



HENRY VILAS ZOO®

Conservation Action Messaging
Evaluation and Training Toolkit

Henry Vilas Zoo

Intent, Impact, & Insight

Knowledge remains insignificant without intention to shape it.

Intent:

- Addressing gaps in guest retention of conservation action messages.
- Intentionality in interactions with guests at zoos and aquariums.

Impact:

- Enhancing zoos as leaders in environmental education and wildlife conservation.
- Creating meaningful conservation conversations.
- Inspiring connection between wildlife and action.

Insight:

- We inspire acts of empathy for wildlife through acts of empathy towards our guests.
- It is important that we *Celebrate Effort Always*.
- Understanding guests helps us help them understand wildlife.

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All Links to These Tools Can Be Found By Following the Link or QR Code Below:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vq_zlvWSEJo2ubGbbjChpFQkpK0GW3MQebtsxkoPmZc/edit?usp=sharing



Conservation Action Retention Pre-Test

What is the Pre-Test?

The pre-test was created to gauge initial guest retention levels of conservation action messaging around the zoo. The survey also works to get a better understanding of why guests come to the zoo, how they prefer to learn, what they might remember learning about conservation, and to what capacity they might be willing to engage in conservation practices.

How it can be helpful:

- Insight on guests' initial retention level of conservation messages
- Insight on how guests think about and understand conservation topics
- Insights on why guests come to the zoo
- Insights on guests' connection/desire to help wildlife

Notes & Considerations from HVZ:

Throughout this survey, there are many instances where you can switch out text or images to be in accordance with your own institution. These can include exhibits, conservation actions, or animals. This text is bolded throughout the survey.

We received feedback from many parents of young families about how they would appreciate more kid-friendly ways to engage with information and take action. Many also mentioned that they often don't have time to stop and engage because they have to take care of young kids.

How to Use:

We set this survey up to be completed within a few minutes. Our approach involved a choice to take home a fun incentive after they completed the survey. This helped get more people with children to stop as the kids were interested in the incentive. Stickers were the main incentive that we offered. To capture a greater audience, we set up with two people. One person helped administer the surveys to adult guests while the other person gave educational talks and showed off biofacts to the children.

Guest Conservation Messaging Survey

1. What is your *primary* reason for coming to the zoo?

- For fun/entertainment
- To learn
- For a zoo program
- Visiting the Area
- Just for something to do

2. If you wanted to learn about an animal at the zoo, your preference would be to:

- Independently read signs and observe animals
- Listen to information about an animal from someone at the zoo
- Research it myself via website or other social media
- A combination of these

3. I would like to learn more about how I can help wildlife.

- | | | | | | | |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Strongly | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly |
| Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Agree |

4. Have you ever attended a **Keeper or Wildlife Champion chat**?

- Yes
- No
- I haven't heard of Keeper/Wildlife Champion chats

5. When I visit the zoo, I feel inspired to take action to help protect wildlife.

- | | | | | | | |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Strongly | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly |
| Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Agree |

6. “Henry Vilas Zoo wants to encourage guests to take action on behalf of wildlife. Let’s learn about some ways you can participate in conservation.”

Is there anything you think people might find confusing about this phrase?

7. Do you recall learning anything around the **zoo** about conservation?
- I recall learning about conservation and recall what it means
 - I recall learning about conservation, but don’t recall what it means
 - I don’t recall learning about conservation or what it means
8. Do you recall learning anything around the **zoo** about what actions you can take to help protect wildlife?
- I recall learning about conservation actions and recall specific examples
 - I recall learning about conservation actions, but don’t specific examples
 - I don’t recall learning about conservation actions or specific examples
9. If you recall specific examples of conservation actions, please provide an example.

10. Could you see yourself doing any of the following?

- Attending AZA accredited zoos (like Henry Vilas Zoo!)
- Talking about your favorite animal from the zoo
- Cleaning up trash when you see it
- Not supporting wild animals as pets/keeping wildlife wild
- Recycling
- Giving space to wild animals
- Reporting any suspicious wildlife hunting and trapping activity that you see
- Using less plastic
- Reducing use of fertilizers/pesticides

Thank you for caring for animals like Peru and Morrison here at the zoo and supporting efforts to protect their wild counterparts!



11. Any thoughts/feedback/favorite conservation action?

Transtheoretical Model of Change

What is the Transtheoretical Model Behavior Gauge?

This is a tool used to assess guests' mindsets and level of consideration in pursuing a behavior. This can be used to test out zoo related topics and guest readiness to take action.

- **Precontemplation:** Not thinking about change. Unaware of the impact of actions.
- **Contemplation:** Thinking about change. Weighing the pros and cons.
- **Preparation:** Ready to take action soon. Belief that it is a positive move.
- **Action:** Recently changed behavior. Motivated to stick with it.
- **Maintenance:** Actively maintaining new behavior. Guarding against relapse.

How it can be helpful:

- Tests readiness to change
- Tracks development of guest readiness over time
- Tracks how readiness changes based on implementation of new practices
- Provides insight on what conservation actions hit the mark/align with guests' interests

Notes & Considerations from HVZ:

This tool can be used and modified to further test actions that are in the pre-test. While the pre-test aims to get an initial idea of what guests might see themselves doing, surveying using the Transtheoretical Model allows you to go a step further and look into what exactly guests think about each action. What guests might not seem interested in from the pre-test might look different when they take this. It can dig into things they've never thought about, have no interest in, or what they might already do. The goal of this tool is to help you find topics and conservation actions that fit your guests and their interests.

