Campus

Continued from Page A1

But with the ecologically rich Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary at the lab's doorstep, much of the research is local.

In past months, work has lent to the understanding of where ocean currents carried oil from the Cosco Busan spill in San Francisco Bay and how an algal bloom off the coast is prompting the death of hundreds of seabirds.

Pete Raimondi and Mark Carr, who work at the marine campus and are part of UCSC's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, recently furnished the data needed to win federal protection for a series of offshore reserves.

The reserves, which have been touted as the "state parks of the sea," run from Ano Nuevo to Point Conception in Santa Barbara County and protect nearly a quarter of the offshore waters in between.

"We view these areas as comparable to areas that are terrestrial, almost like wilderness areas," said Raimondi.

The Marine Life Protection Act, which established the reserves, took effect in September and is also a boon for California's fisheries.

Scott Shaffer, another faculty member at the marine campus and assistant research biologist at the university, was part of a team that recently discovered juvenile salmon are being picked off by large populations of Western gulls in streams along the Central Coast.

By tagging the fish and the gulls, and monitoring the situation, Shaffer hopes he'll eventually make a contribution to helping restore local populations of coho salmon and steelhead trout.

Planned marine campus expansion

Researchers at UCSC's Long Marine Lab are looking forward to several new developments on the 100-acre campus, including:

- A 16,000-square-foot wing added to the Center for Ocean Health, expanding research and lab facilities and teaching space.
- Construction of a 30,000-square-foot Coastal Biology Building, another research facility with labs, offices and teaching space.
- A modest conference center with lecture rooms, a place to eat and short-term lodging.
- A number of support facilities, such as storage space.

"After we figure out who's doing what and how much, we'll figure out a plan, he said.

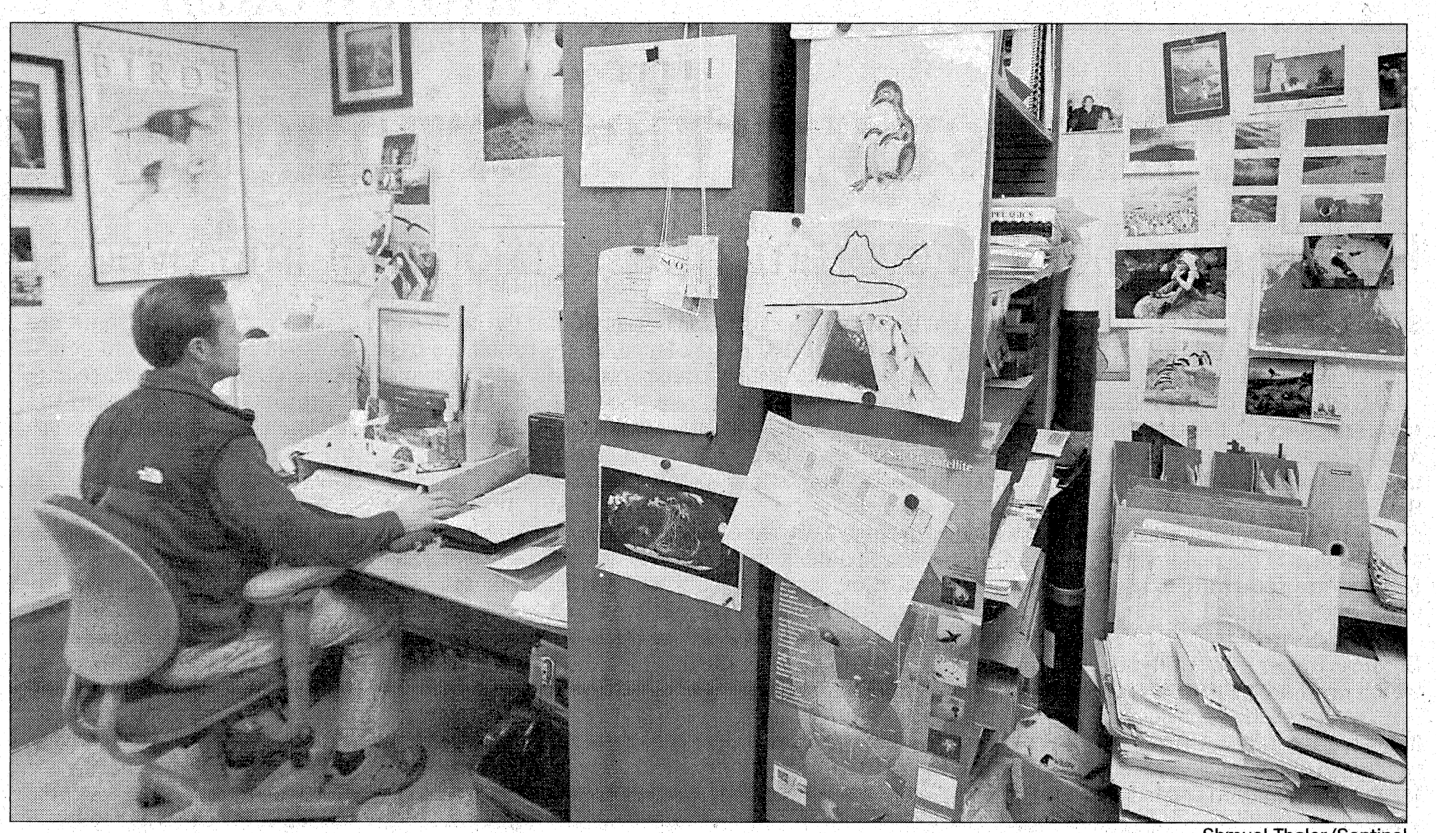
More of these questions are poised to be studied with the planned expansion of the marine campus.

Of the 100 acres at the site, about 16 are currently developed. The plan is to build out another 12 acres, which will include about 322,000 square feet of facilities. The remaining lands will stay in their natural state.

First, a $10 million wing will be added to the Center for Ocean Health. The facility will take up the slack of the current center, which houses nine or 10 faculty and their staffs but is overbooked. Some staff are now relegated to four mobile offices adjacent to the building.

"We've had trailers down there for 25 years that are leaking and rusting," Griggs said.

Construction of the new wing, which will allow another nine or 10 faculty members to come to work, could begin in three years.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

An assistant research biologist works on his data at his office at Long Marine Lab's Center for Ocean Health Friday.

The centerpiece of the proposed development is perhaps the Coastal Biology Building, which will consist of a number of labs, research facilities and teaching space for a dozen or so faculty and their staffs.

The Coastal Biology Building will be located inland, next to the state and federal facilities. For perspective, the Center for Ocean Health and the adjacent Seymour Marine Discovery Center are located on the waterfront.

The plan also calls for smaller support facilities, including a small conference center and a warehouse for equipment storage.

The plan, however, is contingent upon funding and could run tens of millions of dollars. So far, no money is dedicated. The university also has no immediate plans to expand faculty, according to Griggs, though campus staff are quick to note that the number of undergrads planning to major in marine biology has grown, becoming one of the university's most popular degrees.

The California Coastal Commission approved the marine campus' development plan Thursday. Although not the final OK, the commission's green light was regarded as the toughest obstacle to getting the project off the ground.

The UC regents still must sign off, and formal certification from the Coastal Commission is needed in June.

To win approval from the Coastal Commission, campus architects agreed to scale back the original 474,000-square-foot expansion, including scrapping 80 proposed apartments, protecting more of the area's wetlands and improving public access to natural areas.

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