

**REPORT/RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
OF BIG BEAR VALLEY RECREATION AND PARK DISTRICT
AND RECORD OF ACTION**

January 13, 2026

FROM

NOEL CASTILLO, Director, Department of Public Works – Special Districts

SUBJECT

Out-of-Country Travel Request

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Acting as the governing body of Big Bear Valley Recreation and Park District, approve out-of-country travel for the Curator of the Big Bear Valley Recreation and Park District – Big Bear Alpine Zoo to travel to the Bahamas, to represent the Zoo at the 2026 Association of Zoos and Aquariums Directors' Policy Conference, for the period of January 25, 2026 through January 30, 2026, with all travel and related expenses fully sponsored by the Friends of the Big Bear Alpine Zoo and no cost to the District other than staff time.

(Presenter: David Doublet, Assistant Director, 386-8811)

COUNTY AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Promote the Countywide Vision.

Operate in a Fiscally-Responsible and Business-Like Manner.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approval of this item will not result in the use of Discretionary General Funding (Net County Cost). Travel, lodging, transportation, and conference attendance costs associated with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Directors' Policy Conference will be fully sponsored by the Friends of the Big Bear Alpine Zoo via monetary donation pursuant to County Policy 06-01. As a result, there is no direct cost to the Big Bear Valley Recreation and Park District other than staff time associated with participation in the conference.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

AZA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and recreation. AZA represents more than 235 facilities in the United States and overseas, which collectively draw more than 200 million visitors annually. AZA-accredited facilities meet the highest standards in animal care and welfare while providing a safe, educational, and engaging experience for families. In addition, AZA institutions contribute millions of dollars annually to support scientific research, conservation, and education programs.

The Directors' Policy Conference (DPC) provides a professional development opportunity for the Big Bear Alpine Zoo (BBAZ) Curator Jessica Whiton (Curator) to strengthen leadership competencies and gain exposure to policy and executive-level issues impacting accredited zoos and aquariums. Attendance will enable the Curator to network with AZA leaders, exchange best practices, and build relationships that may support future operational, conservation, and

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educational initiatives. The knowledge, skills, and connections gained will further contribute to stronger wildlife programs, improved public engagement, enhanced compliance with federal and AZA-accreditation standards, and ultimately support the District's and Zoo's reputation for educational opportunities for the public, showcasing local wildlife through enriching, natural exhibits and world-class animal care for the overall benefit of the community.

Per County Policy No. 08-04, prior approval for travel outside of the United States for County business must be authorized by the Board of Directors.

The District recommends approval of the out-of-country travel request for Curator to attend the DPC. Attendance at the conference aligns with the strategic goals of the District by strengthening BBAZ's role as a leader in animal welfare and conservation and supporting the continued development of its leadership team.

PROCUREMENT

Not applicable.

REVIEW BY OTHERS

This item has been reviewed by County Counsel (Aaron Gest, Deputy County Counsel, 387-5455) on December 29, 2025; and County Finance and Administration (Matthew Dalton, Finance Analyst, 387-5005) on December 30, 2025.

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Record of Action of the Board of Directors
Big Bear Valley Recreation and Park District

APPROVED (CONSENT CALENDAR)

Moved: Curt Hagman Seconded: Joe Baca, Jr.
Ayes: Col. Paul Cook (Ret.), Jesse Armendarez, Dawn Rowe, Curt Hagman, Joe Baca, Jr.

Lynna Monell, SECRETARY

BY 
DATED: January 13, 2026



cc: File - Travel/Out-of-Country
MBA 01/20/2026