



## **Santa Monica Pier Aquarium Celebrates Underwater Parks Day**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Santa Monica, CA– With the recent adoption of state-regulated Marine Protected Areas for Southern California coastal waters, Heal the Bay’s Santa Monica Pier Aquarium has much to celebrate on the third annual Underwater Parks day January 15. The marine science center at 1600 Ocean Front Walk - beach level just beneath the Santa Monica Pier’s carousel – will offer presentations and activities throughout the day highlighting marine protected areas of Southern California and the benefits of marine reserves around the world. Craft projects for all ages and special displays will encourage visitors to help protect the ocean through their everyday actions.

Winners of the Aquarium’s underwater photography and video contest will be announced at 2:00 p.m. and examples of the winners’ work will be on exhibit.

Entries for the contest are being accepted through 5:00 p.m. Jan.10. Only one entry per person, consisting of a single image, should be submitted. Photographs will be judged for subject relevance and artistic vision by a panel of Heal the Bay staff. Winners will be chosen in three categories: open photography, youth photography for entrants under 18 and video. Complete rules and regulations for participants are available at:

[www.healthebay.org/uwphotocontest](http://www.healthebay.org/uwphotocontest).

Underwater Parks Day has been set aside by marine science centers throughout Southern California as a day to educate the public about Marine Protected Areas, an important process to preserve and restore California coastal marine resources. Marine Protected Areas, also known as MPAs, are a network of underwater parks established through the state's fish and game commission and managed by the Department of Fish and Game. Offering protection from fishing and other activities that disturb marine life, these underwater parks are seen as a safe haven where species can feed, breed and thrive with minimum human impact, protecting their abundance for future generations.

The Aquarium will be open regular winter weekend hours from 12:30 to 5:00 p.m. More information on the day's scheduled events can be found at:

<http://www.healthebay.org/event/underwater-parks-day>.

#### 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.