What do you think about...?

Mark the box that correlates with the level of consideration that you have given these actions at this point in time.

	I have never thought about doing this	I am not interested in doing this	I am thinking about doing this	I am planning on doing this at the next opportunity	I already do this
Attending AZA accredited zoos (like Henry Vilas Zoo)					
Cleaning up trash when you see it					
Recycling					
Planting native plants at home					
Not supporting wild animals as pets/keeping wildlife wild					
Talking about your favorite animals from the zoo					
Adding a birdhouse around your home					
Reporting suspicious wildlife hunting and trapping activity					
Reducing use of fertilizers/pesticides					

How to test:

When you provide this survey to a guest, they will mark each box that corresponds to the level of consideration they have given each conservation action at that moment. Below is an example of what this might look like after completion.

	I have never thought about doing this	I am not interested in doing this	I am thinking about doing this	I am planning on doing this at the next opportunity	I already do this
Attending AZA accredited zoos (like Henry Vilas Zoo)					X
Cleaning up trash when you see it					X
Recycling					X
Planting native plants at home			X		
Not supporting wild animals as pets/keeping wildlife wild	X				
Talking about your favorite animals from the zoo					X

How to Calculate the Mean:

Scoring	What do you think about <u>(an action)</u> ?	TTM Stage
+0	I've never thought about doing this	Precontemplation
+1	I'm not interested in doing this	Contemplation
+2	I am thinking about doing this	Contemplation
+3	I am planning on doing this at the next chance	Preparation
+4	I already do this	Action

Each phrase that a guest is going to mark as their level of consideration has points associated with it. These also represent a stage of readiness for change. When you are surveying guests with this tool, you will have to turn those phrases into points to calculate the mean, then find the corresponding stage that represents your guests.

"I have never thought about doing this" = +0 points

"I'm not interested in doing this" = +1 points

"I am thinking about doing this" = +2 points

"I am planning on doing this at the next chance" = +3 points

"I already do this" = +4 points

Let's take a look at the example from above.

	I have never thought about doing this	I am not interested in doing this	I am thinking about doing this	I am planning on doing this at the next opportunity	I already do this
Attending AZA accredited zoos (like Henry Vilas Zoo)					X (+4)
Cleaning up trash when you see it					X (+4)
Recycling					X (+4)
Planting native plants at home			X (+2)		
Not supporting wild animals as pets/keeping wildlife wild	X (+0)				
Talking about your favorite animals from the zoo					X (+4)

4+4+4+2+0+4 OR (4*4)+2 = 18 18/6=3 Mean = 3 3 = Preparation stage

The sum comes from how many points each response is worth. But to calculate the mean from there, you are going to divide that sum by the number of conservation actions that you have provided. In this case, it would be six. So you divide the sum of 18 by the 6 actions and you get the mean of 3. This puts your guests in the preparation stage of change.

How did we get from 3 to preparation?

Scoring	TTM Stage
0	Precontemplation
1	Contemplation
2	Contemplation
3	Preparation
4	Action

0 = Precontemplation
 1 = Contemplation
 2 = Contemplation
 3 = Preparation
 4 = Action

How to Interpret Results:

Using the completed example table above, you can calculate the mean to be 3.00. By referring to the tables below, this means that the guest is in the Preparation stage. So this makes your job to provide doable actions that could move them to act, while highlighting the ways it can make positive change. You reinforce their beliefs while educating them on the real issues wildlife face.

Scoring	Mean Range Correspondance	TTM Stage
0	0-0.99	Precontemplation
1	1-1.99	Contemplation
2	2-2.99	Contemplation
3	3-3.99	Preparation
4	4	Action

Your mean probably isn't going to be a whole number. We recommend tracking 2 decimal points for greater specificity. When the mean falls in between, refer to this chart. Take note that the range for contemplation is larger than other stages, this just means that overall there has been more or less contemplation given to an action.

Conservation Action Interview Survey

What is the Interview Survey?

This survey was made to further break up information from the preliminary survey to gain deeper insight and improve guest understanding of the questions being asked. We have also included a script that is intended to be a rough suggestion of what to say to guests.

How it can be helpful:

- Additional feedback, greater insight
- Ability to make sure that guests understand the questions as intended
- Use additional feedback to understand if you are meeting the needs/wants of guests

Notes & Considerations from HVZ:

We found interviewing to provide us with a better understanding of how guests were responding and what they were thinking about when taking the preliminary survey. We observed that interviewing a guest allowed us to hear their extra thoughts about questions. Thus opening insight about how guests are perceiving and thinking about things.

The script was made for ease of replication purposes. However, a real interaction with guests is not going to follow a script and will feel much more natural as well as allow for individual methods of approaching an interview. So this does not at all mean that you have to read it word for word, but simply follow it roughly. We wanted to make sure that it was easy to as closely replicate what is said each time to make sure that we aren't changing things up too much with each different individual that surveys guests.

