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World Fence News Staff Report

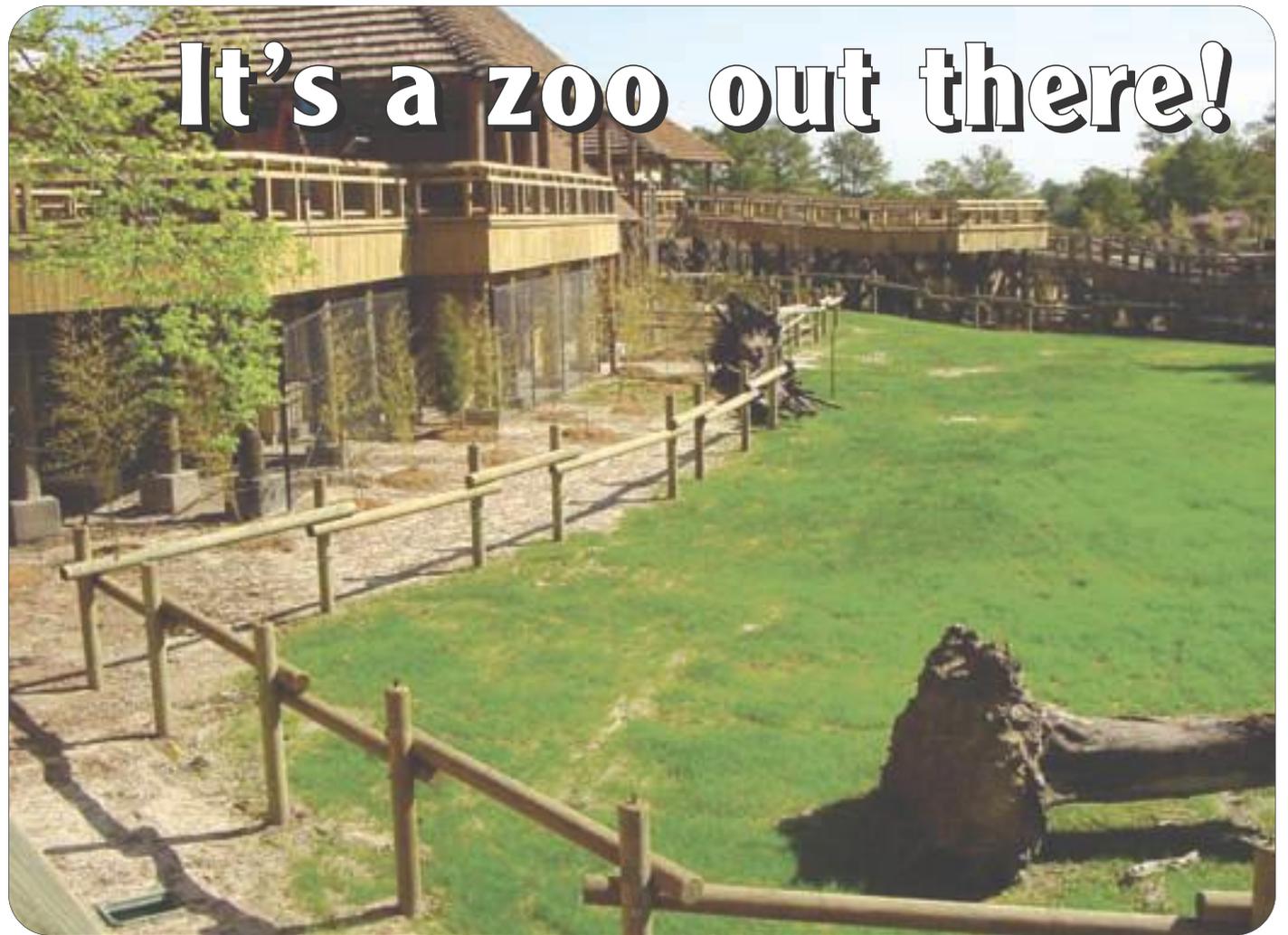
NORFOLK, Va. — The Virginia Zoological Park is in the midst of a major expansion of its African exhibit area, and playing a major role in the project is Hercules Fence Co., which was contracted to provide a wide variety of fencing, most of which had to be custom-fabricated to exacting specifications.

The fencing ranged from decorative wooden post and rail to high-strength welded steel capable of containing rhinos.

Louis Jason, who managed the project for Hercules Fence, said that the amount of custom fabrication involved kept things interesting until the end. "All of the big swing gates for the rhino and elephant enclosures had to be custom made," he said. "The cutting, coping and welding of the 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ -in. pipe for the elephant gates was a chore. Inside the giraffe night house, all of the rails had to be welded. The posts in the night house had to be welded to imbeds set into the floor and ceiling. Each of the five rails in the rhino night house had to be cut and welded.

"There were very few parts on this job that we could buy off the shelf and install," he added.

One of the most challenging aspects of the project was installing the



rail fencing in the bottom of the rhino restraint moat. Allen Stamper, Hercules Fence superintendent, coordinated the task of setting 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ -in. Schedule 80 posts in 24-in. x 60-in. deep footings, which

turned out to be within the Lafayette River water table. To create the footings in the watery area, Stamper devised 24-in. x 60-in. sheet metal cylinders with handles. The cylinders were worked into the river mud and then the crew excavated the slurry core out of the cylinders. To complete the railing, 4-in. Schedule 80 rails were welded to

the 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ -in. uprights. After seeing the completed moat, Stamper said, "We busted our butts to get that rail done and done right. Now that the entire rail system is submerged in the moat, I can't even see the results of our labor!"

