Long Marine Lab to charge fee to support public programs

SANTA CRUZ — The Joseph M. Long Marine Laboratory, an increasingly popular stop on the Santa Cruz coast for students and the general public alike, will begin charging a small entry fee for some visitors to help meet the costs of its public education programs.

Beginning today, entry to the UC-Santa Cruz research station will cost $2 for adults and $1 for students over age 16 and seniors. Visits will remain free for children age 16 and under, as well as for members of the Friends of Long Marine Lab.

"We are offering more tours than ever, our school tours are getting more sophisticated, and we are conducting more outreach to schools, teachers, and community events in the Monterey Bay region," said Lisa M. Rose, executive director of the Friends of Long Marine Lab. "We have hired an additional staff member and student assistants to put all of this together."

During the 1993-'94 school year, the lab hosted 186 organized tours for 6,161 students In 1994-'95 said Rose, those numbers jumped to 295 tours for 9,939 students. The total number of visitors shows a similar trend: from 27,000 in 1993 to 32,500 in 1994. The visitor count for 1995 already is running well ahead of that for 1994, Rose adds.

Visitors are treated to behind-the-scenes glimpses of research at this active marine-science center. Docents offer interpretations of marine life and research; highlights include an aquarium with touch tanks full of sea critters and the signature exhibit, a 90-foot skeleton of a blue whale. When research in progress allows, visitors also enjoy a memorable stop inside the marine-mammal enclosure, where researchers study sea lions, harbor seals, an elephant seal and two dolphins.

To enhance the lab's ability to host tours and educate the public, work will soon begin on a $4.4-million visitor education center. The Friends of Long Marine Lab are more than halfway toward their goal of raising all funds for the project through public donations and grants