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Orangutans enjoy outdoor yard for first time since June 10

Des Moines, Iowa – June 24, 2008 – For the first time since floodwaters overtook the Great Ape Trust of Iowa campus, orangutans Azy, Knobi and Allie accessed their outdoor yard on Monday, June 23. From all appearances, the three were happy to have an additional choice on where to spend time, and spent the morning watching the activity going on around them as Great Ape Trust personnel worked to return the 230-acre campus to pre-flood condition.

“With the addition of the outdoor space, we are 100 percent back to normal,” said Dr. Rob Shumaker, director of orangutan research. “The orangutans are enjoying the spectacular weather.”

Two weeks ago, non-essential staff evacuated Great Ape Trust after floodwaters from the Des Moines River spilled over a low spot in an agricultural levee, flooding administrative suites and leaving the 230-acre campus in southeast Des Moines mostly under water. At the peak of the flood, there wasn't a spot on campus that wasn't affected by the flood.

The three orangutans and seven bonobos climbed to higher levels in their vertical homes and remained safe and dry throughout the flooding. Water is now receding quickly, and the sight of orangutans in their outdoor space is a signal that life at Great

NEWS RELEASE

Ape Trust is returning to normal – especially for the ape residents, according to Shumaker.

“The worst of this, we feel, is behind us,” he said. “We are completely optimistic about the future.”

GREAT APE TRUST BACKGROUND

Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a scientific research facility in southeast Des Moines dedicated to understanding the origins and future of culture, language, tools and intelligence. When completed, Great Ape Trust will be the largest great ape facility in North America and one of the first worldwide to include all four types of great ape – bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans – for noninvasive interdisciplinary studies of their cognitive and communicative capabilities.

Great Ape Trust is dedicated to providing sanctuary and an honorable life for great apes, studying the intelligence of great apes, advancing conservation of great apes and providing unique educational experiences about great apes. Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization and is certified by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). To learn more about Great Ape Trust of Iowa, go to www.GreatApeTrust.org.

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Insights Through Collaborations with Apes