Jason noted that the zoo project was made easier by sound planning and
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Talk about a fence job with a little bit of everything! Above, the giraffe enclosure included 425 lineal feet of post and rail, with the 6-in. rails routed to fit onto the 6-in. round posts and through-bolted. Surrounding the enclosure is 8-ft. vinyl coated chain link. At left, the rhino holding pen is constructed of 4-in. o.d. Schedule 80, with the rails coped and welded to the posts, with cable reinforcing. Below, this 650-lineal-foot cable restraint fence was fabricated from 3-in. vinyl coated posts on 6-ft. centers, with the posts drilled to accept seven runs of stainless steel cable. PVC coated welded wire mesh was then attached to the cables and framework. (Hercules Fence photos)



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It's a zoo out there!

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coordinating of all the subs on the job by the general contractor, Mid Eastern Builders of Chesapeake, Va.

"Bill Gipson, Mid Eastern Builders' superintendent, worked very closely with us to ensure that all of the subcontractors were not tripping over each other," said Jason.

"We had direct contact with the owner to ensure that the final product turned out exactly like they wanted. The job went smoothly because we had an open door to both the owner and the GC."

The Virginia Zoo is located on 53 acres adjacent to Norfolk's historic Lafayette Park, and is bordered by the

Lafayette River. The zoo currently houses about 350 animals, representing 115 species.

In 1993 the Virginia Zoological Society (which owns and operates the facility in partnership with the City of Norfolk) developed a master plan to revitalize and expand the zoo.

Once the master plan is completed, the zoo will house animals from five continents and will be one of only a few zoo layouts in the country where individual exhibits simulate the geographic native area where the animals are found.

The most recent project was part two of Phase One, and consisted of a re-creation of part of the African Okavango Delta region. It included animal paddocks and housing structures, a moat system, artificial rockwork, a wa-

terfall and raised visitor walkway. The total cost for the Okavango Delta exhibit, which opened this spring, was \$15.8 million. Additional funding is being raised for a planned male elephant facility and an ape exhibit.

(The first part of Phase One consisted of a re-creation of an African village, and was completed in the summer of 1999. Hercules Fence was involved in portions of that project, and also will be involved in part three of Phase One, which will be an education and entry complex.)

As mentioned before, the fence portion of the project ranged from wooden post and rail, to chain link, to cable reinforced steel rail, to welded wire.

Even the perimeter fence got spe-

cial attention. The 2,250 lineal feet of 8-ft. vinyl coated chain link was trenched into a 24-in. wide x 6-in. deep trench, with the fence fabric hog-ringed to a bottom tension wire and the trench backfilled. A 650-lineal-foot cable restraint fence was constructed using 3-in. o.d. vinyl coated steel posts on 6-ft. centers. The posts were drilled to allow seven runs of stainless steel cable to pass through. After the cables were installed, 2-in. x 2-in. vinyl coated welded wire was attached to the structure.

In the giraffe night house, various heights of chain link fence were required, ranging from 42-in. to 17 ft. high. All rails were welded, and the top rail for the 17-ft. high fence is a 4-in. square structural steel tube.

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Specially-constructed slide gates are fitted to the interior holding pens of the giraffe night house. There are three total, and they are 15-ft. tall with 3-ft. openings, mounted on overhead tracks. A special stainless steel pull rod was attached to each gate to allow the keeper to open it from a secure area. The giraffe pens were built from chain link ranging from 42-in. to 17-ft. in height.



The zebra pens were fabricated from black vinyl coated chain link on vinyl coated framework with top and mid rail. Below is the slide gate through which zebras and rhinos pass.



It's a zoo out there!

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The slide gate for the rhino and zebra paddock was fabricated from 4-in. x 6-in. steel tubing, with four 4-in. x 4-in. horizontal rails. The gate slides on an 8-in. steel I-beam with two half-ton trolleys. A stainless steel pull rod was attached to the gate so the keeper can open and close it from a secure area.

Although not detailed in this article, the first part of Phase One, which recreated an actual African village, also contained a variety of fencing and restraint structures.

The giraffe/ostrich yard utilized both fencing and natural barriers, while the elephant yard/house contained massive hydraulic gates and "walk-throughs" that allow selective access to the yards and facilities. Chain link and electrified fencing also were used.

The amount of detail involved in the overall project is impressive. For instance, in re-creating the Xaxaba Village, authentic reed from Cape Town, South Africa was used for the roofs on the huts.

The roofs were constructed by Zulu craftsmen who traveled to the U.S. from South Africa for the installation.

Hercules Fence has been in business since 1955, but has been under the

current Copeland family ownership since 1986. A large part of the firm's business has been, and still is, with the military. However, with the scaling back of the military Hercules has been pursuing more commercial and residential business.

In addition to the Norfolk location, there are Hercules Fence facilities in Manassas, Va. (added in 1994), Newport News, Va. (1997), Richmond, Va. (1998) and College Park, Md. (2002).

The company currently employs about 100 people, with about one-tenth of the employees being 20-year veterans of the firm, said Jason.



At left is another view of the giraffe restraint fence showing the chain link and post and rail portions. Above, elephants are restrained by this heavy-duty gate constructed of 6 5/8-in. horizontal, diagonal and vertical rails, all coped and welded. The posts are 6-in. wide flange beams set 8-ft. into the ground, with the gate swinging on custom hinges. The gates are 8-ft. tall and 13-ft. wide. Below, a detail of a rhino/zebra swing gate. (Hercules Fence photos)



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