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*An international organization dedicated to conservation through public display, education, and research*

October. 14, 2016

Mr. Stephen Kaufer  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
TripAdvisor  
400 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue  
Needham, MA 02494

Dear Mr. Kaufer,

I am writing to you on behalf the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks & Aquariums about your decision to stop selling tickets to animal programs where visitors come into contact with animals under human care, including “swim with programs.” The Alliance is the preeminent trade association and accrediting body for zoos, aquariums, and marine parks throughout the world that exhibit marine mammals. Many of our members offer “swim with” and other interactive educational programs in which contact with animals is involved. Our mission is to support the highest standards of care for marine mammals and to contribute to their conservation in the wild through public education, and scientific research. Our 61 accredited institutions in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean collectively possess the largest body of marine mammal experience and expertise in the world.

While we applaud and share TripAdvisor’s desire to promote animal welfare in tourism, we were disheartened to see AMMPA-accredited “swim-with” and other interactive programs that have operated safely and humanely for many years implicitly included in the category of programs to which you will no longer sell simply because there may be contact involved. Interactive programs are at the heart of the work of modern zoos and aquariums because they facilitate a very special human-animal connection that leaves guests inspired, caring about the animals, and wanting to conserve them in the wild.

Contrary to allegations by PETA and other animal rights organizations, science shows that dolphins and other marine mammals in accredited facilities thrive and live as long as or, in many cases, much longer than their counterparts in the wild. They receive high quality, nutritious food, regular and preventative veterinary care by licensed professionals, and exercise and play in ways that are mentally and physically beneficial. The training they receive enriches their lives and enables them to participate in their own health care.

In the U.S., marine mammal facilities are regulated by three federal agencies, including the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), which inspects the facilities. In its Proposed Rule earlier this year, APHIS acknowledged the tremendous safety record of marine mammal interactive programs. The agency wrote: “We note that interactive programs have been operating for over 20 years without any indications of health problems or incidents of aggression in marine mammals, as evidenced by medical records maintained by licensed facilities and observations by experienced APHIS inspectors.” (Footnotes 2 and 24 Fed. Reg. 5629 Feb. 3, 2016).

In short, there is no animal welfare issue related to interactive programs in AMMPA-accredited facilities throughout the world. That is because AMMPA accreditation standards help our facilities optimize the health and welfare of and environmental conditions for marine mammals and maximize their educational and scientific impact. These rigorous standards cover a dozen different areas, including animal husbandry, animal training, interactive programs, water and environmental quality, education, and scientific research and conservation, among others.

We would like to show you the excellent care we provide and the daily impact we make on our guests.. **We invite you and your senior team to meet with us at one of our accredited facilities in Orlando, Discovery Cove, on either Friday, Nov. 11 or Friday, Nov. 18** to see just how these high standards actually work in our facilities and to observe for yourselves the well-being of the participating animals, the safety of the programs, the depth of our accreditation process, as well as the educational and inspirational value experienced by guests. We would also ask experts from some of our other accredited facilities to participate in this meeting and address any questions you may have about our programs. This in-person meeting would also give us an opportunity to share with you more about our public education, conservation, scientific research, and rescue and rehabilitation work, all of which are requirements of AMMPA membership.

Many AMMPA facilities throughout the world are long-time partners with TripAdvisor, often securing the top TripAdvisor rating for their city or region and garnering hundreds of favorable guest reviews, yet it appears that many of them would be adversely affected if your decision is implemented as it has been described. We hope you will accept this invitation to meet and discuss these issues in person next month and explore ways in which we might instead work together to advance animal welfare in tourism. If neither of these dates work for you, we are happy to work with you to find an alternative date.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [kdezio@ammpa.org](mailto:kdezio@ammpa.org). We will follow up with your office next week on your availability for the meeting.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Dezio  
President & CEO