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**“Snooki” the Loggerhead Sea Turtle Finds Her Forever Home
at the Minnesota Zoo**

Apple Valley, Minn. (October 29, 2025) — After nearly a decade of rehabilitation and care, “Snooki,” a 310-pound female loggerhead sea turtle with an outsized personality and a story of perseverance, has officially arrived at her forever home—the **Minnesota Zoo**.

Her journey began in **September 2016**, when she was found stranded along the beaches of Cape May, New Jersey. Rescued by the Marine Mammal Stranding Center, Snooki was transferred the next month to the **Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center** in North Carolina, where she captured hearts with her big attitude, love for the spotlight, and signature splash that kept volunteers smiling.

Despite years of medical treatment, Snooki was ultimately deemed **non-releasable** due to a spinal injury that left her **positively buoyant**, preventing her from diving and resting on the ocean floor. But her spirit and charm made her a beloved ambassador for sea turtles everywhere—and inspired a multi-year effort to find her the perfect forever home.

A Perfect Fit in the Midwest

Now, Snooki will call the Minnesota Zoo’s **Atlantic Reef exhibit** home—a **250,000-gallon habitat**, fifty times larger than her previous pool. Here, she will have more room to explore, encounter new species, and enjoy an enriched environment under the expert care of the Zoo’s aquarium and veterinary teams.

“This is truly a dream home for Snooki,” said **Kathy Zagzebski**, Executive Director of the **Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center**. “We are thrilled she’ll be moving into a 250,000-gallon tank, surrounded by experienced staff who know exactly how to care for turtles like her. As a Midwesterner myself, I know how powerful it is to see ocean animals up close—Snooki will inspire guests to care about the ocean, even from a thousand miles away. She tells the story of all sea turtles.”

Zagzebski added with a smile, “Snooki is a big personality—our number one ‘adopted’ turtle and a bit of a diva. She’s been known to splash visitors on purpose, especially if a camera’s pointed her way. I hope the Minnesota Zoo team is ready for her!”

A New Chapter at the Minnesota Zoo

Snooki's relocation was a collaborative effort between the Minnesota Zoo and the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center (KBSTRRC) team. After a long-awaited U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permitting process and fundraising campaign by the KBSTRRC team to charter a private flight, **Snooki arrived in Minnesota on October 27**, landing at St. Paul's Holman Field before making her way to the Zoo.

"We are honored to welcome Snooki to the Minnesota Zoo family," said **Christoph Noetzli**, Curator of Aquariums, Marine Mammals, and Life Support Systems at the Zoo. "She will be the largest sea turtle we've ever cared for—an impressive and charismatic ambassador for her species. Our team has decades of experience working with sea turtles that have buoyancy issues like hers, and we're committed to providing her with a safe, stimulating environment where she can thrive."

Noetzli continued, "Snooki's story highlights why partnerships between zoos and wildlife rescue organizations are so important. Many rescued sea turtles can't be released back into the wild due to injuries from boat strikes or entanglements. Accredited zoos like ours give them a second chance—offering lifelong care while educating the public about the challenges sea turtles face in the ocean."

From Jersey Girl to Ocean Ambassador

Known affectionately as a Jersey girl tempered by Southern charm, Snooki is adored by volunteers and fans alike for her spirited antics, expressive moods, and occasional splashing fits. Her favorite foods include mackerel, squid, and herring, though she's been known to ignore live crabs entirely.

While Snooki is unable to return to the ocean, her impact will be far-reaching. As Zagzebski put it, "If she weren't injured, she'd be a nesting female contributing to the survival of her species. Now, she'll **inspire thousands of visitors to care about sea turtles**, ocean health, and the interconnectedness of our planet. As we say, if you save sea turtles, you save the rest of the world."

Snooki will remain in a **smaller acclimation pool behind the scenes for several weeks** before moving into the Atlantic Reef exhibit, where she'll join a variety of ocean species in her new home.

Assets: [Dropbox Video and Photos](#)

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. 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). The Minnesota Zoo is home to beloved traditions, such as Farm Babies, the Jack-O-Lantern Spectacular, and Wild Nights Music series. For more information visit mnzoo.org.

About the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center

Based in Surf City, North Carolina, the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center rescues, rehabilitates, and releases sick and injured sea turtles, while also promoting conservation, education, and public awareness of these endangered species. Learn more at seaturtlehospital.org.

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