



Helping Sanctuaries Help Animals

May 27, 2020

In February and March, 2020, the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) received official whistleblower complaints regarding a GFAS Accredited sanctuary, Project Chimps. In compliance with GFAS standard operating procedures, a formal analysis of the complaints was initiated promptly. This analysis included an investigation of all relevant information and documents requested and received, as well as all items observed during an on-site visit and multiple interviews with Project Chimps' personnel and Board, conducted by GFAS staff to determine any areas of non-compliance with the GFAS Standards of Excellence. In addition, Project Chimps contracted a veterinarian with primate expertise to provide individual health assessments for all resident chimpanzees, which have been completed successfully to date.

The investigative portion of the complaint analysis concluded in early April, 2020 with full cooperation and responsiveness from Project Chimps' leadership. Subsequently, GFAS developed a detailed set of recommendations for the sanctuary, including items that will serve to further enhance individualized animal care and enrichment protocols; human and animal safety; and facility renovations and maintenance. Project Chimps is in the process of implementing this agreed upon plan and expects to have completed all items by August 1, 2020. Per GFAS procedure, a follow-up site visit coinciding with Project Chimp's regular renewal date will then be conducted. Project Chimps has remained a fully accredited sanctuary throughout this investigation.

GFAS continues to work collaboratively with Project Chimps to provide guidance, support, and all available and appropriate resources to promote best practices and ensure on-going alignment with GFAS Standards.

## GFAS and Project Chimps Agreed Upon Recommendations for Operational Improvements



After the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) completed their review of our operations in comparison with the GFAS Great Ape Standards, Project Chimps agreed to implement the following recommendations to improve our program:

Medical Review – Project Chimps has always consulted with outside veterinarians who have primate experience. Very particular details of medical cases had come into question and, at the request of GFAS, we formally contracted with one of these consulting vets who has extensive chimpanzee experience. The contracted vet completed an in-person site visit and thorough review of the individual cases that had been brought into question, concluding that all were currently in good health. The consulting vet has continued to support our medical team through weekly meetings to review ongoing and new cases and to complete the review of all medical files. While Project Chimps has always maintained medical records for each chimpanzee, GFAS further recommended that each medical file contain a “cover sheet”, a health assessment and care plan, that highlights the information contained within the medical record along with physical, social and nutritional recommendations.

Administrative Controls - As a young organization, we are continuing to generate our written protocols as we grow and develop new processes. GFAS recommended that we prioritize authoring certain Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS) and make updates to our daily check lists to better capture daily activities to eliminate concerns on such items moving forward.

- These SOPS were:
  - Health Assessment & Care Plan Creation SOP
  - Training Segregation Facilitation Sedation SOP
  - Fecal Collection SOP
  - Body Condition Score and Monthly Weight SOP
  - Habitat Access and Rotation SOP
- Additional fields added to the daily checklists were:
  - Type of bedding provided daily
  - Indoor temperatures at opening and closing
  - Lixit and food hopper disinfection date
  - Type of physical enrichment provided daily

Enrichment Schedule Controls – All members of the care team have open access to the physical enrichment items that are in rotational use for the chimpanzees. While food enrichment items are scheduled as they need to be created in advance, physical enrichment items were “keeper choice”. The Enrichment Committee has implemented a similar planned schedule for physical enrichment items to ensure the rotation of the items is as wildly varied as possible. As noted above, this is now documented on the daily checklists to ensure compliance with the schedule.

Physical Setups – Project Chimps had already planned to install several new climbing structures in 2020 and had assigned the designs of such as individual employee goals to be completed within the calendar year. GFAS requested that certain structures be prioritized, which included the addition of low platforms and a central climbing structure inside the Chateau.

Staff Support – GFAS and Project Chimps agreed that any work that needed to be completed in the “red zone”, area on the floor that is painted red and within proximity of meshed areas where the chimpanzees reside, will require a second trained person to be present to act as a spotter. GFAS further noted that some of our employees were unaware or confused on the zoonoses status of the chimpanzees, believing them to have diseases they do not have and requested we address the training and PPE protocols to ensure all were properly informed. Lastly, GFAS recommends Project Chimp add a staffing position to focus on behavioral needs and/or enrichment for the chimps. We did in fact have this position in our organizational chart and attempted to hire one in 2019 but were unable to secure a suitable candidate. We will revisit reopening this position in the near future.