**For Immediate Release**

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# ZooMontana Receives $200,000 Sunderland Foundation Grant

Funding Completes Foster Waterfowl Refuge Campaign

**Billings, MT (October 15, 2021)** - ZooMontana recently received a $200,000 grant from the Sunderland Foundation of Overland Park Kansas, nearly completing a yearlong, $1.1 million campaign for the Zoo's new Foster Waterfowl Refuge. A unique concept designed by Billings based Land Design, the new habitat is designed to be a native fish refuge and a natural fly-through for migrating waterfowl, creating a much-needed urban escape for wildlife.

The Foster Waterfowl Refuge is the largest project taken on by the Zoo since 2008. Kick-started by a lead gift from Billings resident Cynthia Foster as a memorial to her late husband Paul Milan Foster, the project quickly garnered support from Ducks Unlimited, Phillips 66, First Interstate Bank, The State of Montana, several foundations, and local residents. "The excitement behind this project was incredible" said Jeff Ewelt, Executive Director of ZooMontana. "Before we knew it, we were just shy of our goal. A few days later, we received the unbelievable news from the Sunderland Foundation that they were going to help us wrap up the campaign. It's a great feeling moving into a project with 100% of the funding in place. We're so thankful to all involved, helping us turn the ugliest area of the Zoo into one of the most beautiful." added Ewelt.

Complete with a raised observation deck, underwater fish viewing, and boardwalks, the Foster Waterfowl Refuge will be a multi-sensory, immersive experience for Zoo guests. From the standpoint of habitat quality, management practices, overall mission, and service to wildlife through education and conservation biology programs, the new habitat represents an unusual opportunity to create an "ideal" wetland. The educational goal of the Refuge is to promote environmental stewardship by providing an appreciation and a hands-on understanding of the local ecosystem and the role of humans in it. As elsewhere, area youth in south-central Montana appear limited in environmental knowledge, thus the Foster Waterfowl Refuge seeks to improve the human-nature connection by developing outdoor learning opportunities that spark guest's interests while simultaneously improving their science literacy.

K2 Construction is planning to begin the project this Fall with a hopeful completion date of mid-2022.

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**About ZooMontana**

ZooMontana is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3), AZA accredited educational organization committed to the best in animal care, conservation and wildlife education. As Montana's only Zoological and Botanical Park, ZooMontana is dedicated to wildlife education and conservation revolving around the 45th parallel of earth. The Zoo is located at 2100 S. Shiloh Rd. in Billings, MT just off the Zoo Drive exit (443) of Interstate 90. Find the Zoo on the web at zoomontana.org and on Facebook. ZooMontana is open every day at 10am.

**About The Sunderland Foundation**

The Sunderland Foundation was established in 1945 by Lester T. Sunderland, who served as President of the Ash Grove Cement Company for 33 years as a highly respected leader in the cement industry. Since its inception, the Foundation, which continues to be led by Lester T. Sunderland's descendants, has focused on supporting construction projects, awarding grants to nonprofits in the Kansas City region and other markets traditionally served by the Ash Grove Cement Company. The Sunderland Foundation makes grants annually to charitable organizations with tax exempt status under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Foundation prefers to make grants for construction and special interest projects rather than for annual operating expenses. https://www.sunderland.org/