As a large portion of our population at Henry Vilas Zoo tends to be families with young kids, we chose survey locations that allowed parents and caregivers the time and space to complete the survey. We noticed at HVZ that it was more difficult to get our guests to stop when we chose to position ourselves close to an entrance or exit as they were ready to start looking around or were ready to leave.

Guest Conservation Action Interview

1. What would be your preferred method of learning about an animal at the zoo?

2. When I visit the zoo, I feel inspired to take action to help protect wildlife.

Strongly Strongly
Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

3. “Henry Vilas Zoo wants to encourage guests to take action on behalf of wildlife. Let’s learn about some ways you can participate in conservation.”

Is there anything you think people might find confusing about this phrase?

4. Do you recall learning anything around the **zoo** about conservation?

- I recall learning about conservation and recall what it means
- I recall learning about conservation, but don’t recall what it means
- I don’t recall learning about conservation or what it means

5. Do you recall learning anything around the **zoo** about what actions you can take to help protect wildlife?

- I recall learning about conservation actions and recall specific examples
- I recall learning about conservation actions, but don't specific examples
- I don't recall learning about conservation actions or specific examples

6. If you recall specific examples of conservation actions, please provide an example.

Interview Survey Script

Important Notes: (1) If a guest provides extra thoughts while taking this, you should write them down! It may not seem totally relevant, but it can still be valuable information. (2) It is always helpful to check that guests are understanding as you ask each question.

1. "Let's say you really wanted to learn about an animal here at the zoo. How would you want to learn about that animal?"

What would be your preferred method of learning about an animal at the zoo?

2. "I'm going to read you a statement and have you rate how much you agree or disagree on a scale of 1-5. With 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree."

When I visit the zoo, I feel inspired to take action to help protect wildlife

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

3. "I'm going to read you a statement and I want you to tell me if there's anything about it that people might find confusing."

"Henry Vilas Zoo wants to encourage guests to take action on behalf of wildlife. Let's learn about some ways you can participate in conservation."

Is there anything you think people might find confusing about this phrase?

4. “I’m going to ask you about something and I want you to tell me if you remember learning about them and if you remember the definition.”

Then read out the answer choices as such:

- “Yes, I learned about conservation and I remember its meaning”
- “Yes, I learned about conservation, but I don’t remember its meaning”
- “No, I don’t remember learning about conservation”

Do you recall learning anything around the zoo about **conservation**?

Mark only one oval.

- I recall learning about conservation and recall what it means
- I recall learning about conservation, but don't recall what it means
- I don't recall learning about conservation or what it means

5. “Same thing as last time, but I’m going to ask you about something and I want you to tell me if you remember learning about them and if you remember any **specific examples**.”

Then read out the answer choices as such:

- “Yes, I learned about conservation actions and I remember an example”
- “Yes, I learned about conservation, but I don’t remember an example”
- “No, I don’t remember learning about conservation actions”

Do you recall learning anything around the zoo about what **actions** you can take to help protect wildlife?

Mark only one oval.

- I recall learning about conservation actions and recall specific examples
- I recall learning about conservation actions, but don't recall specific examples
- I don't recall learning about conservation actions or recall any examples

6. If the guest says that they do remember examples in question 5, then ask them for an example they remember.

If you recall any specific conservation actions, please provide an example.

Key Findings at HVZ

What are the Key Findings?

These key findings below are what we observed as we tested our tools and interacted with guests at Henry Vilas Zoo. We began with a long term understanding of how our guests act, and observed and tested those understandings to help determine what we would be able to get out of further evaluation.

Visitors primarily come for fun: Families often prioritize entertainment over education. They may not have the time or inclination to read informational signs, especially with young children.

Short attention spans: Many guests won't take the time to fully read lengthy signs or materials. Find engaging ways for them to learn.

Direct interaction: Many guests have noted as their preference for learning at zoos to include conversations with staff or volunteers as they are more engaging. Interactive experiences better help capture guests' attention and keep them engaged longer.

Guest Participation: Many guests were already active participants in some of the conservation actions that we promote—or were interested in taking action. This highlights that we can help guests explore an action or grow their effort.

The RUN QUICK Framework

What is the RUN QUICK Conservation Messaging Framework?

RUN QUICK is intended to capture a simple overview of how to interact and consider guests when you are educating them with specific messaging. It helps ensure that your information gets to the point while also engaging your guests in the right ways.

How it can be helpful:

- Overview of guidelines that helps engagement with guests when discussing conservation topics

Notes & Considerations from HVZ:

The **RUN framework** pertains to how you can articulate and base the way you communicate conservation messaging to guests. It explains how and why conservation action is important, how we're all in this together, and the importance that we *can* and *do* act **now** for conservation.

We have previously learned from empathy evaluation here at HVZ that many of our guests preferred the use of "us" or "we" versus "you." Saying "you can make things better" adds pressure, while "We can make things better" helps people not feel that they are obligated to act alone as it takes off pressure that makes them feel like they are responsible for fixing things as individuals. Rather it emphasizes that we are all in this together and can make progress with collective action.

The **QUICK framework** pertains to the different ways that you can share and formulate information while hitting key points that will engage your guests. This helps provide a guide of how to interpret messaging to your guests rather than just giving facts or straight information that won't engage them or spark retention of messaging.

