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September 19, 2017

## **Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium envisioned as world's grandest tribute to conservation movement**

*Largest most immersive wildlife conservation attraction in the world  
a major new destination in the heart of America*

**Springfield, Mo.** – Noted conservationist and Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris will be joined by former Presidents and hundreds of North America's conservation leaders to unveil the all-new Wonders of Wildlife National Museum Aquarium, located in the center of America's heartland in Springfield, Missouri. Nearly ten years in the making and unprecedented in scale and scope, Wonders of Wildlife is larger than the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History and an inspirational tribute to the adventurers, explorers, outdoorsmen and conservationists who helped discover, develop and preserve the nation we love.

With 35,000 live fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds, the 350,000-square-foot complex is a wonder in and of itself. It contains more than 1.5 miles of trails through authentic, immersive habitats and features 1.5 million gallons of freshwater and saltwater aquariums and immersive wildlife galleries. Signature galleries include a massive "open ocean" ring-shaped aquarium and the two-story Shipwreck Room where guests can touch stingrays on the ocean floor. Immersive wildlife galleries feature 4D dioramas that transport guests through sights, sounds, smells and climates to some of the wildest places on earth, including a trek across the African savannah, the Amazon rainforest, the Arctic and America's National Parks and more in a multisensory celebration of conservation and craftsmanship.

The all-new museum and aquarium is located next to Bass Pro Shops National Headquarters in Springfield, Missouri, one of many signature nature-based attractions in Missouri's Ozark Mountains, a region emerging as America's Conservation Capital.

The visionary behind the project is noted conservationist and Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris, sometimes referred to as "the Walt Disney of the Outdoors" for his knack for creating amazing experiences that connect people with nature. Morris, who grew up fishing with his family on Missouri's White River before founding Bass Pro Shops in 1971 with eight square feet of space in the back of his father's liquor store, created the not-for-profit Wonders of Wildlife as a gift to the nation intended to inspire people of all ages to engage with the natural world.

"Wonders of Wildlife is an inspirational journey around the world that celebrates the role of hunters and anglers as America's true conservation heroes," said Johnny Morris. "We proudly invite families and sportsmen to come share the wonder with an unforgettable experience meant to inspire generations of future conservationists."

### **Celebrating those who hunt, fish and act as stewards of the land and water**

Morris convened 40 leading conservation organizations to help tell the American outdoor story from the Native Americans to Lewis and Clark and beyond. The story extends to modern-day wildlife management with a celebration of people who hunt, fish and act as stewards of the land. For the past 80 years, hunters in America have funded America's modern conservation system largely through self-imposed federal excise taxes on

outdoor equipment, and by purchasing hunting and fishing permits.

Beyond its sheer scale and quality, what's most impressive about the museum and aquarium is its powerful message to inspire everyone to connect with the outdoors. As the world advances and more people live and work in major metropolitan areas, it is more important than ever to preserve and promote outdoor experiences. In a stress-filled world of traffic jams, endless emails, calls and constant pressure, the best medicine is a peaceful, rejuvenating experience in nature. The museum and aquarium pay homage to the sportsmen and women of yesterday, today and tomorrow with the knowledge that the surest way to preserve our rich outdoor heritage is to expose more people to its awe-inspiring beauty.

### **A world class aquarium adventure**

At the heart of the Wonders of Wildlife experience is a world-class aquarium adventure, home to massive aquatic habitats teeming with life. There has never been an aquarium as immersive, interactive or engaging as this. Guests of all ages can immerse themselves inside a river full of piranhas, discover what it's like to touch a stingray, traverse an underwater tunnel surrounded by giant river monsters and come face-to-face with sharks, jellyfish, snakes, iguanas, eagles, owls and more.

The experience begins with the breathtaking **Great Oceans Hall**, bringing the excitement of the ocean to the middle of America. Visitors will step inside a 300,000-gallon circular "open ocean" habitat, teeming with life, including zebra sharks, leopard rays and goliath grouper; look in awe at a mesmerizing living bait ball; and discover the Great Barrier Reef, a towering saltwater aquarium showcasing colorful reef fish, including Maori wrasse, potato cod and more. Additional noted exhibits include **Shipwreck Reef**, which plunges guests to the depths of the ocean floor where they can touch stingrays and explore a sunken shipwreck now home to colorful reef.

