

News Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tropical Sea Turtle Flies South for Recovery

Newport, Oregon –Solstice, a distressed sea turtle that was rescued and then successfully treated by the Oregon Coast Aquarium and U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, is heading back to warmer waters. Swimming is a turtle’s regular mode of transportation, but swimming in cold, Northwest waters is what caused trouble for Solstice in the first place. Instead, the U.S. Coast Guard stepped up and will airlift the turtle to southern California during a C-130 Hercules training mission on February 24.

The endangered olive ridley sea turtle was found comatose, hypothermic and malnourished in December. “The Oregon Coast Aquarium provided Solstice urgent care and worked for the past few months to stabilize her so that she would be healthy enough for transport to a facility closer to her natural range,” said Jim Burke, the Aquarium’s Director of Animal Husbandry. “We are glad these efforts were successful, and may have a positive impact on the future of this endangered species in the wild.”

After Solstice leaves Newport, she will complete her rehabilitation at SeaWorld San Diego in preparation for release later this summer.

This turtle was saved thanks to conscientious members of the public. Because they immediately alerted authorities, Solstice was quickly transported to the Aquarium where specialized equipment and expertise provided the sea turtle critical care. At least five other sea turtles succumbed to the elements and stranded on Oregon and Washington beaches this winter. Rapid response is the only hope of returning these large endangered animals to health.

Solstice is the fourth hypothermic sea turtle in five years to be successfully treated for release by the Oregon Coast Aquarium. Sea turtles do not reach the Oregon beaches unless injured or sick, and once stranded, they require immediate care to survive.

The U.S. Coast Guard is using this opportunity to train for other emergency situations that could involve small airports and passengers requiring critical care during the flight.

"The Coast Guard enjoys a great reputation for safeguarding living marine resources and marine environmental protection," said Commander Kevin Smith, the pilot in command. "Allowing our aircrews to transport a distressed sea turtle while accomplishing routine training makes this mission particularly satisfying."

Such teamwork is the cornerstone of recovering any threatened or endangered species. Cooperation between the public, federal and state agencies and partner organizations are the hallmark of a successful conservation program and key to halting the decline of our sea turtle populations.

"Thanks to the cooperation of the Oregon Coast Aquarium, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the members of the public that reported the stranded sea turtle, we'll be able to return her to the Pacific Ocean where she can contribute to future generations," said Laura Todd, Newport Field Office Supervisor for the Service.

Anyone who sees a sea turtle should immediately note its location, remain nearby to observe it if possible and contact the Oregon State Police Tipline at 800-452-7888.

The Oregon Coast Aquarium receives no on-going governmental support and relies on visitor-related revenues, grants, and donations to finance its annual operations, including its wildlife rehabilitation activities. Funding for these projects comes directly out of the money budgeted for the care of the Aquarium's 15,000 marine animals. To help support the Aquarium's rehabilitation efforts, please call (541) 867-4931.

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