



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Santa Monica, CA (May 14, 2010) – Those lazy, crazy, hazy days of summer are the perfect time to rediscover what Santa Monica has to offer. When planning a day at the beach, be sure to visit Heal the Bay’s Santa Monica Pier Aquarium to learn about the local marine life of the Bay – and how to help protect this essential component of life in Santa Monica.

Visitors young and old enjoy hands-on exploration at the Aquarium’s touch tanks, home to dozens of different species of animals - from the commonly seen purple sea urchins, hermit crabs, sea stars and sea cucumbers to the unique California sea hares, brittle stars, abalone, kelp crabs and tube worms. The three large touch tanks teeming with life from the tide pools invite exploration. Visitors can feel a knobby sea star or a sticky sea anemone, and experience both a sea urchin’s spiny hug, and the soft silky surface of a sea cucumber.

The Aquarium’s animals are fed on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, and visitors are welcome to help feed the sea stars. Popular shark-themed Sundays include a 3:30 p.m. presentation and feeding weekly at the marine center’s shark tank. Prepare to be splashed with a little salt water as the swell sharks squirt water in their excitement of an anticipated meal.

More than 100 species of plant and animal life, all from the Santa Monica Bay, are on display; local visitors become frequent guests to check in on a favorite fish, crustacean or invertebrate. And in a true collaboration of art and science, the Aquarium is creatively using a wall to display art installations, offering a different artist the opportunity to present selections of marine-related work each month.

Activities, displays and presentations are all geared toward inspiring understanding, stewardship and conservation of the city’s westernmost border, Santa Monica Bay. More information is available at www.healthebay.org/smpa, or by calling 310-393-6149.

Summer Hours are weekends: 12:30- 6:00 p.m.; Tuesday-Friday: 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. ; closed Mondays. Admission is free for children 12 and under; all others: suggested donation of \$5, with an entry fee of \$2 per adult. For groups of 10 or more, admission is \$2 per person, regardless of age.

About the SMPA

The Santa Monica Pier Aquarium is Heal the Bay's marine education facility located beach-level, just below the Carousel, at the Santa Monica Pier. The Aquarium is open to the general public <<http://www.healthebay.org/smpa/visitor/hoursfees.asp>> and attracts more than 85,000 visitors per year. Since Heal the Bay acquired the Aquarium in 2003 from UCLA, more than 300,000 visitors have been welcomed during public hours and approximately 80,000 students have been educated during in-house education programs <<http://www.healthebay.org/smpa/edupgms/default.asp>> .

About Heal the Bay

Heal the Bay is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to making Southern California coastal waters and watersheds, including Santa Monica Bay, safe, healthy and clean. We use research, education, community action and advocacy to pursue our mission.