This pairs with our Observation Sheet as a way to evaluate how your speakers are presenting information. It is broken down into the categories of the RUN QUICK frameworks and provides different examples of how you could present information under the categories. It is by no means an exhaustive list, but rather some of the key ways we found beneficial in how to present information.

RUN Framework: Tailoring Messages to Your Guests

1. Relevance: Why Guests Should Care

- Goal: Provide context for conservation and how actions can fit into personal interests and aspects of life
- Application: Demonstrate importance locally and all around the world, inspire and motivate by appealing to guest interests.
 - Example: “Adding too much salt to our roads here in Madison when it is icy is ineffective and the runoff of that salt goes into our water systems, polluting places like rivers that our otters need to survive.”

2. Us/We: Strength in Numbers

- Goal: Reduce pressure of obligation from guests and create a feeling of community/strength in numbers.
- Application: Use us/we statements and provide examples of how we are working together; collectively our behaviors make a difference.
 - Example: “Together HVZ and SaltWise are working to reduce unnecessary salt use in Dane County and Wisconsin and reduce salt runoff. You can join us too in salt safe practices- a little goes a long way!”

3. Now: Ability to take Action

- Goal: Highlight how taking action *now* is important and possible.
- Application: Provide doable actions or steps to an action that guests can start doing immediately.
 - Example: “It’s approaching spring-time! Remember, as your grass and gardens grow, using less pesticides is for the best!”

QUICK Framework: How Should You Go about Tailoring Messages?

1. Question: Deepen Understanding

- Goal: Ask and be asked questions to encourage deeper discussion and thought.
- Application: Listen to guests—ask related and directed questions to guide thinking.
 - Example: “What do you think are the biggest threats to bears?”

2. Uncover: Intentionally Inform & Engage

- Goal: Guide conversation with guests in a way that intentionally reveals target information in an engaging or fun way.
- Application: Don’t just give facts! Use engaging, open-ended questions and interactive elements while keeping the conversation fun and informative.

- Example: “You can see that our bears are very curious, they love to play with toys and other enrichment. Do you think bears in the wild are curious too? What do you think they do when they come into contact with trash and litter? Do you think those things might be harmful to them?”

3. Interact: Two-Way Exchange of Information

- Goal: Create meaningful interactions with guests that offer opportunities for reciprocal learning.
- Application: Inviting guests to share ideas, open listening, connecting guest ideas to the animals and conservation.
 - Example: “Where are places that you like to explore outside? What kind of activities do you like to do? Do you ever see trash? That can be so disappointing!”

4. Connect: Personal Connection, Contribution, and Celebration

- Goal: Expand a guest’s base of familiarity, action, and comfort within a topic.
- Application: Foster personal connections, demonstrate how individuals and communities can contribute, **celebrate effort & progress always**.
 - Example: “You started your own garden at home? That’s awesome, great job! Do you have any native plants in your garden? Adding native plants is a great way to support pollinators. Local farms and nurseries like Fitchburg Farms, McKay Nursery, and Johnson’s Nursery are good places to find them.”

5. Know your Audience: Fine-Tune your Approach

- Goal: Understand how to address and explain concepts to diverse populations of guests.
- Application: Meet guests where they are at when it comes to their knowledge level and readiness for change.
 - Example: “One of Berit’s favorite toys is her blue barrel. We give all of our animals at the zoo enrichment - something that stimulates their natural behaviors.”

Conservation Action Observation Guide

What is the Conservation Action Observation Guide?

The Observation Sheet lists key behaviors to help speakers effectively communicate conservation and action messaging. It is intended to evaluate where your speakers are at with the way they are presenting information. You can use this to get a preliminary understanding and then to see how their actions change over time.

How it can be helpful:

- Evaluates how interpreters present information to guests
- Tracking behaviors, behavior change, and common actions over time
- Offers alternative methods for engaging diverse audiences
- Can additionally be used as a training tool

Notes & Considerations from HVZ:

It is broken down into the categories of the RUN QUICK frameworks and provides different examples of how you could present information under the categories. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but rather some of the key ways we present information. You can always add in some examples that your own organization would like to emphasize.

This can be used in training as well as evaluation. Use this in a partner evaluation to get people to practice using the observation sheet, while also learning what the general expectations are for them. Over time, you can see what new behaviors and habits people do take on or if they increase how much they do each behavior.

How to Use:

1. Observe and listen to a speaker's presentation.
2. Mark actions observed on the sheet with tally marks in the corresponding sections.
3. Record specific examples or notes in the notes section for additional context.

