

Letter to the Editor

2016 Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks & Aquariums' Annual Meeting

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This year, the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks & Aquariums (Alliance) held its annual meeting outside the United States for the first time ever, convening in Riviera Maya, Mexico, 9 to 12 February 2016. The meeting location reflected the Alliance's increasingly international membership, with 32 U.S. members and 29 non-U.S. members spanning 17 countries.

The meeting included legislative and public policy updates from around the world; special sessions on the U.S. Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) new proposed Marine Mammal Rule; and a presentation by Dr. Lorenzo Rojas Bracho, coordinator of research and conservation of marine mammals for the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change in Mexico, on the status of efforts to save the critically endangered vaquita.

The meeting included talks by a philosopher and university professor on the proposal for non-human rights for animals and from a prominent celebrity and host of an animal show on celebrities and animal rights activism. To lend perspective on navigating the social media landscape on marine mammal topics, the meeting also featured presentations from the editor-in-chief of an ocean topics website, the CEO of a communications firm, and a representative from an Alliance member facility about a successful recent multi-platform campaign.

Included in the meeting this year were visits to the following Alliance member facilities: Delphinus Xcaret, Delphinus Riviera Maya, and Dolphin Discovery Puerto Aventuras.

The chairs of the Alliance Scientific Advisory Committee, Education Committee, Veterinary Committee, Communications Committee, Policy and Planning Committee, Animal Management Committee, and Stranding Committee gave updates on their work as did the Alliance bottlenose dolphin studbook keeper and representatives from professional member organizations, including the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and the International Marine Animal Trainers Association.

Four newly accredited members were welcomed into the Alliance: Coral World Ocean Park, Delphinus Interactive Aquarium Cancún, Dolphin Discovery Anguilla, and Dolphins Plus Bayside. Seven re-accreditations also were recognized: Discovery Cove, Dolphin Discovery Grand Cayman, Dolphin Discovery Isla Mujeres, Mystic Aquarium, Oceans of Fun, Point Defiance, and Vancouver Aquarium. Four prospective member facilities made presentations about their work.

The meeting was preceded by an Alliance Board and Committee Chair meeting.

Meeting sponsors this year were Animal Necessity, Atlantic/Pacific, Bionic Bait, Delphinus, Dolphin Discovery, Georgia Aquarium, McRoberts Sales Co., Nassal, PGAV Destinations, and Pisces Seafood.

Thank you to *Aquatic Mammals* for the opportunity to share an overview of our 2016 Annual Meeting.