



News Release

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Minnesota Zoo opens teacher registration for the 2025 ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge

Students will have the opportunity to design enrichment and reimagine the habitat for the white-cheeked gibbon, a critically endangered and beloved primate at the Minnesota Zoo

APPLE VALLEY, Minn. – The Minnesota Zoo is welcoming teachers from across the country to join its award-winning [ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge](#) presented by Flint Hills Resources. Beginning over 10 years ago with 25 teachers, this program now attracts thousands of students from multiple states and nations each year. Teachers of students grades three through 12 are encouraged to apply by Nov. 15 to take part in the competition.

The ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge is a yearlong project challenging elementary, middle and high school students to develop solutions to real zoo-based problems. Using STEM concepts, students work in groups to design and present solutions at the Zoo. In March, select groups will be invited to showcase their design solutions to Zoo staff and professional engineers from Flint Hills Resources. Top student teams will win prizes for conservation, innovation, teamwork and other zookeeper categories. [Watch a short video about the program](#) from its 10th anniversary earlier this year.

“The ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge provides students a one-of-a-kind opportunity to envision future careers in STEM while growing their problem-solving skills,” said John Frawley, director of the Minnesota Zoo and president of the Minnesota Zoo Foundation. “We are proud to watch this program continue to grow and reach more students each year.”

This year’s competition will feature the white-cheeked gibbon, a species that is critically endangered and conserved by the Minnesota Zoo. Students will have the opportunity to work in groups to either redesign the existing gibbon exhibit or to design new enrichment features for the animals.

“The ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge is a rare opportunity for students to use a world-class zoo for hands-on learning,” said Heather Rein, director of community affairs at Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery. “We can’t wait to see the next generation of scientists and engineers in action next March!”

The ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge is made possible by a partnership between the Minnesota Zoo and Flint Hills Resources, which started in 1989. The Minnesota Zoo has received top honors from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums for the ZOOMS education program.

About the Minnesota Zoo

The Minnesota Zoo is a year-round destination providing a window into the natural world. With hundreds of species of animals, worldwide conservation efforts and acres of scenic beauty, the Zoo is a resource to connect people, animals and the natural world to save wildlife. For more information visit mnzoo.org. The Minnesota Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and an institutional member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

About Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery

The Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery produces transportation fuels used throughout the Midwest, including most of Minnesota's gasoline, diesel fuel and jet fuel, as well as other products people rely on such as propane and asphalt. Located 17 miles southeast of Minneapolis, Pine Bend has a refining capacity of 375,000 barrels per day and is among the most efficient and safest oil refineries in the country. Flint Hills Resources directly and indirectly supports more than 4,000 Minnesota jobs and has invested nearly \$1.7 billion in upgrades and improvements to its Minnesota facilities since 2010. With 1,000 full-time employees, the Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery is one of the largest employers in Dakota County. More information about the Pine Bend refinery is available at PineBendRefinery.com.

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