New lab

Continued from Page A1

It replaces NOAA's obsolete lab facilities in Tiburon, built 50 years ago as a Navy depot.

Laboratory research will focus on Pacific Coast groundfish, sensitive coastal and estuarine fishes and protected species, such as Pacific salmon.

The environmental research will focus on the near shore waters along the central California coast and San Francisco Bay.

The research done will support management of these fish stocks by providing the scientific basis for decisions, Grimes said.

Among the most critical populations to be studied at the new facility are salmon and rock fish, both of whose numbers have declined.

Recovery of those fisheries isn't likely without a "platform of sound science" provided by facilities like the new Santa Cruz laboratory, said Holstein.

The facility is the newest of 21 marine science institutions based in the Monterey Bay region. Together they support nearly 1,850 scientists and support staff with an annual collective budget of nearly $150 million, Farr said.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Secretary of Commerce Norm Mineta applauds during the dedication of the new National Marine Fisheries lab Tuesday.

The Monterey Bay area is becoming a national Mecca for marine science research, said Farr, who spearheaded efforts to obtain federal funds for the building.

Farr compared the accumulation of facilities in the Monterey Bay to the marine equivalent of the Kennedy Space Center.

"We have no idea how far it's going to go. In essence, we're just launching it," Farr said. "It's not just about science. It's about economics and the economics of ocean are the most vital of the planet."

Long Marine Lab includes a Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center funded by the state Department of Fish and Game and the Seymour Marine Discovery Center

UCSC's Center for Ocean Health and a seabird/raptor facility are under construction

A design team toured fisheries and marine research facilities along the Pacific Coast before settling on features in the new building, which is organized along a spine with three extending wings. To withstand the marine environment, Ripley Architects of San Francisco used corrosion resistant materials such as fiber cement board and poured-in-place concrete.

Clerestories pour light in the building. All storm water on the 2.5 acres is directed through biofilters into a natural wetland area.

The facility was designed to take advantage of natural solar heating and ventilation. Work areas and courtyards are placed to provide protection from prevailing winds.

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