

# Marine lab may be oil-spill rescue site

By JOHN ROBINSON  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — The UC Santa Cruz Long Marine Laboratory may become home to a rescue center for marine mammals injured in oil spills, under a law signed Tuesday by Gov. Pete Wilson.

The rescue center is designed to save sea otters, sea birds and other marine life imperiled by an oil spill. The site of the \$4.5-million center will not be chosen until January, but Assemblyman Sam Farr, D-Monterey, and others say the Monterey lab is the front-runner.

"This is part of creating a vision of Monterey Bay as the world center for marine studies, sort of a Silicone Valley of the ocean," Farr said.

"We never know when an oil spill is going to happen. We do know that oil spills happen in California and we have all seen the horrible damage left behind," Farr

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— *Assemblyman Sam Farr*

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said. "The rescue center will ensure that animals hit by the spills will be treated quickly and professionally, ideally limiting any damage."

Scientists say a catastrophic oil spill in the Monterey Bay and Big Sur area could virtually wipe out the sea otter population in California. The sea otter is an endangered species.

Environmentalists and legislators began pushing for more preparation against oil spills on the Central Coast after the 1989 Valdez,

Alaska, oil spill which devastated wildlife in the area.

The Long Marine Lab is a natural site for such a rescue center because of its location on the northern edge of the sea otter range, the established marine mammal programs already in place at the university and the large pool of students and local volunteers which could be called out in the event of an oil spill.

"It's an important thing to have happen and it would be attractive for both the university and com-

munity," said Steve Davenport, Long Marine Lab manager. "We want it because of our existing strong marine mammal programs. It would fit in nicely, providing we would have some input and influence on the ongoing research (at the center)."

The center would cover at least two acres, consisting of indoor cleaning and work areas, veterinary support services, indoor and outdoor pools, cages and other facilities.

The bill signed Tuesday was authored by Farr.

"The bill is the son of a major oil-cleanup bill passed last year, which sets up the toughest oil-spill and cleanup laws in the world," Farr said. "Long Marine Lab has everything we need in a marine-mammal rescue center already in hand. I don't think the state needs to look any further for a rescue facility."