The Seymour Marine Discovery Center is dedicated to educating students, families, and the general public about the role marine science plays in the understanding and conservation of the world’s oceans. The Seymour Center provides access to a university research center through rich educational experiences and intriguing exhibits utilizing our striking setting along Monterey Bay as a backdrop for teaching.

During March 2015, we celebrated our 15th anniversary in our beautiful facility, although the public education program predates this building by many years.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-15, 69,592 visited the Seymour Center.

The following represents a snapshot of the year’s achievements.

EDUCATION PROGRAM DELIVERY

VISITOR PROGRAMS

A variety of specialty-themed days were presented for the walk-in public. Examples include Sea Otter Awareness Week, Shark Science Week, Earth Week, and World Oceans Weekend. These provide interest for the return visitor, grow attendance, and focus insight on a specific aspect of marine science through pop-up exhibits and programs. 2,300 visitors participated in these special education days (an increase of 300 visitors from the previous year during those same weeks).

Nearly 17,500 visitors enjoyed a daily tour including behind-the-scenes access to our adjacent research facility—Long Marine Laboratory. Another 1,800 visitors participated in a Reserved Group Tour, pre-arranged specifically for their needs. Through specialty tours (Marine Mammal Research Tour, Younger Lagoon Reserve Tour, and Santa Cruz Wharf Tour) we served another 260 people.

During the very popular, 11-part, Science Sunday lecture series, scientists discussed topics such as whaling and international law, seal mummies in Antarctica, the ever-growing debate about California water and fisheries restoration, sand mining around the globe, ocean acidification, shark conservation, the life of elephant seals, shorebird conservation, and the human-ocean connection in an at-capacity talk called, “Blue Mind.” Along with the annual Ken Norris Memorial Lecture in the fall, more than 950 visitors attended, nearly 10 percent above the prior year.
SCHOOL PROGRAMS

School field trips serving K-14 students continue to be a cornerstone of our program. In FY 2014-15 we provided marine science education to 280 classes (a slight increase over the previous year) comprised of 9,000 students, teachers, and adult chaperones. Of the 280 classes served, 130 came from schools classified as Title 1—schools with high numbers or percentages of students from at-risk or low-income families. Scholarships were made available to Title 1 schools, making it possible for 1,050 students to participate, who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience a marine research center.

Approximately 55 percent of visiting schools are from Santa Cruz County, including Davenport, the San Lorenzo Valley, and Watsonville. Classes from Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties made up 30 percent. The balance was students from inland counties, traveling here to learn about their connection to the ocean. Students came from Contra Costa (Walnut Creek), Alameda (Oakland), Sacramento (Galt, Sacramento), Merced (Merced), Stanislaus (Modesto), San Joaquin (Acampo, Porterville), Fresno (Clovis), and Nevada (Truckee) Counties. Teachers often incorporate the Seymour Center into their weeklong marine science field study courses, including a high school class from Wisconsin that has made the Seymour Center a part of their curriculum for the past two years.

We entered into a new partnership with Younger Lagoon Reserve and the Monterey Bay Aquarium in the fall of 2014, allowing us to increase our capacity to support high school students in the Watsonville Area Teens Conserving Habitats (WATCH) program. 24 WATCH students from Aptos High School designed and carried out field-based research projects in Younger Lagoon Reserve on topics including endangered fish, cyanobacteria, and predation. We provided students with meeting and lab space, training, compound and dissecting microscopes, and lab equipment. WATCH students shared their research results with Seymour Center visitors during a busy weekend day.

The Seymour Center hosted our third annual Homeschool Day in the spring of 2015. Attendance has significantly increased each year with 160 participants at last spring’s event.

We also provided teachers with professional development workshops to sharpen their scientific skills. In our annual Underwater Robotics Workshop, 30 teachers and 50 students worked side by side. The GEMS Ocean Sciences Educator Workshop brought together 20 teachers to further develop their teaching strategies as they transition to the Next Generation Science Standards.

YOUTH SUMMER SCIENCE PROGRAM

With nearly as many on the wait list, 108 children ages 7-14, enrolled in nine, weeklong summer science sessions known as Ocean Explorers. Students actively learned about and participated in marine research at the Seymour Center, and our associated Long Marine Laboratory, where participants worked alongside marine mammal researchers.
and trainers. Participants gained experience with marine mammal husbandry, training, and research. *Ocean Explorers* also investigated the coastal environment at field sites around Monterey Bay, including rivers and watersheds, sandy beaches, rocky intertidal areas, and kelp forests by kayak! Young participants generally come from Santa Cruz, San Clara, and San Mateo Counties—however, nearly 10 percent traveled from areas as far away as Arizona, Kansas, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Colorado, and Mexico for this unique experience. Full or partial scholarships were available to low income participants.

