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**The Marine Mammal Center to Break Ground for New Hospital Facility**

*New \$18 million “green design” will help animal rehab center “look to the future” with upgraded pools and filtration system, solar panels and education center*

**(SAUSALITO, Calif. – October 27, 2005)** The Marine Mammal Center, a Sausalito-based, nonprofit rehabilitation and research hospital for seals, sea lions and other marine mammals, begins rebuilding its 30-year old facility this November. The Center’s staff, local dignitaries, donors and volunteers will kick off the momentous, \$18 million project with a news conference on November 10, at 11 a.m. on the hospital grounds in the Marin Headlands within the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. A 3D model of the new facility and site plans will be unveiled and The Center will announce the launch of the “*Looking to the Future*” community fundraising campaign to complete fundraising for the project. Media tours of the site and a barbecue celebration will follow the news conference. Throughout the construction project, The Center will remain in operation rescuing and treating marine mammals. Public access to the hospital will be restricted for safety concerns, but visitors will be able to see activities remotely through a soon-to-be installed webcam accessible on The Center’s website.

“This is a day we’ve all worked very hard towards making a reality for over six years,” said B.J. Griffin, Executive Director of The Marine Mammal Center. “The new improved facility, will be nearly the same size, but will be markedly better for our animal patients, and it will improve our ability to educate the public about the importance of marine mammals and how their health relates to our own health. We are enormously gratified by the generosity of our lead donors who’ve helped get this project underway; now we are turning to the public to help us raise the remaining \$3 million needed to complete this project.”

Fundraising began for the project five years ago and to date, \$15 million has been raised, led by significant gifts from the late William Kimball, from the Geoffrey C. Hughes Foundation and from the Marin Community Foundation.

“As a community, we should all feel proud to have such a key institution in our midst,” said Thomas Peters, President and CEO of the Marin Community Foundation. “We are so pleased to be a part of The Marine Mammal Center’s new hospital to help them fulfill their mission to rescue and treat marine mammals and to educate people about these extraordinary animals that serve as sentinels for our environment. It’s very exciting to see the center break ground for this important project.”

The new Marine Mammal Center will be built where the current facility is on 35,000 square feet of land, formerly a Nike missile site, in the Marin Headlands. The goal of the rebuild is to create a facility with new pools, pens and a water filtration system designed to improve the rehabilitation of specific species of animals such as seals and sea lions. The visitor experience will be enhanced to include an education center with indoor and outdoor classrooms as well as visitor amenities. Three main buildings, forming a complex around a central courtyard, will allow visitors to see many never-before-seen aspects of animal care, science and education.

Construction of the new Marine Mammal Center is expected to be completed by the summer of 2007. A unique aspect of the project is its green design. Skylights built into the roofs of each building will allow for natural lighting and reduced energy costs. Special photovoltaic shade panels built over the animal pens will convert radiant energy into voltage to help power the main buildings on sunny days while shading animal patients. Highlights of the complex include:

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- **Marine Science Community Education Center:** This 5,760-square foot, two-story building will be built near the pens at the current site. The education center is to be the primary visitor facility and will include an information desk and education classroom, a marine science discovery room with interpretive exhibits, and a retail store.
- **Veterinary Science and Research Center:** This two-story, 7,800-square foot building will house veterinary science offices, as well as The Center's Stranding Department. There, staff and volunteers will field and coordinate rescue calls, and veterinary staff and researchers will study diseases that affect patients. A "commons" area, complete with bathrooms, lockers and a kitchen, will provide staff and volunteers an area to change out of their slickers and to prepare their own meals during their shifts.
- **Marine Mammal Medical Center:** This building will become the hub of activity for veterinary staff and volunteers, and may be viewed by the public. The one-story, 3,920-square foot Medical Center will include a marine mammal food preparation area, pharmacy, medical record room (known as a chart room), and a laboratory and necropsy research areas. Public viewing areas within this building will promote the educational mission of The Center by incorporating inverted bay windows, giving visitors a glimpse into the day-to-day work The Center does.

In addition, a centralized courtyard and amphitheater will provide a common gathering area for visitors to learn more about The Center's patients and the natural history of marine mammals. A public observation deck on the second level will give the public a unique view of the animal pens, and at the same time, provide enough distance so extremely ill patients are not disturbed.

Another hallmark of the rebuild project is the new life-support system containing 23 in-ground and above-ground pools for pinniped patients, an existing portable pool for cetaceans such as harbor porpoises and dolphins, and four tanks for special-needs patients. A 40-foot permanent tank for cetaceans will be built in a future phase. Modernization of The Center's water treatment systems will significantly improve animal care facilities and quadruple its water-holding and treatment capacity from 47,000 gallons to 160,000 gallons. New life-support systems using the latest treatment technology will turn over each tank every 15 minutes, reducing The Center's annual consumption of water while at the same time significantly improving its facilities.

**The Center will host a news conference and groundbreaking ceremony, November 10 on the actual construction site.** Speakers and dignitaries at the press conference include: Brian O'Neill - Superintendent, Golden Gate National Recreation Area; Representatives from congresswomen Woolsey and Pelosi's offices; Thomas Peters - President and CEO, the Marin Community Foundation; Dennis Scremin - Mayor of Sausalito; Dennis DeDomenico - Chairman of the Board, The Marine Mammal Center. **Invited guests should arrive at the parking lot next to building 1065 at Rodeo Beach by 10:30 a.m. Shuttles from that parking lot will run directly to the hospital to avoid heavy traffic and parking constraints. Media will be able to utilize the VIP parking reserved at the hospital.**

**The schedule of events that day includes:**

- 11:00 a.m. - News conference begins, presentation of 3D model, question and answer period
- 11:45 a.m. - Media tours of the construction site as well as main grounds
- 12:00 p.m. - Celebratory barbecue for invited guests

**The Marine Mammal Center** is a nonprofit hospital headquartered in Sausalito, California. Staff and volunteers are dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of ill and injured marine mammals, to research about their health and diseases and to public education about marine mammals. Since 1975, more than 11,000 California sea lions, elephant seals, porpoises, and other marine life have been treated, rescued along 600 miles of coastline from Mendocino County to San Luis Obispo County. Staff and volunteers uniquely combine rehabilitation with scientific discovery and education programs to advance the understanding of marine mammal health, ocean health and conservation.

**On the Web:** [www.marinemammalcenter.org](http://www.marinemammalcenter.org)

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