

Wildlife to roam spot in Algiers

*Threatened species
to breed at center*

By Benjamin Alexander-Bloch
Staff writer

The Audubon Nature Institute and San Diego Zoo Global are moving forward on a partnership that could help rebuild threatened species for generations to come, breaking ground today on an Algiers facility to house larger groups of roaming animals in an environment that the entities hope will help create more sustainable populations.

The so-called Alliance for Sustainable Wildlife, which will house more than two dozen endangered and threatened species, is expected to be completed in 2017, said Joel Hamilton, Audubon's vice president and general curator.

The partnership's 1,000-acre breeding site, which will be one of the largest of its kind in the nation, is based on the model that certain animals will more easily breed, and will breed with more genetic diversity, when they can roam in large herds or flocks.

Animals are expected to arrive at the Alliance for Sustainable Wildlife in October. The

See **WILDLIFE**, A-12



STAFF MAP

CONTINUED

San Diego, Audubon form rare alliance

WILDLIFE from A-1

center's second phase is projected to begin in 2015.

While zoos and aquariums around the nation often work together to help repopulate just one species, the partnership between Audubon and San Diego marks the first time two organizations are tackling conservation on such a broad scope, according to officials with the two organizations.

While large-scale breeding programs do exist, such as the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Texas, they are run by only one institution, as opposed to an alliance.

"What we are doing is looking at the population of animals that we have in zoos and at some of the species that have not been as successful at breeding as we would like and therefore aren't as sustainable as we'd like for the future of zoos," said Hamilton, who oversees the zoo's animal programs and the Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center, where the breeding center will be built.

Tucked away in the dense, hardwood forest in lower coast



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS ARCHIVE



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The first phase of the breeding center involves building areas for bongo, LEFT, and okapi, among other animals. The animals will begin coming after fences, roads and barns are constructed.

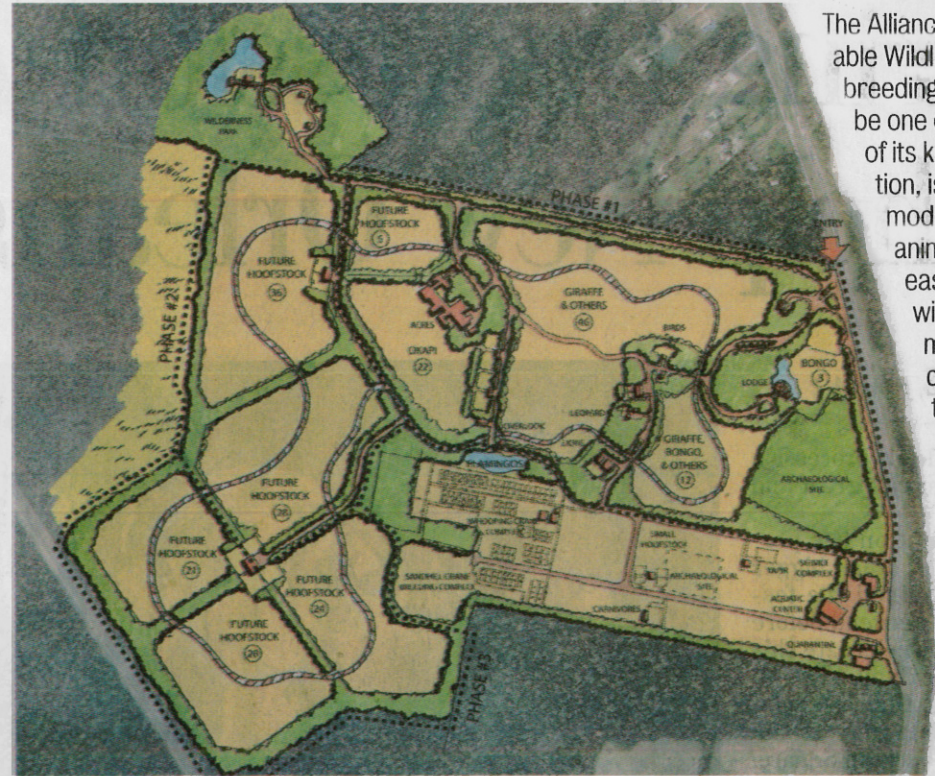
Algiers along the Mississippi River, the Species Survival Center opened in 1993; Audubon already has invested about \$30 million in its development.

San Diego Zoo Global is expected to contribute about \$10 million for the project over the next five years for more capital improvements. Audubon and the San Diego Zoo will share operating costs.

The first phase of the breeding center involves building

areas for Masai giraffe, bongo antelope and okapi, among other animals. The animals are expected to begin coming into the area by October, after fences, roads and barns are constructed.

In explaining the program when it was announced last year, Rick Gulley, a New Orleans native who is chairman of the Zoological Society of San Diego board, said that "animals that live in herds or flocks, by their



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very nature need to roam, roam to form large social groups, and roam to breed."

Having a larger species group also lets animals pick their own mates, and could provide them with the skills needed if they

were ever released back into the wild, said Bob Wiese, chief life sciences officer of the San Diego Zoo Global.

While the general public will not be able to visit the refuge, it is likely universities will be

given access and eventually classroom field trips might be offered.

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