



Baby Hellbenders Developing: Photo Courtesy of St. Louis Zoo

Waterlife Design Group Works with St. Louis Zoo on Hellbender Propagation Facilities

Waterlife Design Group, based in Apopka, FL, has recently worked with the Saint Louis Zoo to aide in their efforts to save an endangered aquatic species, the Ozark hellbender. In the summer of 2011, Waterlife Design Group worked to design, construct and install the new hellbender propagation facilities at the Saint Louis Zoo in St. Louis, Missouri. With the system designed by Waterlife Design Group, the diligent zoo staff has produced the world's first successful breeding of Ozark hellbenders in captivity – a first for either of the two subspecies of hellbender.

According to a press release from the Saint Louis Zoo, “In 2004, funding from private donors, the Missouri Department of Conservation, the United States Fish & Wildlife Services and the Zoo covered the cost of building sophisticated facilities including climate-controlled streams to breed the hellbender. The hellbender propagation facilities,” designed and installed by Waterlife Design Group, “include two outdoor streams that are 40 feet long and six feet deep. The area is landscaped with natural gravel, large rocks for hiding and artificial nest boxes, where the fertilized eggs were discovered. A nearby building houses state-of-the-art life support equipment used to filter the water and maintain the streams at the proper temperature.”

Aquatic life support systems are Waterlife Design Group's specialty. The bulk of Waterlife's business comes from designing and installing efficient and trustworthy life support systems. Waterlife Design Group understands that your system and its contents are too precious to take chances with, so they use only the best equipment and methods to install a system.

Of the Waterlife Design Group-constructed facility, the Saint Louis Zoo's release continues, “In addition, two large climate-controlled rooms in the basement of the Zoo's Charles H. Hoessle Herpetarium are the headquarters for the program. The facilities recreate hellbender habitat with closely monitored temperatures, pumps to move purified water, sprinklers synced to mimic the exact precipitation and lights that flick on or dim to account for brightness and shade. The largest room includes a 32-foot simulated stream, complete with native gravel and large rocks for hiding. It houses a breeding group of adult Ozark hellbenders from the North Fork of the White River in Missouri; offspring from these hellbenders will eventually be released back into the wild.”

Though the baby hellbenders are not on display for the public, Waterlife Design Group is proud to have been a part of a project where the results are likely to be instrumental in saving an endangered species.

To find out how Waterlife Design Group can help you, visit WaterlifeDesign.com, email WaterlifeDesign@AquaticEco.com or call 407-472-0525 for a free consultation with one of our experts.

About Waterlife Design Group

Waterlife Design Group is a division of Aquatic Habitats Inc. established to meet the increasing demands of the aquaculture, public zoo and aquarium industries. Facilities around the world have benefited from Waterlife's design, engineering and consulting expertise. The team's extensive field experience and versatility have quickly established Waterlife as a leader in system design and analysis, including retrofits and troubleshooting. Waterlife will coordinate with owners, architects, engineers and contractors to develop integrated, coherent and economical solutions for the aquatics industries. For more information and examples of Waterlife Design Group's projects, visit WaterlifeDesign.com.

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