HENRY VILAS ZOO / CONSERVATION ACTION OBSERVATIONS		
OBSERVING:	DATE:	YOUR INITIALS:
Category & Indicators	Mentioned	Notes
1. Relevance		
Mentions a conservation action		
Explains how efforts here make an impact all around the world		
Provides actions to guests that pertains to their personal interests		
Explains how any small action has impact in conservation		
2. Us/We		
Includes an Us/We statement		
Mentions an action they do in their own life		
Mentions how the zoo is participating in a conservation action		
Invites guests to join us in an action in their own way		
3. Now		
Provides small action to guests that help build to a goal action		
Mentions how conservation can start now		
Mentions actions that guests might already be doing		
Provides actions that can help animals during time-sensitive events (like natural disasters)		
4. Question		
Asks guests "how" they participate in an action already		
Asks question to help guests think about animal needs		
Polls guests to gauge how many already participate in action		

Category & Indicators	Mentioned	Notes
5. Uncover		
Provides fun or gross fact		
Reveals needs of an animal in a hopeful/empathetic way		
Frames information in an engaging way (hand raising, movement, a game, thumbs up/down)		
Asks guiding questions to help audience get to an understanding/conclusion		
Uses repetition or mnemonics to reinforce ideas/actions		
6. Interact		
Guest imitates or acts out an animal behavior		
Uses information/stories guests have provided to explain/interpret an idea		
Listens to a story from a guest		
Asks for thoughts on a topic from guests		
7. Connect		
Tells a story about an animal at the zoo		
Explains how zoos provides for needs of animals		
Explains needs of wild counterparts		
Celebrates effort that a guest is taking towards conservation		
8. Know your Audience		
Breaks down complex terms/ideas		
Tailors messaging/actions and language to age group/general audience		

Post-Chat Self Evaluation

What is the Self Evaluation Tool?

The self evaluation tool is mainly intended to get speakers to self-reflect on how they present conservation messaging to guests. It is also intended to help gain ongoing insight on what is being talked about, how confident and comfortable our speakers feel, and is a way to continue to get speakers to think about the ways they communicate information to guests. We also ask about what our speakers want or feel the need to learn more about regarding interpretation practices.

How it can be helpful:

- Reflection from interpreters–improvement of presentation
- Understanding how interpreters are feeling
- Tracking (long term) responses/progress/thoughts
- Ability to track what conservation action messages are commonly being used

Notes & Considerations from HVZ:

We recommend slowly introducing this self-evaluation tool after training and partner evaluations as this makes sure that people are feeling comfortable with the expectations instead of dreading that they have to reflect on their performance, or that they may be criticized.

Additionally, we recommend that you set a specific time frame for the testing period to make sure that evaluations are not occurring more often than is helpful. This will help ease the speakers' limited motivation to provide feedback so it doesn't feel tedious, as well as ease the burden on staff to ensure self-evaluations are completed.

Post-Chat Self Evaluation

Name: _____

Date: _____

Exhibit/Animal: _____

1. Did you have a conservation message in mind beforehand? Yes No

2. What conservation action did you use and why?

3. What ideas/speaking points did you prioritize?

4. Do you feel that you communicated the goal points? Yes No

5. Did a guest bring up anything that you felt you needed to know more about?
 Yes No

6. If given an opportunity to practice interpretation, what area would you focus on?



Conservation Messaging Fact Sheet

What is the Conservation Messaging Fact Sheet?

This fact sheet is meant to serve as a quick reference guide for conservation communication that helps align messages as genuine and relevant to guests. It summarizes a few key conservation messaging frameworks and a menu of behaviors that are in the training presentation. It provides easy access to actionable tips when an interpreter needs some help communicating with guests.

How it can be helpful:

- Provides a quick reference of ways to communicate conservation actions
- Provides various ways that guests can take action
- Easy to keep on hand and travel with for quick help

Notes & Considerations from HVZ:

This fact sheet is designed for communicating conservation actions, but it may be generally helpful for inspiring connection with guests. The goal is to go deeper than just providing facts.

“Describing Animal Needs” and “I’m Doing It, the Zoo is Doing It, & You Can Join Me” are two frameworks on this sheet. These frameworks are explained in more depth in the training presentation. The menu of behaviors that is referenced in this sheet comes from “Maximizing Biodiversity Conservation Through Behavior Change Strategies” and the citation can be found in the sources section of this packet.

CONSERVATION MESSAGING FACT SHEET

Updated: 11/2024

Over half of U.S. adults read at a middle-school level or lower.



Our Language Matters!
 Guests come to zoos with different levels of ability, different interests, and different motives! Keep your language inclusive and encouraging by focusing on *clear, relatable, and easy-to-understand* messaging!

Describing Animal Needs and Inspiring Conservation Actions

Engaging guests in understanding animal needs bridges the gap between the zoo and conservation efforts. Here's four steps to start that conversation.

- 1. DESCRIBE THE ANIMAL'S NEEDS**
 "Seals need clean water, just like they would in the ocean."
- 2. HOW THE ZOO PROVIDES FOR THOSE NEEDS**
 "Our tank holds 27,000 gallons of water that we filter regularly to make sure it's crystal clear and safe for our seals."
- 3. THE NEEDS OF THEIR WILD COUNTERPARTS**
 "Seals in the wild need clean oceans and rivers, which are impacted by things like plastic pollution and runoff."
- 4. HOW WE CAN HELP MEET WILD NEEDS**
 "We planted a rain garden behind the seal exhibit to help filter runoff and keep waterways clean. Guests can plant native plants at home to reduce pollution too!"

ALL ABOUT ACTION

Everyone has different abilities and interests—offer a variety of ways they can get involved. Here's a quick menu to keep in mind:

Advocacy Actions

- SPREAD INFORMATION**
 Encourage guests to share what they learn with others! Adding a simple "share what you learned with your friends and family" is an easy one for all ages.
- RECRUITMENT**
 Suggest they join our membership program which proceeds support our conservation partners.
- ADVOCACY**
 Ask guests to talk to leaders in their community, as leaders have the ability to make change. Encourage participation in things like public campaigns or petitions that are on behalf of wildlife. (Be mindful of not saying what they need to vote for as that can get into problems being a government organization, but informing about different programs is okay.)

