

## A Better Home for Zoo Turtles

**For more than 20 years, the water under the big stone bridge has been dark, smelly and unattractive for the visitors to The Henry Vilas Zoo in Madison, Wis.**

Posted: September 7, 2006

For more than 20 years, the water under the big stone bridge has been dark, smelly and unattractive for the visitors to The Henry Vilas Zoo in Madison, Wis. This zoo is one of only a few no-admission, accredited zoos nationwide and is funded by donations and community supporters. Transforming the pond at the entrance has taken many years of fund raising. The new pond under the bridge includes a large waterfall, wetland filters and clear water.

Pond Professors Inc. was contacted in early May to examine the project and develop a plan for the transformation. Meeting with the zoo caretakers, the team designed a plan for a large waterfall, wetland filters, a wheelchair-accessible floating deck and a clean, clear large pond. For more than 20 years, the water under the big stone bridge has been dark, smelly and unattractive.

The crew faced many challenges, including seepage from an adjacent lake and the removal of 880 tons of muck, fish waste, trash and years of debris. When we finished cleaning out the site, we installed a rubber-lined barrier wall to hold back the lake seepage. The crew installed a rubber-lined barrier wall to prevent seepage from the adjacent lake.

Within the center of the pond, we created a turtle island for the large snapper turtles to use for sunbathing and breeding. Under the turtle island, we installed dual fish tunnels to allow for protection from predators. This island, 10 feet by 20 feet, supports the zoo staff while teaching classes. After cleaning out the site, the renovation team installed three different cleanout culvert tubes with pumps, which were kept running for the entire six-week project. Dual wetland filters at the top of the newly transformed large, multi-tier waterfall allow for natural filtration of the pond. The waterfalls are 25 feet wide, 30 feet tall with 30,000 gph.

### Specifications:

Designer/Installer: Pond Professors  
Employees from Aquascape Designs and Aqua Pros in Chicago also helped complete the project.

Contact Information: 608-868-3305  
[www.pondprofessors.com](http://www.pondprofessors.com)

Location: Janesville, Wis.

Construction: The transformation of the pond at Henry Vilas Zoo took six weeks to complete and included the removal of 880 tons of waste.

The crew installed a rubber-lined barrier wall, a floating floor, a 10-foot by 20-foot island and nearly 600 tons of rock.

Mechanical Components: The wetland filter system uses a 7,500 gph pump to power the filtration. Under the pond is a 4,500 gph pump keeping the ground water at a level below the floor of the pond.

Cost: \$249,900