



Explore the marine environment at family-friendly SeaFest in Newport on June 27

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Newport, ORE. – The Hatfield Marine Science Center (HMSC) in Newport is hosting its seventh annual SeaFest celebration on Saturday, June 27, starting at 10 am. The open house and community festival takes place at the marine lab’s waterfront campus on Yaquina Bay, next door to the Oregon Coast Aquarium.

The day-long event offers visitors a chance to go behind the scenes to see the labs and meet the scientists who study marine life, explore the bottom of the sea, and track whales across the world’s oceans.

“SeaFest is a great opportunity for the public to get a closer look at the amazing web of life that exists in the ocean and estuaries,” said HMSC Program Manager Ken Hall, who oversees the event.

“With all of the interactive, hands-on science exhibits, live animal displays, demonstrations of what marine biologists and other scientists do in their daily work, visitors leave SeaFest with a better understanding of a whole range of topics, from wave energy to what makes a healthy marine ecosystem, and its importance to our own well-being,” said Hall.

Organizers emphasize the appeal of the event to all ages, highlighting the wide range of exhibitors, food vendors, live music on the entertainment stage, and activities for kids including, crafts, face painting, outdoor games, and other attractions. Visitors can watch the Hatfield Center’s resident giant Pacific octopus, “Amigo” devour a live crab during the noontime feeding, or get their hands wet inspecting sea stars, anemones, fish and sea urchins in the touch pools that simulate the rocky intertidal zone.

Ocean-going research vessels will be on display at the dock between noon and 4 pm, with public tours offered aboard the R/V Pacific Storm, flagship of the OSU Marine Mammal Institute, featured in the March 2009 issue of National Geographic magazine and the film “Kingdom of the Blue Whale”.

Attendees are encouraged to pick up an “Ocean Passport” when they arrive at SeaFest, get it stamped as they go around to science exhibits, and then return it to the information booth for a chance to win great prizes, including:

- Two roundtrip tickets on SeaPort Airlines, serving Astoria, Newport, Pendleton, Portland, and Seattle
- Overnight lodging and golf package for two at the Salishan Spa and Golf Resort in Gleneden Beach. The drawing for prizes takes place at 3:50pm.

Other highlights of what is planned for SeaFest 2009 include:

- Guided tours of the HMSC seawater system, oyster aquaculture operation, and aquatic animal husbandry facilities and Yaquina Bay estuary trail (tours offered throughout the day);
- Science Zone exhibits demonstrating the tools and techniques scientists use to study a wide variety of marine life, including various species of salmon, flatfish, shellfish, and marine mammals
- Dockside exhibits: crab pots in the water, live shellfish displays and rare deep sea fish species on ice.
- Outdoor exhibits highlighting research on sustainability and renewable energy technologies including solar power, wind, and wave energy;
- Displays highlighting outdoor recreational gear and activities with “how to” demonstrations on fishing, kayaking/canoeing, surfing, bicycling, kite flying, and other fun things to do on the coast;
- Giant birthday cake and historical display celebrating Oregon sesquicentennial and 50th anniversary of Oregon State University College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences.
- US Coast Guard helicopter search and rescue demonstration exercise on Yaquina Bay (2 pm)
- Screening of National Geographic film “Kingdom of the Blue Whale” and opportunity to meet the researchers featured in the film (3 pm)

“This will be our seventh SeaFest, and hopefully one of the best” says Hall, who estimates attendance at last year’s event at more than 4,000 people.

Hall points out that SeaFest has been maintained as a free event to all participants, thanks in large part to the financial and in-kind support of community sponsors such as the City of Newport, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Georgia Pacific-Toledo and the Oregon Coast Aquarium.

The theme of SeaFest 2009 is “Leadership through science”, highlighting research conducted by Oregon State University (OSU) and partner agencies at the Hatfield Center, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

SeaFest scheduled events and exhibits end at 4pm, but the Visitor Center remains open until 5pm. Accommodation requests related to a disability should be made to Seafest@oregonstate.edu

Several Newport area hotels are offering special discounts on lodging for out-of-town guests attending SeaFest. Get 20% off at the Holiday Inn Express and Inn at Yaquina Bay, just by mentioning SeaFest.

For more information, including SeaFest logo and photos from previous years’ events, visit: <http://hmsc.oregonstate.edu/seafest/>.