

Walls will have to be built around the Cleveland Metroparks **Zoo's** \$27 million RainForest to protect it from floods, a consultant said yesterday.

CT Consultants Inc. of Willoughby will recommend that a series of dikes, embankments or concrete walls be placed around the structure, said David Wiles, associate with the firm. Wiles said he had no estimate of the cost.

Park commissioners discovered the stalled structure was in a **flood** plain from a Plain Dealer story in January on the building's skyrocketing cost and design faults. In March, they ordered a \$40,860 study to confirm flooding dangers and to determine how to ensure safety of the 87,000-square-foot structure, the largest and most expensive project in Metroparks history.

The exhibits were to have been designed by Cleveland architect Thomas T.K. Zung under two contracts awarded by the park system. He was paid for that work, although he never completed it. Zung also had been hired to conduct a feasibility study on building the RainForest at its present site, but said he never tried to determine how the **flood** zone might affect the project because former park officials told him not to worry about it.

A Cuyahoga County grand jury is investigating Zung's work on the project.

The project, a re-creation of a tropical rain forest, has soared in cost from an original estimate of \$4 million. Its opening date has been pushed back from 1988 to 1992.

Wiles said that during last May's flooding of **Big Creek**, which is beside the building, water came up to the RainForest's front entrance, but none got inside.

His comments came in an interview with The PD after the unveiling yesterday of a model of the RainForest's interior.

Wiles said his firm's study was not completed, but that aerial photographs had been taken and topography maps were being drawn. Those and an analysis will be submitted to the park district early in June, he said.

Park Board President Daniel R. Corcoran said after the consultants' report was received, "We will look at the economics of it and implement the recommendations with barricades or walls or levees as quickly as possible and within our budget." He said the work would be done before the building opens.

Corcoran told the crowd at the model preview: "This building didn't require a sin tax, an act of Congress or contributions from industry or the private sector. We are paying for it out of park operating funds, which are provided by the taxpayers. When we open the RainForest in 1992, it will be completely paid for."

Zoo Director Steve H. Taylor described the more than 600 wild creatures that will live in the RainForest as ranging from ants to a 400-pound orangutan. He said the collection will be larger than the number of animals that were under his care in the entire Sacramento **Zoo**, which he formerly directed. He also asserted that the building "will be the most complete rain forest ever built in the world."

Park District Executive Director Vern J. Hartenburg predicted the RainForest would boost **zoo** attendance to more than 1 million visitors a year. The visitors are expected to spend \$10 million to \$20 million a year in Greater Cleveland, he said.

Zoo attendance in 1989 was 799,606.

The model displayed yesterday was created by the Larson Co. of Tucson, Ariz., which is designing the exhibits.

CITATION (AGLC STYLE)

PAULINE THOMA; STAFF WRITER, 'Dikes urged to protect zoo RainForest', *Plain Dealer, The* (online), 3 May 1990 <<https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy2.cpl.org/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&dofref=news/173EA6EC4A78DCC8>>