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**Arizona Center for Nature Conservation/Phoenix Zoo Secures Land to Establish an Off-Site Conservation Center**

**PHOENIX (October 11, 2018)** – The Arizona Center for Nature Conservation (ACNC)/Phoenix Zoo has signed a lease agreement with Freeport-McMoRan Inc. for 1,120 acres in Pima County, Arizona, to establish a conservation management center for the purpose of managed population sustainability and the possible reintroduction of wildlife species.

“This has been a goal of the Arizona Center for Nature Conservation for quite some time,” says ACNC President and CEO, Bert Castro. “It will continue to take time to build out the land for our needs, which are ultimately to house, breed, care for and reintroduce to the wild, critically endangered species. Given Arizona’s harsh climate, it allows us the opportunity to work with arid species who will thrive in this region. We are considering species such as oryx, gazelles and addax, all who have a great conservation need and would benefit from the bolstering of populations through the reintroduction of animals to the wild.”

The land is 130 miles from central Phoenix and is located near the city of Sahuarita. The ACNC will pay Freeport-McMoRan a nominal fee for the fifty-year lease agreement. Freeport-McMoRan, a leading international mining company with headquarters in Phoenix, Arizona, has a long history of supporting the ACNC/Phoenix Zoo by contributing to various statewide educational programs and fundraising events for the organization.

“Our ties to the ACNC run deep,” says Steve Higgins, Freeport-McMoRan Senior Vice President, and member of the ACNC Board of Trustees. “This parcel of land not only fits the goals and mission of the ACNC to create an open range conservation center and continue ex-situ management efforts for arid land species and desert wildlife but also supports our company’s commitment to environmental stewardship. We are pleased to provide this parcel of land to assist in the continued efforts of such a vital and important conservation organization.”

The ACNC will begin site-planning studies within the coming months. “We look forward to expanding the outreach of the ACNC and creating a larger impact for the animals and habitats with which we are able to work,” says Castro.

The role that the ACNC plays in the conservation of animals, both native and internationally, has been long-standing, although not broadly understood by our Zoo visitors. We hope that by engaging in an off-site center, we will bring greater attention to the needs of threatened and endangered species, both near and far. Space within zoos and aquariums is limited, so the need for large expanses of land dedicated to the preservation of species and the breeding of animals for reintroduction to the wild is great. Further, our desire is to elevate the profile of zoos and aquariums across the nation, specifically highlighting the successes we’ve had as an industry in restoring populations of wildlife that are in peril.

#### **About the Arizona Center for Nature Conservation**

The Arizona Center for Nature Conservation operates the Phoenix Zoo and the South Mountain Environmental Education Center. The ACNC advances the stewardship and conservation of animals and their habitats while providing experiences that inspire people and motivate them to care for the natural world.

The Phoenix Zoo is the only zoo in the Valley accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is a non-profit zoological park, serving 1.4 million guests annually. The Zoo is home to more than 3,000 animals, many of which are endangered and threatened species. For information on upcoming events, exhibits and activities at the Phoenix Zoo, visit [www.phoenixzoo.org](http://www.phoenixzoo.org).