

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Palm Oil Position Statement

Background

Palm oil is used to manufacture many of the products that we use and eat every day, such as chocolates, baked goods, cleaning products, shampoos, cosmetics, pet foods, and many more items. Palm oil and its derivatives can be listed on ingredient labels with over 600 different names. It is produced by growing oil palm trees (*Elaeis guineensis*), which is grown predominately in Malaysia and Indonesia. Palm oil cultivation is also expanding in other regions of the world such as South and Central America and central Africa due to their similar tropical climates.

Much of the world's palm oil is produced in a manner that harms wildlife and critical habitats. Historically, millions of hectares of rainforest have been cleared to create palm oil plantations. Deforestation and slash-and-burn land clearing for the purpose of palm oil cultivation still occurs today. As the rainforest is being depleted, many endangered and critically endangered species in Malaysia and Indonesia are losing their habitat to unsustainable palm oil plantations, including species found nowhere else on Earth, such as the Sumatran, the Bornean, and the Tapanuli species of orangutans. Cheyenne Mountain Zoo is home to critically endangered Sumatran and Bornean orangutans.

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo joined the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in 2010 as the first zoo to become a member alongside other environmental and social non-governmental organizations, palm oil producers, traders, manufacturers, retailers, banks, and investors. The RSPO brings together the voices of different stakeholders who work together to set strict standards for the production of palm oil. RSPO-certified palm oil does not contribute to deforestation, requires producers to protect primary and secondary forests, pays workers a decent living wage, does not employ forced or child labor, and peacefully coexists with wildlife. As a member, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo contributes to RSPO discussions, votes on RSPO principles and criteria (P&C) and resolutions, and works together with them to promote sustainable palm oil in North America and worldwide.

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo supports the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and the uptake of RSPO-certified sustainable palm oil

We envision a future where all palm oil producers practice environmentally-friendly agriculture, restore and protect wildlife populations, support healthy, thriving ecosystems, and pay their workers fairly.

There are ways to protect the rainforest and the species within it while also meeting global demand for palm oil.

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo supports the mission of the RSPO. **We believe that the answer to this issue lies within supporting sustainable palm oil, not boycotting palm oil.** Boycotting palm oil would leave a vacuum in the market for other edible oils to fill, such as soybean, rapeseed, or coconut. The oil palm produces 4 to 10 times more oil than its alternatives, therefore requiring much less land while producing a much greater yield. Palm oil also requires significantly less fertilizer, pesticides, and energy input than other edible oil crops. Additionally, millions of people in developing countries rely on palm oil cultivation for their only source of income, many of those people being smallholders and family-owned farms. Boycotting palm oil would harm the livelihoods of these people, and they would have much less incentive to produce sustainable palm oil. The Cheyenne Mountain Zoo stands for supporting the production and uptake of sustainable palm oil, not a boycott. We encourage our peer zoos and aquariums to join the RSPO and support RSPO-certified sustainable palm oil to be part of the solution.

What we do to help

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo works diligently to advance the promotion of sustainable palm oil in many ways.

Internally, we conduct a yearly inventory by going through the products we buy and make improvements on our purchasing to support RSPO-member companies. We also have dedicated staff for palm oil programming and attend RSPO conferences in Malaysia or Indonesia every other year to be involved in decision-making and to gain field experience.

We continuously lobby our peer zoos and aquariums to join the RSPO and educate their own guests about the palm oil crisis. We conduct a yearly survey of members of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) to assess their messaging around palm oil. Using the responses from the survey, we reach out to zoos and aquariums to offer advice on their palm oil programs to ensure our industry is sending a unified message. Additionally, we offer free assistance to other zoos and aquariums if they would like to start a palm oil awareness program or conduct an inventory at their organization.

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo is the North American regional administrator of the [PalmOil Scan](#) app developed by the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). We work in conjunction with WAZA, Chester Zoo in the United Kingdom, Auckland Zoo in New Zealand, and Adelaide Zoo in Australia to rate companies and give them a score of Excellent, Good, Poor, or No Commitment. A company's score is based on their membership to the RSPO, the submission of an Annual Communication of Progress (ACOP), whether or not they have a public commitment and time-line to using only 100% deforestation-free palm oil, and the amount of physical RSPO-certified sustainable palm oil the company uses out of their total volume. The PalmOil Scan app

is a powerful tool that can help consumers make educated choices about the companies they are supporting.

At Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, there are many educational resources on palm oil in our Primate World exhibit, where our resident Sumatran and Bornean Orangutans live. We offer action items like petitions and letter-writing stations to facilitate guests' participation in lobbying companies to make the switch to sustainable palm oil. These letters are also available on the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo website's [Palm Oil Toolkit](#), an extensive open access library of resources for other conservation organizations to adapt and use as needed. Additionally, we have a "Shopping Store" full of everyday products that guests can scan with the PalmOil Scan app to learn more about their own impact through their consumer choices. Our Primate World staff and animal keepers are thoroughly educated on the topic, and engage zoo guests in educative conversations about the issue.

For more information:

If you are interested in learning more about Cheyenne Mountain Zoo's work on sustainable palm oil, the RSPO, or any other related palm oil inquiry, please contact us at the information below:

Email: palmoil@cmzoo.org

CMZ Palm Oil Coordinator Phone: (719) 424-7869

PalmOil Scan App: www.cmzoo.org/palmoilscan

PalmOil Toolkit: www.cmzoo.org/palmoiltoolkit

CMZ Palm Oil Webpage: www.cmzoo.org/palmoil