

OSPR News Release

OFFICE OF OIL SPILL PREVENTION & RESPONSE (916) 445-9338

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Oiled Wildlife Center Ground-Breaking

The California Department of Fish and Game's Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) joins the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC), and the State Department of General Services, Friday morning, to host a ground-breaking ceremony for the State's Oiled Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center (Center). The 10:00 A.M. event, May 31, will take place near the Long Marine Laboratory, at 100 Shaffer Road, Santa Cruz.

The event culminates four years of planning, and marks the beginning of the Center's construction phase. Officials scheduled to speak include California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Director Jacqueline E. Schafer and OSPR Administrator Pete Bontadelli, University of California Chancellor Karl S. Pister, and State Department of General Services Director Peter G. Stamison.

This, the nation's first facility dedicated to the research and care of oiled wildlife, will be the primary location for OSPR's wildlife response, veterinary research and service programs, and the statewide Oiled Wildlife Care Network. It will also be used in oil spill response training. Other agencies expected to participate in activities at the Center include the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Biological Survey, and National Marine Fisheries Service.

When it is not being used for oil spill response, faculty, research staff, and students from the UCSC Institute of Marine Sciences will collaborate with OSPR scientists on studies related to petroleum product impacts on California's coastal wildlife and habitat, and baseline health of marine mammals and marine birds .

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Oiled Wildlife Center Ground-Breaking

May 30, 1996

Page 2

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 on animals injured in spills.

Scientists from both UCSC 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/UCSC program at DFG's Granite Canyon station, south of Carmel, on the toxic actions 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.

UCSC 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 UCSC and Long Marine Laboratory use.

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