



## News Release

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### **Minnesota Zoo calls on teachers to register for the 10th annual ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge**

*Students will have the opportunity to design exhibits for bison and prairie dogs, whose habitats can be seen from the Zoo's brand-new Treetop Trail*

APPLE VALLEY, Minn. – The Minnesota Zoo is celebrating 10 years of its award-winning [ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge](#) presented by Flint Hills Resources. Beginning in 2014 with 25 teachers, this program now attracts thousands of students from multiple states and nations each year. Teachers of students grades three through 12 are encouraged to apply to the program by Nov. 17 to take part in the competition.

The ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge is a yearlong project challenging elementary, middle and high school students to develop solutions to real zoo-based problems. Using STEM concepts, students work in groups to design and present solutions at the Zoo. In March, select groups will be invited to showcase their design solutions to Zoo staff and professional engineers from Flint Hills Resources. Top student teams will win prizes for conservation, innovation, teamwork and other zookeeper categories. [Click here](#) to watch a short video about the program and a volunteer ZOOMS judge.

“For 10 years, the ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge has given the next generation of problem-solvers the opportunity to grow their skills and envision STEM careers in this important field,” said John Frawley, director of the Minnesota Zoo and president of the Minnesota Zoo Foundation. “We are delighted to continue to bring this challenge to more students every year and are excited for the year to come.”

This year's competition will feature the Minnesota Zoo's bison and black-tailed prairie dogs. Students will have the opportunity to redesign the existing bison and prairie dog exhibits or to design group-based enrichment for the animals in the new space. The bison and black-tailed prairie dog habitats are visible from the Minnesota Zoo's new Treetop Trail – the world's longest elevated pedestrian loop. Flint Hills Resources recently announced a [\\$1 million donation](#) to the Minnesota Zoo, helping make the Treetop Trail a reality.

“We are thrilled to see the ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge grow and give the next generation of scientists and engineers engaging experiences at a world-class zoo,” said Heather Rein,

director of community affairs at Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery. “Having students work with animals along the Zoo’s new Treetop Trail is the perfect way to celebrate 10 years of this incredible program.”

The ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge is made possible by a partnership between the Minnesota Zoo and Flint Hills Resources, which started in 1989. The Minnesota Zoo has received top honors from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums for the ZOOMS education program.

### **About the Minnesota Zoo**

The Minnesota Zoo is a year-round destination providing a window into the natural world. With hundreds of species of animals, worldwide conservation efforts and acres of scenic beauty, the Zoo is a resource to connect people, animals and the natural world to save wildlife. For more information visit [mnzoo.org](http://mnzoo.org). The Minnesota Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and an institutional member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

### **About Flint Hills Resources**

Flint Hills Resources is a leading refining company with operations primarily in the Midwest and Texas. Flint Hills operates the Pine Bend refinery in Rosemount, Minnesota and two refineries in Corpus Christi, Texas with a combined crude oil processing capacity of more than 700,000 barrels per day. The company produces, markets and transports refined products including gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, asphalt and heating oils. Flint Hills Resources also owns and/or operates more than 4,000 miles of pipelines, including the Minnesota Pipe Line, that transport crude oil, refined petroleum products, natural gas liquids and chemicals that are delivered through a distribution system of more than 40 terminals throughout the Midwest and Texas.

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