

THE NIH DIRECTOR

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NIH Will No Longer Support Biomedical Research on Chimpanzees

Research with non-human primates has and continues to be vital to helping us understand and improve human health in a multitude of ways, including the development of treatments and interventions. However, use of non-human primates needs to be supported by the science. It has been two and half years since [NIH announced its](#) decision in June 2013 to significantly reduce the use of chimpanzees in agency-supported biomedical research and retain only a small population of chimpanzees for future biomedical research. As part of this decision, NIH indicated it would identify 50 chimpanzees that would be retained based on the characteristics necessary to support the research of the projects submitted, and periodically review this decision based on scientific needs. To be considered, projects would have to meet a strict [set of principles and criteria, set forth by the Institute of Medicine and accepted by the NIH](#), after having cleared scientific review. Since June 2013, based on recommendations from the Council of Councils, NIH has phased out all previously active biomedical research protocols using chimpanzees that did not meet the IOM principles and criteria, and no new biomedical research projects have been approved.



Chimpanzees at Chimp Haven are often seen grooming and playing with one another. *Chimp Haven*

Another major development occurred last summer. On June 16, 2015, [the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it has designated captive chimpanzees as endangered](#). Among other things, this designation requires that researchers apply for and obtain a permit to use captive chimpanzees in research if it could harm the animal. Up to this point, we are not aware of any permits that have been sought for this purpose.

As a result of these numerous changes over the last few years and the significantly reduced demand for chimpanzees in NIH-supported biomedical research, it is clear that we've reached a tipping point. In accordance with NIH's commitment in June 2013, I have reassessed the need to maintain chimpanzees for biomedical research and decided that effective immediately, NIH will no longer maintain a colony of 50 chimpanzees for future research. All NIH-owned chimpanzees that reside outside of the Federal Sanctuary System operated by Chimp Haven, Keithville, Louisiana, are now eligible for retirement. Relocation of the chimpanzees to the Federal Sanctuary System will be conducted as space is available and on a timescale that will allow for optimal transition of each individual chimpanzee with careful consideration of their welfare, including their health and social grouping.

These decisions are specific to chimpanzees. Research with other non-human primates will continue to be valued, supported, and conducted by the NIH.

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