

There are some basics when trying to build your zoo's conservation commitment. Below is a formula which was first established at the Columbus Zoo in the early 1990's and then successfully implemented at the Brevard Zoo starting in 2001. The great thing about this philosophy is that it can be easily utilized at small, medium and large zoos. Below are some of the building blocks:

1. Conservation is all about relationships - establishing a level of trust with your field counterpart is essential - and vice versa - this is a two-way street.
2. Do not allocate dollars with the thought that you will get something out of it - i.e. animals.
3. Do the right thing and I guarantee you your commitment and goodwill will come back to your zoo three-fold.

Enacting your program:

1. I recommend starting with small grants between 2,000 to 3,000- for the following reasons
 - a. allows you to establish your relationships i.e. you hear back from the field contact via emails, photos, video. If the relationship is mutually beneficial, then you can increase the amount over time.
 - b. Your zoo may have a limited conservation fund so spread the money around - this will give you more stories for your website, your conservation report, and to share with your staff, volunteers, board and potential donors.
 - c. I also believe strongly in every zoo be willing to give money to start-up field projects, not just established ones. The reality is that the established projects were once unknowns - so be willing to take a chance - that's why small grants work - if the project is a bust then you are not out of a lot of money.

Never make promises you may not be able to keep....so measure your offers of assistance before actually making an offer of support.

2. Ask if you can assist the field project in other ways as well as providing a grant, i.e. develop education materials, create a logo for the project, develop and oversee their website, offer to print business cards, or create artwork for t-shirts and posters.