## AQUARIUM AND EXHIBIT HALL

Dozens of grunt sculpins delighted visitors both young and old in our aquarium, offering a glimpse of how these small benthic fish navigate through their watery world—they prefer to “hop” around on their fins rather than use them to swim.

Finding favorites, including flatfishes, fringeheads, and fat innkeeper worms helped make memorable experiences for our visitors exploring the exhibit hall. Newly raised sea nettles also made a welcome addition to our jelly exhibit—the result of many months of careful work behind the scenes.

The majority of our exhibit lighting was upgraded to more efficient LED technology.

Not only are we saving energy (the annual equivalent of taking one car off the road), the text and graphics are significantly easier to view under the new crisp illumination.

A scientific illustration intern produced a detailed graphic of a swell shark that will be incorporated into an exhibit panel near the shark touching pool. We also showcased some of her other nature illustrations in the exhibit hall.

A temporary exhibit curated by SPECTRA artist Gwen Toevs brightened the hall for several months. This large, multifaceted, art piece created by local elementary students focused on watersheds, salmon lifecycle, and species declines.

New interpretive panels were produced and installed on the Santa Cruz Wharf. They not only assist the million-plus wharf visitors learn a little about marine science, but also serve in a marketing capacity for the Seymour Center.

## STUDENT RESEARCH AND EDUCATION AWARDS

Each fall, UCSC students compete for monetary awards for their proposed research and education projects in the marine sciences. In conjunction with our board of directors and the Institute of Marine Sciences Director Gary Griggs, the Seymour Center hosts this competition. Last year 17 projects were supported with $11,617 awarded from funds endowed for this purpose. The top two recipients attended and spoke at the *Global Oceans Awards Gala*. 
While part of UC Santa Cruz, the Center must raise our ~$1.2 million budget annually (including all operating costs, salaries, and benefits). While this continues to be a major challenge, our community of supporters remains strong.

MARKETING AND VISITATION

Visitation was stable this year with 67,950 visitors. With a slight increase in admission fees during midyear, admission income increased by $27,000.

The Center actively promotes its activities with PSAs and calendar listings throughout the region. Last year, traditional print ads included the Santa Cruz Sentinel, Good Times (and their annual Visitor Guide), Santa Cruz County Traveler’s Guide, Monterey Bay Travel Adventures, Above the Fog (Chaminade Resort’s In-Room Magazine), Coastal Wedding, and Bookshop Santa Cruz’s Reader’s Guide. A highlight in print media was two articles in the travel section of the San Francisco Chronicle, including the cover photo and multipage article. Ads were purchased to coincide with both.

Online campaigns running throughout the year included SantaCruz.com and SantaCruzParent.com. Public radio ads ran two weeks every month on the NPR-affiliate, KAZU. We continued our long-time contract with Certified Folder, placing rack cards at lodging and attractions throughout the region, as well as the San Jose Airport. Coupons for discounted admissions were available in various formats. The most highly used program is through the many Bay Area municipal libraries. Called Discover and Go, more than 450 families from across the region utilized these discount coupons.

We continue to connect with the public through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr, and bi-monthly e-blasts. Our most active accounts are Facebook with ~2,900 followers, and Twitter with ~400 followers. Monthly e-blasts reached 5,300 people. Our website continues to be strongly used—a sample month during the past year: 6,000 sessions; 4,000 users; 18,000 page views.

A marketing highlight was the production of a short (70-second) video that’s accessible on the Santa Cruz Conference and Visitors Council website, as well as on our own website.

OCEAN DISCOVERY SHOP

The Ocean Discovery Shop bursts with offerings appealing to a range of ages and pocketbooks, all within 300 square feet. Small but mighty, the shop adds to the visitor experience with eclectic and ever-changing merchandise that keeps members and regular visitors coming back. Specialty merchandise encourages visitors to make a deeper connection to ocean science and conservation—marine-themed books, toys,
puzzles, and educational games intrigue younger visitors, while sustainably sourced and ethically produced accessories and housewares help adults make the connection between commerce and conservation. A special place to begin or end a visit, the shop netted $28,000 in retail revenue last year.

**FACILITY RENTALS**

The Center’s exceptional location along the northern shore of the Monterey Bay, complete with spectacular ocean views and local native plant and animal species, makes for a prime meeting, retreat, conference, reception, wedding, luncheon, dinner, or other business or social event venue. Clients choosing our unique setting support ocean science, conservation, and education programs. Volunteer educators are often on site during events to answer questions and provide guests with an introduction to our resident marine animals.

Since the Center opened in 2000, we have more than doubled our facility rental use and income. During FY 2014-15, more than $99,000 in rental fees helped fund our mission, with more than 7,300 guests attending events. We continue to market our facility to new guests and event attendees, both locally and internationally, encouraging them to spread the word about our Center and ocean conservation.

