

Assiniboine Park Zoo Launches Disposable Mask Recycling Program

For immediate release: Winnipeg, April 22, 2021 – In celebration of Earth Day, the Assiniboine Park Conservancy is pleased to announce the launch of a new disposable mask recycling program at Assiniboine Park Zoo.

“Over the course of the global COVID-19 pandemic, disposable masks have become a serious environmental concern around the world,” said Renata Machado, Sustainability Coordinator, Assiniboine Park Conservancy. “As a conservation organization, we want to be part of the solution to this problem.”

There are several environmental concerns related to disposable masks. Carelessly discarded masks are a new source of litter in our communities. They present a potential biohazard, can be hazardous to wildlife, and are a growing source of pollution in our lakes, rivers and oceans. Those that do end up in the garbage are accumulating in landfills.

“We are pleased to offer Zoo visitors an option that will help keep disposable masks out of our landfills and our environment,” added Machado.

To offer the new service, the Conservancy has partnered with TerraCycle, an established social enterprise that offers recycling programs for hard-to recycle waste in 21 countries around the world.

A weather-proof collection bin, designed and built by Conservancy staff to accommodate TerraCycle’s Zero Waste Box system, is now located at the Zoo exit, providing visitors with a convenient place to safely deposit their disposable masks as they leave the Zoo. When the TerraCycle box is full, it will be removed and replaced with an empty box. The full box will be sealed and stored for 72 hours, then transported to a recycling facility where the contents are sorted and broken down into separate materials that are recycled and incorporated into new products.

All non-woven disposable plastic-based masks can be recycled, including 3-ply surgical, dust masks, KN95, and N95 masks. Paper and cloth masks cannot be recycled.

Under current public health orders, Zoo visitors are required to wear masks in all indoor public places and encouraged to wear them outdoors when physical distancing is more challenging or unpredictable.

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