Community Actions

- LOCAL CONSERVATION**
 In Madison, suggest joining community science efforts.
- SPECIES SUPPORT**
 Encourage small changes at home, like planting native plants or adding birdhouses.
- VOLUNTEER OR DONATE**
 Remind them they can support HVZ directly by volunteering or donating!

I'm Doing It, The Zoo is Doing It, You Can Join Me: A Simple Framework

- I'M DOING IT: SHARE YOUR PERSONAL CONSERVATION ACTIONS.**
 "I'm helping reduce waste by bringing a reusable bag whenever I shop."
- THE ZOO IS DOING IT: HIGHLIGHT THE ZOO'S EFFORTS.**
 "Our zoo has switched to sustainable palm oil products in our gift shop to help protect rainforests and wildlife."
- YOU CAN JOIN ME: INVITE GUESTS TO TAKE PART.**
 "You can join me by checking for sustainable palm oil logos when you shop too—it's an easy way to help protect habitats!"

Why Does This Framework Work?

- PERSONAL CONNECTION**
 Guests can relate to you when you share your own actions.
- TRUST IN THE ZOO**
 Knowing the zoo is committed to conservation builds confidence and trust.
- INVITATION TO ACT**
 Clear, actionable steps encourage guests to feel empowered, rather than overwhelmed.

Beware the Boomerang Effect!

Sometimes people do the opposite of what we're encouraging if the message feels too pushy. Instead of trying to change someone's mind, create a welcoming space for conversation and action.

How can I avoid this effect?

Focus on small, achievable actions and use stories to make your message relatable.

"Let me tell you about how our zoo has been reducing plastic waste—it's been a great change for us, and it's something we can all do."

Private Actions

- RESOURCE SUSTAINABILITY**
 Suggest simple changes like biking to work or using public transport. Mention how RoundTrip helps plan bike and bus trips in Madison.
- SUSTAINABLE PURCHASES**
 Mention apps that help them choose sustainable seafood or certified products (SeafoodWatch, RSPO).
- RECYCLING**
 Encourage recycling of a specific item (this makes it more recognizable and helpful for the guests) like recycling plastic bottles, or recycling electronics with lithium.
- PROPERTY CARE**
 For those that may have property doing conservation actions like reducing salt use on roadways, decreasing fertilizer/pesticide use, raking leaves out of storm drains, planting native plants/pollinator friendly plants.
 - o This doesn't exclude those that aren't property owners. They can still talk to their HOA, landlord, workplace, school, or favorite business and encourage more sustainable property care practices.

Example Conversations

- Plastic Reduction**
 "I'm doing my part by using a metal straw instead of plastic. Our zoo has also cut down on plastic waste by eliminating single-use plastics in our food stands. You can join me by bringing a reusable straw or bottle next time you visit!"
- Supporting Wildlife**
 "I've started planting native plants in my garden to support pollinators like bees and butterflies. Here at the zoo, we've added pollinator gardens for the same reason. You can join us by planting a few native flowers at home—it's easy and helps wildlife thrive!"
- Picking Up Trash**
 "When I go swimming, I think of Elva and Dragonroll happily swimming in clean water. I know how much I like to swim in clean water and I want that for otters too. If you join me in picking up trash the next time you go swimming in a lake or ocean, we can help keep waters clean and safe for all otters."



Conservation Messaging Training

What is the Conservation Messaging Training?

This training is a 45 min presentation on conservation action messaging intended to provide interpreters with an overview of various frameworks and real-world applications. It provides in-depth explanations of key concepts and practices, as well as examples on how to apply them. This is an interactive learning and training opportunity for zoo staff and volunteers.

How it can be helpful:

- Gives insight into how to engage with guests intentionally about conservation action messaging
- Provides interactive & practical training components for staff and volunteers
- Includes recommended steps and ideas for implementation

Notes & Considerations from HVZ:

This training was developed after evaluating guest mindsets at HVZ through our pre-test, interview, and TTM surveys. It explains things like what HVZ considers conservation messaging to be, and why it is important, as well as the Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM) and how the TTM helps us understand guest mindsets. It also explains the “Describing Animal Needs” and “I’m Doing It, the Zoo is Doing It, & You Can Join Me” frameworks. There are many opportunities for practice as well as ways to apply this training at different organizations.



Conservation Training

Agenda Overview

- 1 Overview of Conservation
- 2 Transtheoretical Model
- 3 Framing for the Zoo
- 4 Put it All Together

Conservation Action Tool Implementation Guide

1. Training

- **Goal:** Teach interpreters how to use the observation and self-evaluation tools.
 - Overview of what the tools are and why we are implementing them
 - How to use the observation tool
 - Importance of doing self-evaluations and receiving feedback

2. Partner Observations

- **Goal:** Allow interpreters time to understand expectations. Get interpreters comfortable with giving and receiving feedback with peers.
 - Pair up interpreters to observe each other.
 - Use the observation checklist tool to track what is said and done.
 - Afterward, review observation tallies and provide each other with constructive feedback.

