

# The National Elephant Center Becomes a Reality With Waste Management's Support

A new model for excellence in elephant care and conservation became a reality when The National Elephant Center was announced at a press conference at the Houston Zoo in early February. Plans to create a national elephant conservation center in central Florida were made possible, in part, by Waste Management's involvement. The facility will be under construction for several months with the first elephants expected to arrive in 2009.

"Elephants are among our most endangered animals in the world, and their future depends on innovative programs that integrate science, research, education and animal care expertise. The National Elephant Center will play a vital role in addressing the critical need for elephant population management and will be an international resource in elephant conservation," said Center Board President Mark C. Reed, and Executive Director of the Sedgwick County Zoo. "Waste Management's support of the project, including its nominal lease to the Center of the land, will help provide a perfect home for our elephants and programs."

The Center is located on 300 acres owned by Waste Management in Okeechobee, Fla. It includes space for elephants to roam and explore while providing a variety of natural waterholes for wallowing. It is adjacent to property that Waste Management maintains as a natural area certified by the Wildlife Habitat Council that provides food and nesting areas for threatened Florida sandhill cranes and other species.

"When we look at our landfills, we see them as a form of recycling – beneficial reuse of the land at our sites," said Waste Management CEO David Steiner. "Our landfills provide power to our communities through landfill gas to energy projects. They also supply tens of thousands of acres for community parks, recreation centers and wildlife habitats. We are proud of our ability to provide one of our landfill resources for a program that helps ensure the future of one of nature's most majestic resources, elephants."

"There are nearly 290 elephants in 77 North American zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and this facility will support those institutions in a variety of ways, including population management, artificial insemination and breeding, research and conservation activities, and training for keepers, curators and veterinarians," said Reed, who along with nine other zoo directors including Rick Barongi from the Houston Zoo, serve on the Center's board of directors.

The National Elephant Center is a nonprofit organization that envisions becoming the global leader in elephant population management. It is committed to ensuring the future of elephants in zoos and in the wild by advancing science in artificial insemination and breeding; promoting elephant research and conservation programs; providing specialized training for elephant caregivers; and becoming a voice for elephants nationally and internationally through advocacy and collaboration. For more information, visit [www.TheNationalElephantCenter.org](http://www.TheNationalElephantCenter.org).

