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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North American River Otter Exhibition Launches At The Living Planet Aquarium

Sandy, UT (January 4, 2012) --- Few animals convey a sense of joy and spontaneity like otters. Visitors to The Living Planet Aquarium this year will have three new animals and a unique new experience to enjoy. The playful river otter, native to Utah, promises new opportunities for wild discovery and fun animal observation. **The North American River Otter Exhibit** opens Thursday, January 12, 2012 at The Living Planet Aquarium in Sandy, Utah.

Undeniably cute, the river otter is a notoriously playful member of the weasel family. They love to swim, slip and slide, whether in the mud during summer or the snow in winter. They have even been observed playing tag and “juggling” pebbles with their front paws!! Three male river otters will be included among the Utah species featured in the Discover Utah Gallery. They come to us from the Long Island Aquarium in Riverhead, NY where they were born two years ago to wild-caught parents from Louisiana, where populations are so healthy that nuisance animals are often caught for relocation. “They need a new home because Long Island does not have room for this many adult otters, and because inbreeding will become a possibility as the youngsters grow” said Andy Allison, Curator of Animals. “Shortly after arrival to The Living Planet Aquarium the otters will be trained to enter their off-exhibit enclosures. They may rotate on and off exhibit to encourage more activity while on exhibit” said Allison. Trained aquarists will encourage the otters to demonstrate their species-typical behavior, allow them to exercise control or choice over their environment, and to enhance their well-being by offering them a variety of novel experiences. Enrichment items will

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comprise of different categories including olfactory (new smells), manipulative (something to play with such as food hidden inside something), habitat (new logs or rocks in the enclosure), food (like occasional treats they don't see very often) and more.

At one time, river otters were found throughout most of Utah's waterways. Early records report regular sightings of otters. Large quantities of Otter were known to live in the streams of Utah in the 1830's. It was soon after this that otters seemed to disappear from Utah's rivers, probably due to habitat degradation, water pollution and unregulated trapping during settlement times. Since the start of the 20th century, River Otters have not been abundant in Utah and are protected by the Utah Wildlife Code. Trapping and hunting North American River Otters is currently prohibited. The exhibit will educate visitors about river otters, otter reintroduction efforts, and release locations in Utah. Preview the otters in their new habitat here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ot63azU4z6s>. The North American River Otter Exhibition is a permanent exhibit made possible by the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation.

Aquarium members will be allowed into the facility 1 hour early at 9am Thursday, January 12 for an exclusive "Members Only Sneak Peek" of the new exhibit. Membership card must be present for Aquarium entrance.

Quick Facts

What: North American River Otter Exhibit
When: Thursday, January 12 10am – 6 pm
Where: 725 E 10600 S in Sandy
Admission: \$9 adult
\$8 senior, student & military
\$7 children age 3-17
Children 2 and under are admitted free of charge.
Sponsor: George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation
Information: www.thelivingplanet.com (801) 355-FISH (3474)



The Living Planet Aquarium Mission Statement

The Living Planet Aquarium inspires people to explore, discover and learn about Earth's diverse ecosystems.

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