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Kern County Showed Up and Delivered. Now Voters Get to Decide CALM Zoo's Future.

More than 32,500 Kern County residents signed their names. The measure is slated for the November ballot. Now the campaign begins.

Kern County, Calif. — May 6, 2026 — One by one, Kern County residents put their name on a petition and said the same thing: CALM Zoo deserves a future as big as its past.

The Protect CALM Zoo campaign has submitted over 32,500 signatures from registered voters for certification with Kern County election officials, seeking qualification of the measure for the November 2026 ballot. If voters say “Yes” in November, it ensures funding for a 20-year Master Plan that would transform CALM Zoo from a beloved local treasure into a legacy institution that draws visitors from across California and puts Kern County on the map.

“When more than 32,500 of your neighbors sign their name to something, that’s so encouraging and speaks to the importance of CALM to this community. Kern County spoke clearly, and we are humbled by that trust. Now our job is to carry that energy all the way to November and finish what this community started.”

— **Jim Damian, Businessman & President of the Board, Protect CALM Zoo**

CALM Zoo is the only zoo in the country dedicated exclusively to California’s native species, welcoming more than 100,000 visitors annually. For a lot of Kern County families, it was the first place they ever saw a mountain lion up close, or watched a golden eagle spread its wings, or learned that the desert they drive through every day is alive in ways they never expected. The Master Plan is about making sure that CALM exists for future generations in new and exciting ways.

A YES vote funds the most ambitious vision CALM Zoo has seen since it opened its gates in 1983. Expanded and modernized wildlife habitats. New educational facilities that connect Kern County children to California’s natural world. A redesigned entry experience. A wildlife rehabilitation hub that would make CALM Zoo a leader in California conservation. The goal is a destination-class facility, the kind that draws families from across the Central Valley, not just from down the street. Fresno County built that kind of zoo when they passed a sales tax measure to support the Fresno Chaffee Zoo. Kern County has the same chance in November.

“Forty years ago, CALM Zoo was a dream that this community fought for. Today, over 32,500 signatures later, a continuation of that dream is on the ballot. If Kern County votes yes in November, the families who walk through those gates twenty years from now will know the community fought to protect that dream for them.”

— **Madelyn Janssen, CALM Board Member and Former KGET Reporter**



For Ridgecrest, that future comes with something worth knowing. Because Ridgecrest is currently at the legal ceiling for local sales tax, residents there won't pay the measure's increment, even if it passes countywide. Ridgecrest voters get a say in November without seeing a single cent added to what they pay today. That's not a loophole. It's just how the numbers fall and it means Ridgecrest has every reason to show up and vote yes.

Kern County has spoken. Now it's time to finish what more than 32,500 people started. Visit ProtectCALMZoo.org to add your name as an endorser, follow the campaign, and help carry this across the finish line in November.

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About CALM Zoo

The California Living Museum (CALM Zoo) is the only zoo in the country dedicated exclusively to California's native species. Located in Bakersfield, CALM Zoo has called Kern County home since 1983 and today welcomes more than 100,000 visitors each year. CALM Zoo's mission is to forge a connection and appreciation between the community and the California ecosystem through education, guest experiences, and conservation. Learn more at calmzoo.org

About Protect CALM Zoo

Protect CALM Zoo is the community campaign supporting a local ballot measure to fund CALM Zoo's 20-year Master Plan. Add your name as an endorser and follow the campaign at ProtectCALMZoo.org.

<p><u>Paid for by Protect CALM Zoo</u> <u>Ad Committee's Top Funders</u> Central Church of Christ of Bakersfield Rotary Club of Bakersfield, California</p>
