



The South Carolina Aquarium at a Glance February 11, 2010

The South Carolina Aquarium inspires conservation of the natural world by exhibiting and caring for animals, by excelling in education and research, and by providing an exceptional visitor experience.

Ownership and Administration:

- Developed by the City of Charleston, under the leadership of Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
- Hilton C. Smith, Jr. is Chairman of the Board of Directors
- Staff includes specialists in conservation, education, animal husbandry, marketing, visitor relations, finance and management.

Business Operations:

- The \$69 million cost of building and opening the South Carolina Aquarium was provided by both private and public partnerships.
- The Aquarium is a 501(c)(3) registered private not-for-profit corporation. As such, the Aquarium relies on the generosity of individuals, corporations and foundations to fulfill its mission of education and conservation of the aquatic environments of South Carolina. The Aquarium does not receive local, state or federal tax support.
- The Aquarium opened with a total debt of \$11.75 million. Over the course of the last 10 years 50 percent of the debt payments were paid through profitable business operations and the other 50 percent through private donations. 22 percent, or \$1.3 million, of the total monies provided by private donations came from the Spaulding Paolozzi Foundation.
- Since opening the doors in May of 2000, business operations at the Aquarium have shown a positive net asset year-over-year. Over the last 5 years the Aquarium has shown a 5-year average of \$918,000 in profits each year.
- The Chamber of Commerce estimates the Aquarium's annual economic impact to be \$153 million dollars, sustaining more than 2100 local jobs. In 2009, despite the economic downturn, the Aquarium exceeded its business forecast and showed an 11.5% increase in attendance.

Moving Forward:

- *Investments in the guest experience:*
 - Through debt relief, the Aquarium is positioned to invest in additional enhancements to the guest experience. The Aquarium will welcome a new albino alligator exhibit on March 20, 2010 one of less than 50 in the world. During the year, the Aquarium will continue to strengthen original exhibits, upgrade flooring and provide fresh paint throughout the interior. For example, the Aquarium's Carolina Seas exhibit underwent a complete renovation at the end of January 2010 including refurbishing to the coral and new species within the tank. Additionally, the Aquarium will invest in new entertainment experiences with the opening of a 4-D theater.
- *Investments in education:*
 - Our state's schoolchildren will enjoy greater access to quality education programs. To date, nearly 90,000 schoolchildren have enjoyed the Aquarium's free Structured School Programs and all South Carolina teachers can continue to enjoy free admission.
 - Recognizing many schools are unable to take field trips during these difficult times, the Aquarium recently invested in a new program, *Aquarium Rovers*, an outreach program that allows Aquarium educators to take animals from boa constrictors to penguins into local classrooms.
- *Investments in conservation:*
 - The Aquarium will continue to serve the community with an even stronger commitment to conservation; from on-site educational classes, to business practices which include extensive recycling, including a newly-founded Wine Cork Recycling Program, to the use of bio-diesel to run the Aquarium's generator.
 - The Aquarium will maintain a commitment to sustainable seafood education through the Aquarium's Sustainable Seafood Initiative, which together with over 86 partner restaurants and chefs, helps consumers make smart choices about the seafood they eat.
 - The investment and commitment to the conservation of wildlife and wild places has allowed Aquarium staff to conduct fish surveys under the Atlantic Ocean and to count freshwater mussels in South Carolina's streams and rivers.
 - This commitment and investment is the basis for the creation of the Aquarium's Sea Turtle Rescue Program, which has rehabilitated and released 43 turtles back into the wild. Today, 11 patients representing three different sea turtle species are undergoing care and on the road to recovery.