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Oiled Wildlife Care Center Dedication in Santa Cruz

CONTACT: Dana Michaels, OSPR Public Affairs Officer (327-9948)

The California Department of Fish and Game's Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) joins the University of California (UC) Santa Cruz, and the State Department of General Services, Monday morning, to host the opening and dedication of the State's Oiled Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center (Center). The 9:30 a.m. event, Monday, July 21, will take place at 1451 Shaffer Road, Santa Cruz, near the Joseph M. Long Marine Laboratory.

This event culminates four years of planning and a year of construction. Officials scheduled to speak include OSPR Administrator Pete Bontadelli, University of California Chancellor M.R.C. Greenwood, and State Department of General Services Deputy Director Eugene A. Spindler II.

Located on California's central coast, adjacent to the UC Santa Cruz Long Marine Lab, this center will provide the best achievable treatment for marine mammals and birds affected by an oil spill in marine waters, in accordance with the Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act.

This 18,000-square-foot center is the first of its kind in the United States dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and research of oiled marine wildlife, with emphasis on sea otters. Outside sea water pools and pens along with wildlife washing and drying rooms, veterinary treatment and rehabilitation rooms, and laboratory space will facilitate care for up to 125 sea otters, and provide the flexibility to care for other marine mammals and birds.

The Center will be the primary location for the OSPR oiled wildlife response unit, the centerpiece of the statewide Oiled Wildlife Care Network, and will be used in training and response exercises. When not being used as an oiled wildlife care facility, it will serve as a center for sea otter and marine wildlife health research in partnership with UC Santa Cruz and other cooperators. This research will include:

- Field-based studies on sea otters' population dynamics, ecology, and habitat;
- Studies of the basic physiology of captive otters and other coastal animals;
- Toxicological studies on the effects of oil and synergistic toxicants on marine animals.

Scientists from both UC Santa Cruz and OSPR have worked with sea otters, both in California and in Alaska, following the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in 1989.

The toxicology research would complement an active OSPR/UC Santa Cruz program at DFG's Granite Canyon station, south of Carmel, on the toxicity of petroleum products, dispersants, and cleaning agents used in oil spill response on various marine organisms. There will be six full-time and two part-time DFG veterinary, research, and administrative staff working at the Center, after it is completed in the summer of 1997.

UC Santa Cruz Researchers will have full-time access to two outdoor mammal pools and some of the indoor laboratory space at the new center. During non-emergency times, two other outdoor pools and additional lab space will also be available for UC Santa Cruz and Long Marine Laboratory use.

Development of the Center has been a cooperative effort between the OSPR, UC Santa Cruz, California Department of General Services, and the petroleum industry.
