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San Francisco Zoo's famous rescued Grizzly Bear sisters enjoy the new "Hearst Grizzly Gulch"

Zoo goes and grizzly bears get up close and personal at one of the largest bear exhibits in North America

In June, guests to the San Francisco Zoo – the largest zoological park in Northern California – will journey to the rugged regions of North America to view the Zoo's beloved female grizzly bears, Kachina and Kiona, in a new expansive habitat called Hearst Grizzly Gulch. The \$3.7 million habitat features a sunny meadow, pool, herb garden, mountain stream waterfall and heated rocks for the 4-year-old bears to do what they do best -- explore, romp, swim, fish, dig and nap. At one acre, Hearst Grizzly Gulch is one of the largest naturalistic environments dedicated to grizzly bears in any zoo and the newest animal habitat at the San Francisco Zoo since 2004.

"Thanks to the dedication and commitment of the Zoological Society Board Members and the generous grant from Hearst Foundation, we now have a new grizzly bear exhibit that will help families appreciate these intelligent mammals, fascinates guests with the remarkable tale of Kachina and Kiona, as well as Monarch the Zoo's first ever grizzly bear and ignites a call for action in preserving grizzly bears in North America," said Zoo's Executive Director, Manuel Mollinedo.

The Hearst Grizzly Gulch celebrates a milestone in the lives of the orphaned, Montana-born sisters who warmed the hearts of Bay Area residents with the bittersweet story of getting a second chance at life. The orphaned bears were originally slated to be euthanized after they were considered "problem" animals for getting too close to developed areas and into a rancher's grain storage. In the fall of 2004, San Francisco Zoo Board Member Fred Carroll notified the Zoo of the bears' dire situation. With the cooperation of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department, the Zoo agreed to provide a home for the two grizzly bears. Kachina and Kiona, whose names in Native American dialect mean "sacred dancer" and "brown hills" respectively, marked the return of grizzly bears to the Zoo since 1989.

"I am honored to be a part of this wonderful story and to have helped raise funds for the bears' new home," said Carroll, chair of the Hearst Grizzly Gulch Campaign. "Hearst Grizzly Gulch offers both a charismatic and interactive environment for the grizzly girls, and delivers an important conservation message about North America's diverse and endangered wildlife."

The Zoo's newest exhibit will offer an intimate perspective of the grizzly bears, providing up-close encounters of Kachina and Kiona through eye-level and underwater viewing. From eye-level, guests will marvel at the bears' distinctive looks including their brown-colored coats, curved claws, long snout and enormous stature. Through the underwater observation point, Kachina and Kiona will engage visitors by frolicking in the pool or fishing for an afternoon snack.

"The glass viewing provides families a rare chance to go nose-to-nose with Kachina and Kiona in a safe environment," said Mollinedo. "We expect visitors to become enthralled with their beauty and distinct personalities."

Design and development of Hearst Grizzly Gulch was completed with sustainability and the bears' interests in mind. Incorporated into the exhibit was the Zoo's original goat hill, which measures 20 feet high, to serve as the mountain stream waterfall and a climbing structure. In an effort to satisfy Kachina and Kiona's inquisitiveness, the exhibit crew created a multitude of

enrichment areas for the bears to demonstrate their natural behaviors of foraging, digging and razing.

“Knowing how smart bears are, we built the exhibit with the mindset of keeping the grizzly girls mentally and physically stimulated,” said Bob Jenkins, the Zoo’s director of animal care and conservation. “Expanding upon infrastructure from previous animal exhibits and creating enrichment areas throughout Hearst Grizzly Gulch, such as leaving large tree stumps inside the exhibit, offers the opportunity for our bears to run amok and showcase their natural behavior.” Grizzly bears are considered North America’s largest omnivore, which means that they eat both animals and plants. Equipped with an excellent sense of smell and powerful jaws, grizzly bears are able to enjoy eating a variety of foods which can include berries, bulbs, nuts, fish and small to large mammals. Inside Grizzly Gulch, the Zoo’s bears will savor the taste of fish or sink their mouths and paws into their favorite plants. “It’s vital for us to present Kachina and Kiona with a healthy diet selection” said Jenkins. “From prodding in the garden for berry and grape plants to discovering hidden treats left behind by keepers to scooping out fish placed in the pool, these bears will undoubtedly have plenty of activity-based eating.”

Positioned alongside Hearst Grizzly Gulch are several interactive graphic panels, teaching families about these magnificent animals. Here, guests will learn more about grizzly bears’ natural history, geographic range, and physical attributes. In addition to animal factoids, the historical prominence of the Zoo will be shared through the chronicles of Monarch the grizzly bear. Although Monarch never set paw in the current Zoo location, he inspired Herbert Fleishhacker to pursue his dream of establishing the San Francisco Zoo that we know today.

Recognized as the California state mammal and the symbol of the California state flag, the grizzly bear is now extinct in the state. Between 1800 and 1975, the grizzly bear population in the lower 48 states decreased from 50,000 to less than 1,000. The decline can be attributed to human development, livestock depredation control, commercial trapping and unregulated hunting. The life span of a grizzly bear ranges from 20 – 30 years.