

NEWS RELEASE

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Images available upon request

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MEDIA ADVISORY

Rehabilitated Harbor Seal Ready for Release

WHAT: The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Stranding Response Team will release a rehabilitated harbor seal. The public is invited to observe the event.

WHEN: Friday, January 28, at 11 a.m.

WHERE: First Landing State Park behind the Chesapeake Bay Visitors Center

WHO: A juvenile harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) stranded December 28, 2010, south of Little Island Fishing Pier in Sandbridge. He was named "Puddy" for team volunteers Peg and Buddy who initially monitored his behavior on the beach. The small seal (nearly 3 ft. long) stranded thin (35 lbs.) and pale with shark bites on the left side of its body. The next day, Puddy was taken to the Aquarium's Marine Animal Care Center where staff administered fluids, antibiotics, topical treatment for his wounds and nutritional support.

WHY: Puddy has healed from his injuries and gained 13 lbs. The Aquarium's veterinarian has cleared Puddy for release back into his natural habitat.

CAUTION: The Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Team receives reports of healthy harbor and harp seals throughout the winter and early spring. The team encourage citizens and their pets to keep a safe distance from these wild, sometimes aggressive animals. Please report all seal sightings to the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response 24-hour hotline, (757) 437-6159. Seals are wild animals and should not be approached except by marine animal experts.

The Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Program's mission is to promote the conservation of marine animal species through stranding response, research, rehabilitation and education. It is largely a volunteer-based group operating from the Aquarium's Marine Animal Care Center in Virginia Beach. The program is supported by the Virginia Aquarium Foundation through donations from the community, and grant-making organizations.

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