

SEA OTTER HOLDING FACILITY FUNDED THANKS TO PUBLIC

NEWPORT — On Giving Tuesday, the Oregon Coast Aquarium announced a campaign to build a new sea otter holding facility. The facility would allow the aquarium to take in an additional rescued sea otter and facilitate new Behind-the-Scenes guest experiences. Thanks to generous donations from aquarium supporters, the sea otter holding facility has been fully funded.

The Oregon Coast Aquarium is one of only 13 rehabilitation facilities across North America

authorized to accept rescued sea otters — but all are at full capacity. The addition of the sea otter holding facility will allow the aquarium to take in a non-releasable injured or abandoned sea otter pup that would otherwise have nowhere to go.

An additional sea otter would join the aquarium's three rescued male sea otters, Nuka, Schuster and Oswald.

Construction on the sea otter holding facility will begin this Spring. Thanks to the success of the campaign, construc-

tion of the facility will include a Behind-the-Scenes, interactive design. The aquarium has plans to develop a sea otter encounter program, which will promote guest education on sea otter natural history and the importance of sea otters to coastal ecosystems.

Over 225 individuals donated to the sea otter holding facility campaign through social media, member mailing, the aquarium website and call-ins. Most were first-time donors. One anonymous donor

found out about the aquarium's need for the facility on NPR. After hearing the broadcast, the donor contacted the Aquarium to sponsor the rest of the funds needed for the facility in memory of the late Dr. Nélio Baptista Barros. Dr. Barros was a pioneer in marine mammal research and an active member of the Latin American research community in the U.S. and abroad.

Prior to his passing in 2010, Dr. Barros conducted ecological research with Portland State

University and helped coordinate the Marine Mammal Stranding Network in Oregon and Washington.

"We met [Dr. Barros] twice, and he struck both of us as very dedicated to his work," said the anonymous donor. "Children were drawn to him because of his warmth and his treatment of them as equals. Both times I saw him, he was surrounded by a crowd of children hanging on his every word."

The addition of the sea otter holding facility is part of the

aquarium's expanded wildlife rehabilitation mission. A future Marine Wildlife Center will increase capacity for marine life rescue and rehabilitation, safeguard the aquarium's current animal collection, improve conditions for rehabilitation, and create an opportunity for hands-on learning.

OREGON STATE PARKS TO OFFER ANNUAL 'FIRST DAY HIKES' JAN. 1

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) is inviting Oregonians outdoors on New Year's Day for the annual First Day Hikes event. Visitors can choose from 32 hikes in 31 parks across the state. All hikes will be guided by a park ranger or volunteer who will share stories about the park's history, geology, wildlife and plants.

All hikes are free; day-use parking fees will be waived at all participating parks Jan. 1 only.

Hikers can register for specific hikes online at the Oregon State Parks Store: bit.ly/ParkStoreEvents. While online registration isn't required for participation, visitors are encouraged to register. It helps park staff plan the hike and provides them with participant contact information should hike details change.

OPRD advises visitors to plan for inclement weather, dress in layers, wear sturdy shoes, bring water and remember to carry binoculars for viewing wildlife.

OPRD has sponsored First Day Hikes annually since 2012, part of a larger national event organized by America's State Parks.

Along the coast, the following locations will be hosting hikes on Jan. 1:

- Bullards Beach State Park: 1 p.m., meet at the meeting hall.
- Cape Lookout State Park: noon, meet in the Lookout Trailhead parking lot.
- Fort Stevens State Park: 10 a.m., meet at parking lot A.
- Jessie M. Honeyman Memorial State Park: 10 a.m., meet at Cleawox Lodge.
- Oswald West State Park: 8 a.m., meet at Elk Flats Trail parking lot. Parking is limited; please arrive early, carpool, or use another nearby lot.
- South Beach State Park: 10 a.m., meet at the park day-use area.
- Umpqua Lighthouse State Park: 10 a.m., meet at Lake Marie swim area.
- Whale Watch Center at Depoe Bay: 10 a.m., meet at the Whale Watch Center.

At Honeyman State Park, hikers can register for the hike at the Oregon State Parks Store, <http://bit.ly/ParkStoreEvents>.

ParkStoreEvents. Registration — although not required — will help park staff plan for the hike

and give park staff contact information should the hike be canceled because of weather.

The hike will be a one-mile trek from the lodge to the Sand Dunes Day-use Area

Dogs must be on a six-foot leash, and baby strollers are not recommended.

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ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



Matthew Horrillo Junior



WRESTLING

Highlight: Matthew Horrillo is this week's Athlete of the Week. Matthew took 4th place in last weekend's Grants Pass Winter Kickoff Classic. The competition included wrestlers from 42 schools. Coach Neil Wartnik says Matthew's match for 4th place was one of the most exciting matches he has ever witnessed as Horrillo went to 3 overtimes and a 30 second Ultimate Overtime to defeat his opponent.

Honorable Mention Brayden Thornton BASKETBALL

Highlight: Honorable Mention goes to freshman basketball player Brayden Thornton who led all Siuslaw scorers in Friday night's matchup against Pleasant Hill scoring 16 points

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