

PIER 39

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RECORD NUMBER OF SEA LIONS FILL K- DOCK AT PIER 39

San Francisco, September 29, 2009 – There is a record breaking number of California sea lions that are now camped out in PIER 39’s West Marina. The current count taken last Friday by The Marine Mammal Center was up to 1,585. The reason there are so many is unknown, but researchers are analyzing data for some clues. “Earlier this year, we saw a record number of yearling sea lions strand as a result of an abrupt change in the classic upwelling pattern, which caused their food sources to shift further off shore,” said Jeff Boehm, Executive Director at The Marine Mammal Center. “Now, the older sea lions that are out there are seeking food wherever they can find it, and the current run of anchovies has a lot of them hanging out in some areas in greater numbers than we’ve grown used to.”

If El Niño conditions on the equator continue to strengthen, The Center (which has responded to nearly 1,500 animals so far this year – nearly three times its yearly average) could be in store for a busy rescue season this winter.

The number of sea lions that PIER 39’s experiencing is definitely an anomaly. “Usually during this time of the year, we typically have only a few smaller sea lions on the docks, as the larger males head south to mate,” says PIER 39 Harbor Master Sheila Chandor. “We plan to install additional sea lion floats by K-Dock that will help to accommodate the increased herd.”

In January of 1990 California sea lions began “hauling out” on PIER 39’s K-Dock shortly after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. These boisterous barking pinnipeds numbered from 10-50, but due to a plentiful herring supply, available dock space and a protective environment, the population grew to more than 300 within a couple of months. The PIER 39 sea lions have since become an international sensation.

The Marine Mammal Center, an organization devoted to advancing rehabilitation, scientific discovery and education relating to marine mammals, partners with PIER 39 to monitor PIER 39’s sea lion population. Together, The Center and PIER 39 have instituted an educational program to teach visitors about sea lions. Weather permitting, The Center’s volunteers are available on Saturdays and Sundays from 11am – 5pm to answer questions. For more information about the sea lions at PIER 39, please phone 415.705.5500 or visit www.pier39.com or call The Marine Mammal Center at 415-289-7325 or visit www.tmmc.org.

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