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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **SEA LIONS STORM THE SENATE?!**

### ***Pacific Marine Mammal Center Sends Two Very Special Ambassadors To Washington, D.C.***

**Laguna Beach, CA – February 7, 2006 - Pacific Marine Mammal Center (PMMC)** announced today that it is preparing to transport **two hand-reared California sea lion pups** to a permanent home at the **Smithsonian's National Zoo** on March 5, 2006. The two pups, **Summer and Calli**, are unique because, generally when pups are successfully rehabilitated at PMMC, they are released. "Because these animals required hand-rearing (bottle feeding), they have become dependent on humans and are deemed unreleasable by National Marine Fisheries Service," says Michele Hunter, Director of Operations/Animal Care.

**Summer**, the older of the two pups, was born and abandoned by her mother on June 17, 2005. Pacific Marine Mammal Center received a report about a newborn sea lion pup that was under 24 hour watch in Malibu. The female sea lion had given birth early in the morning of June 17<sup>th</sup>, did not nurse or tend to the pup, and subsequently left her around 4:00pm that afternoon. The California Wildlife Center in Malibu monitored the pup until the following afternoon and informed National Marine Fisheries Services that the mother never returned. Although outside of its usual territory, Pacific Marine Mammal Center agreed to accept the pup as the Marine Mammal Care Center at Fort MacArthur, Los Angeles County's marine mammal rescue center, was inundated with animals and did not have capacity to care for a newborn animal. When Summer arrived at the Center, she was one day old, weighed **15 pounds**, and measured **27 inches long**.

**Calli**, the younger of the two pups was born one week later. On June 24, 2005, PMMC Animal Care Supervisor Dean Gomersall responded to a routine rescue call at Little Corona beach. "When I got to the beach with my rescue crew, I was surprised at the amount of attention this animal was getting," said Gomersall, "When I got closer, the reason became obvious...a female sea lion had just given birth on the beach." Both the mother and the newborn pup were quickly transported back to

PMMC. The female made no effort to tend to her offspring and shortly thereafter, began exhibiting seizure activity, signifying that she was likely suffering from domoic acid poisoning. Over the next hour, the seizures intensified and it became clear that she would not be able to care for her newborn baby. Unfortunately, Calli's mother did not survive, and Center staff was responsible for the round-the-clock care of the sea lion pup. Calli weighed **14 pounds** and measured **28 inches long** at the time of her birth.

Both pups are now healthy, weaned from their bottles, and eating fish on their own. Summer now weighs 57 pounds and Calli weighs 52 pounds. "We are thrilled that the pups are going to have a permanent home at the National Zoo. I know they will both thrive there," says Hunter, "Of course, I will miss them greatly. Usually, we have a hands-off policy with the animals and, with the close contact and long hours we have spent, these pups have really worked their way into our hearts." Hunter will be accompanying the pups on their journey to Washington, D.C. along with Kirsten Sedlick, PMMC Animal Care Supervisor. The transport flight is being generously donated by pilot Jim Slavik and co-pilot Chris Granger.

#### **About Pacific Marine Mammal Center:**

Established in 1971 as Friends of the Sea Lion, Pacific Marine Mammal Center is among the forerunners in marine mammal rehabilitation science. The Center's founding preceded the institution of the Marine Mammal Protection Act by one year. The first organization of its kind in the state of California, PMMC shares the responsibility for the rescue and rehabilitation of marine mammals on California's coastline with only six other organizations. PMMC is the designated holding facility for stranded cetaceans in Orange and Los Angeles Counties. Pacific Marine Mammal Center is a non-profit organization with a mission to rescue, medically treat, and rehabilitate marine mammals that strand along the Orange County coastline due to injury or illness; to release healthy marine mammals back to their natural habitat; and to increase public awareness of the marine environment through education and research.

**Pacific Marine Mammal Center is located in the large red barn at 20612 Laguna Canyon Road. The Center and gift shop are open to the public from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily. For more information please contact Emily Wing at 949.494.3050 or visit Pacific Marine Mammal Center on the web at [www.pacificmmc.org](http://www.pacificmmc.org).**

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