library of Sciences.

According to Ross, if the USFWS decides to classify chimpanzees as endangered, they will be provided the same protections afforded other endangered species which will minimize exploitation for commercial profit and could serve to benefit the long-term survival and conservation of the species.

The USFWS reports the chimpanzee status review process could take up to 12 months to complete before a final decision is made.

For more information about Lincoln Park Zoo's work with chimpanzees, please visit [www.lpzoo.org](http://www.lpzoo.org) or visit Project ChimpCARE: [www.chimpcare.org](http://www.chimpcare.org)

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### **ABOUT CHICAGO'S LINCOLN PARK ZOO**

Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo, a historic landmark founded in 1868, is dedicated to connecting people with nature by providing a free, family-oriented wildlife experience. A leader in conservation science both globally and locally, the zoo exemplifies the highest quality animal care and educational outreach. The not-for-profit zoo, managed by The Lincoln Park Zoological Society, is a member-supported organization and one of the nation's only free, privately managed zoos. For more information, call (312)742-2000 or visit [www.lpzoo.org](http://www.lpzoo.org)