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U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer Awards The Marine Mammal Center Her Conservation Champion Award

(SAUSALITO, Calif. – May 10, 2005) The Marine Mammal Center is proud to announce that it is the recipient of U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer’s Conservation Champion Award. The senator presented the award to The Center during a press conference held on the hospital facility grounds in front of an audience of board members, donors, staff and volunteers. Senator Boxer established her Conservation Champion Award in January 2000 to recognize individuals and organizations working to promote a safe and healthy environment.

“The Marine Mammal Center rescues and treats ill and injured marine animals, provides valuable scientific research, and gives schoolchildren and adults alike the ability to learn more about the mammals that live in our oceans,” said Senator Boxer. “I am very pleased to acknowledge its fine work with this Conservation Champion Award.”

Staff from The Center guided the senator on a tour of the hospital grounds which included a look at the hospital, surgical suite, holding pens for seals and sea lions, and fish kitchen food preparation area. Scientists also highlighted the types of research they’re currently involved with, all designed to gain better understanding of diseases found in many marine mammal patients. The Center’s officials also thanked Senator Boxer for her role in helping to acquire federal money for the new rebuild project.

“We’re so thankful to Senator Boxer for awarding us with her Conservation Champion Award; it truly recognizes the national impact our work has on marine mammal species around the country,” said B.J. Griffin, Executive Director at The Marine Mammal Center. “We’re also extremely grateful to the senator for being so instrumental in helping us secure \$2 million in federal funds needed to help build our new hospital and to further our important work here at The Center.”

Pre-construction activities began this week with the removal of materials on the hospital grounds to make way for a new filtration tank system to be built. The actual groundbreaking for the new, \$18 million state-of-the-art facility is set for October of this year. Rebuild plans include provisions for upgraded holding pools, water filtration system, improved laboratory and a learning center for visitors. The Center already has raised \$14.5 million; it needs to raise a little more than \$3 million to complete the project.

Celebrating its 30th year in 2005, The Marine Mammal Center is a nonprofit hospital dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of ill and injured marine mammals, and to research about their health and diseases. Volunteers and staff have treated more than 10,000 California sea lions, elephant seals, porpoises, and other marine life, along 600 miles of coastline from Mendocino County to San Luis Obispo County. In fact, The Center treats more marine mammals than any other institution of its kind in the world, uniquely combining its rehabilitation program with scientific discovery and education programs to advance the understanding of marine mammal health, ocean health and conservation.

On the Web: www.marinemammalcenter.org