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## **The Marine Mammal Center Participates in Safe Seas 2006**

### **Oil spill response and readiness exercises increase disaster preparedness**

**(Sausalito, Calif. – August 9, 2006)** Today, The Marine Mammal Center, along with local, state and federal agencies, will participate in Safe Seas 2006 – an oil spill response and readiness exercise that takes place in the Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries waters near San Francisco. The goal of Safe Seas 2006 is to demonstrate techniques and technologies used to protect marine and coastal resources and to develop individual skills in contingency planning and emergency response in the event of an oil spill disaster at sea. The three-day disaster drill, lead by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is the largest of its kind to be held in U.S. waters. The Marine Mammal Center will respond to simulated oiled marine mammals because of a hypothetical massive oil spill 12 miles off the San Francisco coast.

“We are the only marine mammal rescue unit -- between Mendocino County and San Luis Obispo County -- that is ready to respond to stranding emergency response events involving marine mammals,” said Shelbi Stoudt, Stranding Manager at The Marine Mammal Center. “We take these drills very seriously and see them as a way to improve our own response protocols.”

Participants will respond to a scenario involving a collision of a bulk-freight cargo ship arriving in to San Francisco Bay, with that of a barge, resulting in 300,000 gallons of oil to spill into The Bay. Thousands of multicolored, biodegradable drift cards will be disbursed to represent oil making its way to shore. The Marine Mammal Center’s stranding and rescue team will patrol beaches at Crissy Field, Baker Beach and Fort Funston to look for these cards as part of its protocol in locating marine mammals that have stranded on beaches.

**-More-**

## **Safe Seas 2006 continued**

The simulated disaster outlined would threaten the Gulf of the Farallones, Cordell Bank and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Pt. Reyes National Seashore, and the economic and ecological resources dependant on San Francisco Bay.

More than 300 people from multiple agencies will participate in drill, training, field operations, oceanographic surveys, and incident command post activities. The agencies participating include NOAA, the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Air Force Reserve, Marine Spill Response Corporation, Alameda County Sheriff's Department and Bodega Marine Laboratory.

The Safe Seas 2006 exercises also provided an opportunity to refresh skills through educational short courses. Dr. Frances Gulland, Director of Veterinary Science at The Marine Mammal Center, Dr. Mike Ziccardi with the Oiled Wildlife Care Network, and Dr. Teri Rowles with NOAA's Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, taught courses involving protocols in wildlife capture and care during an oil spill response. They also outlined techniques and guidelines in handling live and dead wildlife with infectious diseases.

### **About The Marine Mammal Center**

Headquartered in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in Sausalito, California, The Marine Mammal Center is a nonprofit hospital dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of ill and injured marine mammals, and to the research of their health and diseases. Volunteers and staff have treated more than 12,000 California sea lions, elephant seals, porpoises, and other marine mammals, along 600-miles of coastline stretching 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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