3. Self-Evaluations

- **Goal:** Encourage self reflection.
 - After partner observations, start using self-evaluations so individuals think critically about how they are performing and meeting expectations.

4. Set Regular Self-Evaluation Schedule

- **Goal:** Set up continued use of self evaluation.
 - Set a schedule for when self-evaluations should be done at the organization (e.g. every 4 weeks, bimonthly).

Other Goals:

- Create a supportive space for discussion of tools and evaluations for volunteers and staff.
 - Provide support for those in need.
 - Acknowledge strengths to encourage further improvement.
- Collect feedback from interpreters
 - Are the tools easy to use?
 - Is the self-evaluation tool manageable for long term use?
 - Is it easy to train interpreters on?

Post-Implementation Survey

What is the Post-Implementation Survey?

The post-implementation survey was designed to gauge guest conservation action retention levels and their mindsets about zoo conservation messaging after the implementation of this project. It is meant to provide insight on any changes there may be in guest retention or mindsets.

How can it be helpful?

- Gauge change in guest retention of conservation actions after implementation of new practices and behaviors
- Ability to monitor ongoing and/or sustained changes of retention and mindsets

Notes & Considerations from HVZ:

As this project focuses on oral interpretation, this survey aims at monitoring if guests are having conversations with zoo staff and volunteers, if they hear about conservation action, how relevant actions feel to them, as well as if they are learning about conservation around the zoo. As we have a goal of enhancing zoos as leaders in environmental education and wildlife conservation, we also wanted to gauge how much guests see zoos as reliable educational resources. This post-survey shares some questions from the pre-test as there is a shared goal of gauging retention levels.

Guest Conservation Messaging Post-Survey

1. I view the zoo as a reliable educational resource.

Strongly	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly				
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Agree

2. When I visit the zoo, I feel inspired to take action to help protect wildlife.

Strongly	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly				
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Agree

3. Do you recall learning anything around the **zoo** about conservation?

- I recall learning about conservation and recall what it means
- I recall learning about conservation, but don't recall what it means
- I don't recall learning about conservation or what it means

4. Do you recall learning anything around the **zoo** about what actions you can take to help protect wildlife?

- I recall learning about conservation actions and recall specific examples
- I recall learning about conservation actions, but don't specific examples
- I don't recall learning about conservation actions or specific examples

5. Did you engage in conversation with zoo staff or volunteers about conservation?

If yes: The interaction felt like an open discussion.

Strongly	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly				
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Agree

6. I feel that any actions I learned were relevant to me.

Strongly Strongly
Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

N/A; I do not recall learning about conservation actions

7. Please provide any examples of conservation actions you may recall learning about at the zoo.

Thank you for caring for animals like Peru and Morrison here at the zoo and supporting efforts to protect their wild counterparts!



Timeline Example for Project Implementation

What is the Conservation Action Retention Implementation Timeline?

This timeline references our implementation plan at HVZ. This helps lay out our goal and tasks and provides a timeframe for follow through.

How it can be helpful:

- Provides an idea of what implementation looks like at HVZ
- Can be easily modified for use at other organizations
- Built around the consideration of busy-season

Notes & Considerations from HVZ:

This timeline is what we are using at HVZ. The goal is to provide other organizations with an example that is easily modified, as it can be hard to get an idea of how to plan implementation. This could ultimately look very different for your organization and organization goals.

This timeline lays out steps for training all staff & volunteers, evaluator training and ongoing observations, as well as post-season evaluation & planning. Each step has a time frame, a focus, and what accomplishing that focus looks like at HVZ.

Conservation Action Retention Implementation Example Timeline

This is the process Henry Vilas Zoo will be following to implement the conservation action toolkit. This can be modified for other organizations to be able to implement these resources.

Phase 1: Pre-Implementation (Preparation)

Timeframe: December–January

Focus: Finalizing materials and preparing for training rollout.

1. Prepare Materials:

- Finalize tools: observation sheets, self-assessment sheets, surveys, and conservation messaging materials.
- Create training presentation slides and quick-reference guides for all staff and volunteers.

2. Schedule Trainings:

- Coordinate with the volunteer department to confirm monthly **Frontline Volunteer trainings** (February–June, TBD*).
 - Work with keeper staff to include training during annual keeper chat training (February–March).
 - Set training dates for education and operations staff (see timeline below).
-

Phase 2: Training Rollout (All Staff and Volunteers)

Timeframe: February–June

Focus: Training on conservation action messaging best practices and message retention.

1. Frontline Volunteers:

- **Schedule:** Monthly from **February–June** to onboard new interpretive volunteers (*TBD based on meeting with the volunteer department*).
- **Training Goals:**
 - Best practices for conservation action messaging.

