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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Aquarium to Open Snowy Plover Exhibit July 11 *The exhibit includes four chicks recently hatched at the Aquarium*

Newport, Oregon –A celebration will commemorate the opening of the Oregon Coast Aquarium’s new permanent Western Snowy Plover Exhibit Tuesday, July 11 at 12:30 pm. The exhibit includes four plover chicks that were recently incubated and hatched at the Aquarium, which has been successful in past rehabilitation and release of western snowy plovers. In addition, two more rescued chicks have been brought in this week, and will be introduced into the exhibit when they are acclimated to the new environment. This means the exhibit is fully functioning as it was intended; to rehabilitate rescued plovers with the goal to release them back into their natural habitat. A total of seven birds will be in the exhibit on opening day.

The snowy plover is a native shore bird that lives on the beach year-round. Recent counts indicate that only a total of about 150-200 birds remain on the entire coast of Oregon. The main reason for their declining population is loss of habitat. Snowy plovers need flat continuous areas of sand with no grass. They used to inhabit Oregon’s beaches up and down the coastline, but developments and beach grass have destroyed much of their habitat. The Pacific coastal population of western snowy plovers is listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act, and all western snowy plovers in Oregon are listed by the state as threatened. Historically, western snowy plovers were found along the entire Oregon and Pacific Coast region. Over the last century, the number of known nesting or wintering sites declined dramatically from 21 to 7. In 1990, an estimated 30 birds were found. Since then, recovery efforts have resulted in an increase in the population. In 2005, up to 158 western snowy plovers were found at 7 locations on the Oregon coast, the highest count since monitoring began. At least 104 plovers were known to have nested, producing a minimum of 77 young.

The new exhibit was designed and constructed in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Western Snowy Plover Working Team. The partnerships and contributions to plover recovery will be recognized by keynote speakers in the dedication ceremony, including National Director of the USFWS, Dale Hall and Oregon Coast Aquarium President, Dale Schmidt. The exhibit will inform the public about the threats facing the western snowy plover in Oregon and throughout the range and provide the opportunity for the public to observe snowy plovers in a natural setting.

The goal of the exhibit is to educate and serve as a rehabilitation facility for abandoned or injured plovers. Aquarium Curator of Birds, Karen Anderson said she hopes the exhibit will introduce people to this remarkable bird and show how we can restore their dwindling population. “The birds do well when we give them a little room—they’re very resilient,” said Anderson, who has been involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of several other snowy plovers in the past two years. These are success stories that Anderson cites as the impetus for an on-going project to rescue and rehabilitate snowy plovers at the new exhibit.

The new snowy plover exhibit is located in a sunny spot and is enclosed by a mesh that contains the birds, yet allows visitors to see them. “Aviculture is a useful tool in helping to restore the population,” said Anderson, who feels that with a little elbow room for habitat and by increasing our awareness about the snowy plover, the population can make a recovery and once again inhabit their native beaches of Oregon. In an effort to

reduce human disturbance to nesting snowy plovers and increase their population, seasonal restrictions are in place between March 15 and September 15 along the Oregon coast.

Here's what the public can do to share the beach with these delicate birds, and help the plover population:

- Keep your distance from signed nesting areas.
- Leave your pets at home or keep them on a leash.
- Carry your trash from the beach. Garbage attracts predators, like raccoons and crows that may prey on adults, eggs, and chicks.
- Keep kites, balls and frisbees away from nesting areas. These items may frighten birds off their nests and separate the adults from the chicks.
- Don't camp or build fires near nesting areas.
- If you find a plover nest in an unprotected area notify the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 541-867-4558

Land and wildlife managers strive to find a balance between wildlife conservation and human recreation on Oregon beaches. Beach restrictions are one of many management tools, along with habitat restoration and predator control, used by managing agencies for plover conservation. Collaborative efforts between federal, state and local agencies as well as public support make recovery of the western snowy plover an attainable goal.

The Oregon Coast Aquarium is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational attraction dedicated to the highest quality aquatic and marine science programs for recreation and education so the public better understands, cherishes, and conserves the world's natural marine and coastal resources. Contact: Cindy Hanson, Public Relations Manager, at (541) 867-3474 ext. 5224 Visit our web site for more information www.aquarium.org.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.