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Groundbreaking Date for Bowen Aquarium Announced

MELBOURNE, Fla., April 14, 2026 — East Coast Zoological Foundation (ECZF) is thrilled to announce the official groundbreaking date of December 2, 2026, for Bowen Aquarium. This innovative project will be an additional home for the important conservation, education and animal wellbeing work that ECZF and the Aquarium's sister campus, Brevard Zoo, has led for decades.

"December 2 has been such a meaningful date for the "Our Legacy" Campaign. On that date in 2021, we kicked off our fundraising campaign and in 2024 we announced Bowen Aquarium's name and story," said ECZF CEO Keith Winsten. "Being able to officially break ground on December 2 of this year continues the momentum on what will be a transformative project for our community and beyond."

ECZF is working with the Board of Brevard County Commissioners to align the Tourism Development Council funding with this official groundbreaking date.

As ECZF continues toward groundbreaking, the team has made significant progress in the last year, including:

- Completed 100% design of the Aquarium.
- Developed and permitted an advanced wastewater treatment approach for the backwash from our fish filtration systems that manages water quality right at the source.

- Selected and contracted with a construction management company, PCL, that solicited bids for the project, and determined construction costs.
- Developed a strategic financial plan with our advisors and BofA Securities.

To date, \$74 million (53 percent) has been secured toward our \$140 million fundraising goal, a reflection of the strength of this campaign and the commitment of this community. Next month, ECZF will launch a new campaign solely focused on fundraising for Bowen Aquarium.

“Every day, we move closer to seeing Bowen Aquarium come to life,” Winsten said. “We will continue to make progress and begin construction later this year, sharing our updates and accomplishments with the community and stakeholders along the way.”

Bowen Aquarium will offer a unique experience to guests with its focus on native Florida wildlife while also serving as a regional conservation hub with an emphasis on restoring the Indian River Lagoon and surrounding ecosystems. By protecting and maintaining these healthy waterways, ECZF sustains the recreational lifestyle the community is known for, protecting property values and safeguarding tourism.

“Bowen Aquarium has the potential to inspire a love for the Space Coast that goes beyond our local community,” said Peter Cranis, executive director of the Space Coast Office of Tourism. “Tourists will make their memories at the Aquarium and be inspired to protect our incredible ecosystem and their own environment at home.”

In addition to Brevard Zoo, Bowen Aquarium will attract and retain a high-talent workforce to the East Coast of Florida. The Aquarium also will allow us to build additional research and innovation partnerships in the region.

“Bowen Aquarium is poised to make incredible waves throughout our community that go beyond job creation and economic impact,” said Lynda Weatherman, President & CEO of the Economic Development Commission (EDC) of Florida’s Space Coast. “The Aquarium will highlight the incredible ecosystems and quality of life found on the Space Coast, drawing in the talent our business community needs.”

For renderings of the Aquarium, please visit [this Dropbox folder](#).

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About East Coast Zoological Foundation

Driven by a mission to answer the call, the East Coast Zoological Foundation (ECZF) is focused on educating, engaging and empowering the community to take action for conservation. The 501c(3) nonprofit located in Melbourne, Florida includes Brevard Zoo and Bowen Aquarium campuses. ECZF works directly with Florida species and the community to develop programs and workshops to make a difference locally and around the world. From sea turtle rehabilitations and releases, building living shorelines along the Indian River Lagoon, providing scholarships and grants to the community and more, the Foundation creates opportunities for guests to connect with nature and make an impact in conservation and education. Founded in 1986, ECZF is governed by a volunteer board of directors and receives no recurring operating funds from any city, county or state government, relying on donations from people and companies to continue answering the call for wildlife and the environment along Florida's Space Coast and beyond. To learn more, visit OurLegacyCampaign.org