- Techniques for improving guest retention of messages.
 - Familiarization with self-evaluation sheets for personal feedback and improvement.
2. **Keepers:**
- **Schedule:** February–March during annual keeper chat training.
 - **Training Goals:**
 - Incorporating conservation action messaging into chats.
 - Best practices for retention-focused communication.
 - Using self-evaluation sheets to track and reflect on chat effectiveness.
3. **Education Staff:**
- **Schedule:** One hour training session in early **March** and a follow-up/refresher in **May** before peak season.
 - **Training Goals:**
 - Adapting conservation messaging to education programs and tours.
 - Best practices in guest engagement and message retention.
 - Using self-evaluation sheets to monitor communication effectiveness.
4. **Operations Staff (Guest Services):**
- **Schedule:** One-hour sessions in **late March** during regular team meetings.
 - **Training Goals:**
 - Overview of conservation messaging and retention best practices.
 - Using self-evaluation sheets to reflect on guest interactions.
-

Phase 3: Evaluator Training

Timeframe: February

Focus: Training evaluators to observe and provide feedback effectively.

1. **Training Sessions:**

- Host a **2-hour workshop** in early February for evaluators (staff and any interested volunteers).
- Conduct a follow-up session in late February to ensure readiness.

2. **Training Goals:**

- Mastery of observation sheets and survey protocols.
- Consistency in evaluation standards across different groups.
- Providing actionable feedback during observations.

3. **Assign Evaluators:**

- Create a schedule for evaluators to observe interpretive volunteers, keepers, and education staff throughout the busy season.

Phase 4: Implementation and Observations (Busy Season)

Timeframe: April–September

Focus: Implementation of training, ongoing observations, and feedback.

1. **Observation Goals:**

- **Target:** Conduct at least **50 hours of observation** during the busy season.
 - Interpretive Volunteers: **20 hours** (5 hours/month).
 - Keepers: **10 hours** (1 chat/week for key exhibits).
 - Education Staff: **10 hours** during guest tours or programs.
 - Operations Staff: **10 hours** observing incidental guest interactions.
- Observations will focus on alignment with conservation messages and retention-focused communication techniques.

2. **Ongoing Buddy Observations:**

- Pair staff and volunteers for **monthly peer observations** to reinforce skills.

3. **Self-Evaluations:**

- All staff and volunteers will complete self-evaluation sheets after training and periodically throughout the busy season to track progress.
-

Phase 5: Post-Season Evaluation and Planning

Timeframe: October–December

Focus: Assessing training effectiveness and planning for the next season.

1. Data Analysis:

- Analyze guest surveys, observation data, and self-evaluation results to measure retention and training impact.

2. Staff and Volunteer Feedback:

- Host feedback sessions to gather insights on what worked and areas for improvement.

3. Plan for Next Season:

- Refine tools and training materials based on feedback and results.
- Develop a schedule for refresher trainings during the off-season.

Sources & Additional Resources

Additional Resources:

Interactive/Activity Based TTM - The Living Desert Zoo & Gardens

Provides more kid friendly phrasing and visuals for evaluation of TTM stages. Campers are given a booklet of “tickets” corresponding to their camp’s behavioral outcomes. They place tickets into bins that correspond to the TTM stages.

<https://www.pathlms.com/aza-learn/courses/56113/sections/71940/webinars/42495>

6 Degrees of Separation Activity - Inspiration from Nette Pletcher

Connecting guest comments to a conservation action within 6 sentences. This can be great practice for linking conversation to action in a more natural way.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lIH2A-Mm4HKvGhg0-rO5fBr8DR82RshffGpeRfci1V0/edit?usp=sharing>

Two-Way Exchange of Information Learning Tactics:

Impacts of a Comprehensive Public Engagement Training and Support Program on Scientists’ Outreach Attitudes and Practices. *Stylinski, C. et. al.*, <https://stem.oregonstate.edu/sites/stem.oregonstate.edu/files/Impacts%20of%20a%20comprehensive%20public%20engagement%20training%20and%20support%20program%20on%20scientists%20outreach%20attitudes%20and%20practices.pdf>

Transtheoretical Model & Change:

Stages of Change Theory. *Raihan, N. & Cogburn, M.* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK556005/#:~:text=The%20next%20stage%20along%20the,change%20behavior%20outweigh%20the%20cons.>

Facilitating Behavior Change: Introducing the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change as a Conservation Psychology Framework and Tool for Practitioners. *Walton, A.A. et al.* <https://doi.org/10.1002/zoo.21704>

Maximizing Biodiversity Conservation Through Behavior Change Strategies. *Maynard, L. et al.* <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.193>

Education & Learning:

Connecting Students' Interests to a Learning Context: The Case of Ecosystem Services in STEM Education. *Mikhailova, E.A. et al.* <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/12/5/318>

The Impact of In-Person and Video-Recorded Animal Experiences on Zoo Visitors' Cognition, Affect, Empathic Concern, and Conservation Intent. *Miller, L.J. et al.* <https://doi.org/10.1002/zoo.21565>

Why Facts Don't Change Minds: Insights from Cognitive Science for the Improved Communication of Conservation Research. *Toomey, A.H.* <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320722004396>

The Case for Empathy: Fostering Empathy as One Avenue Towards Encouraging Conservation Behavior. *Owen, K.* <https://www.aceforwildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Case-for-Empathy-by-Kathryn-Owen-1.pdf>

Literary Statistics 2024-2025 (Where We Are Now). *National Literacy Institute.* <https://www.thenationalliteracyinstitute.com/post/literacy-statistics-2024-2025-where-we-are-now#:~:text=On%20average%2C%2079%25%20of%20U.S.,to%202.2%20trillion%20per%20year.>