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New Marine Mammal Visitor Center Opens in the Marin Headlands

(Sausalito, Calif. – July 17, 2006) The Marine Mammal Center, in cooperation with the National Park Service, has opened a new Marine Mammal Visitor Center and gift store inside a historic World War II mess hall building in Fort Cronkhite in the Marin Headlands. The new visitor center, located inside Building 1049, is designed to educate the public about the work done at The Center as well as about marine mammal and ocean health. Visitors will also get a glimpse into the history of the former army mess hall and military life at Fort Cronkhite. Currently, The Center’s hospital is undergoing major renovations and while the daily activities of rescue and medical care continue, it is closed to visitors until that work is completed. It is expected to be re-opened to the public in the fall of 2007.

“The new visitor center will allow us to continue to speak directly to visitors from all around the world who come here to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Marin Headlands and who are interested in learning about marine mammals, our work and ocean health,” said Jim Oswald, Communications Manager at The Marine Mammal Center. “Building 1049 has a distinct history, and we’re grateful to the National Park Service for allowing us its temporary use.”

The 170-man mess hall was built to feed soldiers. It exemplifies a typical U.S. Army style dining facility. In the early 1940s, the U.S. Army built dozens of similar wood-frame, temporary military posts for the wartime training and housing of soldiers. By some estimates, more than 100,000 of these mobilization buildings were constructed around the country after the war.

The Marine Mammal Visitor Center will house seal, sea lion, whale, and other marine mammal educational materials for the public to view. In addition, visitors will be able to look at a 3-D model representation of what the new Marine Mammal Center will look like.

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A special internet-enabled computer terminal connected to The Center's webcam will allow guests to take a peak at current seal and sea lion patients at the hospital. Docents will be on hand to answer questions about The Center and our mission. Visitors can also shop for many marine mammal collectibles, t-shirts, cards and books at the gift store located inside the building.

Marine Mammal Visitor Center hours: Beginning July 17, open seven days a week, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. except Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Location: Building 1049 across from the pedestrian bridge at Rodeo Beach, Marin Headlands.

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

About Fort Cronkhite

Fort Cronkhite, located in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, was home for soldiers from various U.S. Coast Artillery Regiments. The beachside barracks were completed in 1941 and housed thousands of Coast Artillery soldiers assigned to the Army's sprawling harbor defenses of San Francisco. During the 1950s, the threat of a Soviet-led attack appeared imminent. In preparation, the U.S. Army built two surface-to-air Nike missile launch sites in the Marin Headlands. Soldiers assigned to the Nike batteries lived in the Cronkhite barracks. The Fort Cronkhite battery was closed in 1972, and three years later, The Marine Mammal Center began its operations on site.

On the web: <http://www.nps.gov/goga/mahe/focr/index.htm>