The aquarium also honors legendary anglers with boats from Earnest Hemingway, Zane Grey, personal fishing artifacts and mementos from U.S. Presidents, and some of fishing's most accomplished sportsmen and women at **The International Game Fish Association's (IGFA) Fishing Hall of Fame** and the **Bass Fishing Hall of Fame**.

More fun surprises await around every corner as visitors traverse cypress swamps, tropical rainforests, Ozarks waterways, craggy caves and more. The aquarium's unique design ensures visitors are constantly surprised and amazed by where they might end up next, and the creatures that await to be discovered around the bend.

### **Immersive wildlife galleries transport visitors around the world**

Visitors can pack their bags for adventure as state-of-the-art 4D dioramas completely surround them within the sights, sounds and smells of the planet's most extreme wildlife habitats. Each environment features meticulous attention to detail including massive hand-painted murals, native foliage and special effects that deliver the chill of the Arctic, the cold winds of the Alps, the dry sun of the African Savannah and more.

Signature exhibits within the wildlife galleries include **The Great African Hall**, immersing guests in the African savannah with animals including elephants, giraffes, rhinos, crocodiles, zebra and more and **Sheep Mountain**, with more than 40 record-setting sheep from around the world.

Visitors will relive conservation's history with **The Boone and Crockett Club's National Collection of Heads and Horns**. Founded by our nation's leading conservation hero Theodore Roosevelt, the Club's legendary exhibit gives visitors the chance to step back in time and see more than 40 historically significant North American game animals that helped spark America's conservation movement when it debuted at New York's

Bronx Zoo in 1908. Guests will encounter World Record bears, bison, caribou, elk and other big game species while learning about these iconic animals and how science, sportsmen and regulated hunting saved them from exploitation and near extinction. One remarkable display is the famous Chadwick Ram from British Columbia taken in 1936 featuring 51-inch horns and considered to be the finest North American big game specimen ever collected. The influential collection relocated to Wonders of Wildlife from the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming.

### **The majesty of the outdoors captured by the world's finest artists and craftsmen**

Wonders of Wildlife is instantly recognizable for the signature imagination, creativity, quality craftsmanship, authenticity and attention to detail that goes into all the projects dreamed up by Johnny Morris, but on a much larger scale. As the largest immersive attraction of its kind in the world, the project's massive size called for an expansive team who spent more than nine years creating the elaborate details that make the experience so rewarding for visitors.

More than 2,000 painters, sculptors, woodworkers, iron workers, taxidermists, illustrators, designers, scientists, biologists, engineers and others contributed to the facility, which is home to some of the most sophisticated life support systems in the country as well as some of the largest and most elaborate nature-based artwork ever created.

Every wall within the 350,000-square-foot attraction features hand-painted murals painstakingly created by a team of painters who embody the talent and quality of true Ozarks craftsmanship. Painters spent more than a year painting the Great African Hall alone, resulting in a photorealistic re-creation of the great African savannah.

After the mural work was completed, imagery specialists consulted with experts to stage 3D landscape elements, including rockwork, native foliage and water effects to match the season and habitat being depicted. Each experience is grounded in the elements of the natural world, ensuring every detail is as lifelike as possible.

### **Grand opening features historic salute to conservation leaders**

In honor of its grand opening on September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017, Wonders of Wildlife is hosting a historic event welcoming the most significant gathering of prominent North American conservation leaders and influencers ever assembled in our nation's history. The very special tribute dinner honoring America's conservation leaders will feature guests including President George W. Bush, President Jimmy Carter, U.S. Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke and Missouri Governor Eric Greitens amongst other dignitaries. The evening concludes with a special "Concert for Conservation" for invited guests featuring music from Kevin Costner, Luke Bryan, Dierks Bentley, John Anderson and many other popular performers. All artists are avid outdoorsmen who are donating their time to help honor the conservation leaders in attendance. More than 400 conservation leaders are anticipated to be in Springfield for the landmark occasion along with significant donors and guests.

### **Share the Wonder**

Wonders of Wildlife is now open daily except Christmas. For additional information including admission, hours of operation and directions visit [www.wondersofwildlife.org](http://www.wondersofwildlife.org).

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