**TECHNOLOGY**

The Seymour Center operates a comprehensive database that manages information for donations, membership, facility rentals and in-house use, as well as for all education and volunteer program information/registration. We utilize online programs for marketing, event management, grant applications, payroll, benefits, recruitment, and more. Privacy and security of personal information is of paramount importance.

Due to rapid advances in technology, operating systems require continuous upgrades to run new and existing programs. Last year, the Center upgraded every computer to its operating system capacity to ensure security of all private information. We replaced three computers and added new memory and capacity for older models. We continued planning for the future replacement/upgrade of computers and software.

**FUNDRAISING**

The Center fundraises for nearly half of its operating budget. Due to the generosity of individuals, business, and foundations, and by building on established relationships and strong bonds, the Center exceeded its budgeted goal by more than $100,000 in FY 2014-15.

A leadership gift of $250,000 from Scott and Kelly Dale steered the way for significant increases in individual giving, including a
successful end-of-year campaign. Scholarship, memorial, and other gifts contributed to the overall increase in individual philanthropy.

Membership support remained stable. Dual/Family and Senior Family memberships continue to be the backbone of the membership program. The Directors’ Circle, the Seymour Center’s most significant leadership circle continued to grow. An annual Directors’ Circle and major gifts ($1,200 and above) donor recognition event helped solidify this “family” of donors.

The Seymour Center presented its two signature annual events, the Whale of an Auction and Global Oceans Awards Gala. The auction moved to online-only several years ago, greatly increasing its presence beyond Santa Cruz. With our online auction program Bidding for Good, bidders participated from as far away as Florida.

The Global Oceans Awards Gala, previously held at a local restaurant was relocated to a UC Santa Cruz site, resulting in a slight drop in attendance. The Center honored Margaret Leinen, director of Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Despite the venue change, we successfully made new friends and raised funds, including scholarship funds earmarked for Title 1 schools and low-income children who attend our exceptional education programs.

Grant funding grew during the year. In addition to established foundation support, we successfully secured a significant new grant from The Campbell Foundation to support exhibit work.

The Seymour Center ended the year with a net gain of ~$63,000 after paying back a campus loan of $154,000. While some of this is restricted to specific programs, we began the year on solid financial footing.

ENDOWMENT

The Center has a modest but growing endowment—$709,000. The long-term objective is to grow this fund to $3 million to provide a larger portion of the Center’s operating budget, closing the gap between expenses and income. We also have a separate Fund Functioning as an Endowment (FFE). At the end of FY 2013-14, a $100,000 challenge was presented to the Center by the UCSC campus, focusing on planned gifts toward the endowment. We are pleased to announce that the goal was met during FY 2014-15, and an additional $100,000 will be added to the FFE next year. Interest from both of these endowments will help fund education programs at the Center into the future.
The number of volunteers remained relatively constant with **294 active volunteers logging 22,454.25 hours** during the fiscal year.

The year was marked by increased teamwork between the Visitor Programs and Volunteer offices to create better systems for volunteer scheduling and recruitment. The data-intensive recruitment and quarterly scheduling processes migrated from a paper-based/handwritten method to online or digitized. Additionally, an online survey is now sent to current volunteers to capture availability (need for a leave of absence, a short-term replacement, schedule change, or resignation). A Google Doc was developed to track staff availability for applicant interviews, interview scheduling, interview outcomes, and document applicant communication. These improvements provided on-line tools for staff, increased shift-assignment accuracy, and provide better customer service for both current volunteers and applicants.

We experienced staff turnover during the year, which was both time and resource consuming. However, new employees have knowledge, skills, and abilities that are well matched to the positions. Changes included a new development director, new visitor programs manager, new admissions coordinator, new events/development associate, and two skillful young educators who backfilled in Youth Programs during an employee’s leave of absence and subsequent part-time schedule. 15 extraordinary college student employees and interns served in every capacity from admissions and customer service, to education program delivery, to aquarium husbandry.

Our board of directors, the Friends of Long Marine Lab, changed significantly during the year. Veteran members retired, and sadly, two longtime and beloved board members passed away, Harriet Deck, former two-time president, and serving president Merritt Taylor. With that loss, current vice president Dan Blunk stepped into the leadership role with Jo Lynne Jones becoming vice president mid-year. We are sincerely grateful for their leadership. In addition they both chaired committees (executive, Dan Blunk; events, Jo Lynne Jones). Rita Prindle chaired the major gifts committee with Freny Cooper heading up the marketing committee.

Three new members joined the board of directors: Kenn Clark, manager of the Mission Inn; Halimah Delaine Prado, director of legal at Google Inc.; and Lucas Willey, business development officer at PremierOne Credit Union.
THANK YOU

for your commitment to our mission and
for your investment in the Seymour Marine
Discovery Center. We are extremely grateful
to all who have helped make this past year
a success.

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