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Field Manager, CA Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project
SeaDoc Society
UC Davis Wildlife Health Center
3121 Essex Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Steve Clabuesch
Diving Safety Officer
UC Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, CA

Dear Steve:

The SeaDoc Society, a marine ecosystem health program of the UC Davis Wildlife Health Center (www.seadocsociety.org), administers the **California Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project** (www.derelictangling.org). Since our inception in July 2005, we have retrieved nearly 11 tons of lost fishing gear from the seafloor around the Channel Islands, including the removal of two 4,000 lb purse seine nets from the eastern end of Santa Rosa Island. Having successfully completed our pilot phase, we have been poised to continue and expand our operations statewide.

We are pleased to report that we received funding in February 2007 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Laurel Foundation to tackle a perhaps more visible and distressing form of derelict fishing gear in California: discarded monofilament. Most coastal ocean visitors have unfortunately observed gulls with hooks and monofilament line hanging from their bills or wrapped around their legs. As well, wildlife rehabilitators in California treat hundreds of marine birds and mammals for injuries related to recreational fishing gear entanglement and ingestion.

Derelict recreational gear is particularly a problem around fishing piers, where masses of accumulated line on pilings create artificial habitats around which small fish congregate, attracting mammal and bird predators, which become injured in the process of foraging. Derelict monofilament line fouls boat propellers, and endangers ocean swimmers too: tragically, sport divers have drowned after becoming entangled in derelict monofilament line.

We intend to help make our coastal environment safer for people and wildlife, as well as improve the aesthetic value of underwater habitat, by making a concerted effort to both remove accumulated monofilament from the water, as well as prevent it from being discarded in the first place. We are modeling our project on a similar program in Florida, which has prevented thousands of pounds of monofilament fishing line from being thrown into the ocean.

Specifically, our 18-month project will consist of three components:

1) *Derelict recreational gear removal*: a team of 2-6 SCUBA divers will manually remove accumulated monofilament from around public-access fishing pier pilings;

2) *Prevention*: Concurrently, we will install monofilament recycling bins on several of these piers, and organize volunteers from local wildlife rehabilitation organizations to maintain the bins at least twice monthly, in perpetuity; collected monofilament will be shipped to a recycler.

3) *Monitoring and maintenance*: We will measure the effectiveness of the removal and prevention program by: monitoring the use of recycling bins; returning to several of the piers six months after the initial clean-up to determine how much new discarded monofilament has accumulated since the prevention program was instigated; and we will track the rates of injury to coastal wildlife from discarded recreational fishing gear before and after removal and prevention efforts.

We are currently seeking diving professionals with applied working SCUBA and free-diving experience to volunteer their time in the water removing monofilament fishing line that has become tangled on the pier pilings. Divers must be AAUS Scientific Divers or the equivalent and have a current dive physical, CPR, First Aid, Oxygen Administration, and gear maintenance. We are hoping to involve divers from Northern and Central California because we believe these water professionals are the people most familiar with conditions in this area and are personally invested in maintaining a clean environment for wildlife and people. This will be the 2nd annual in-the-water clean up at the Harford Pier and the first clean up at the Avila Pier. Work is scheduled to take place on March 1-2, 2008, depending on weather/ocean conditions and diver availability. I envision the clean up to take one full day of effort at each location with approximately 10 participants.

So far, we have completed in-the-water clean ups of the Santa Cruz, Monterey, Harford, Goleta, Santa Monica, Manhattan, Redondo, Cabrillo, Seal Beach, Newport, San Clemente, Oceanside, Ocean Beach, and Imperial Beach Piers as well as the Monterey Breakwater. To date, we have removed over 160 lbs of monofilament fishing line and over 1,400 lbs of fishing gear from pier pilings. A variety of volunteers from UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, UC Santa Barbara, NOAA, Channel Islands National Park, Santa Barbara Channel Keepers, Santa Monica Channel Keepers, Laguna Sea Sports, Project Wildlife, International Bird Rescue and Research Center, and other nonprofit and recreational groups have participated in the water, on the surface, or through other contributions. In addition, Lifeguards, Harbor Patrol, and Fire Department divers have participated or completed the clean ups entirely at several locations including; Santa Monica, Manhattan Beach, Seal Beach, Oceanside, Ocean Beach, and Imperial Beach. This project has generated tremendous community support and local action in restoring and maintaining healthy piers free of monofilament fishing line.

I hope you will agree that this is an exciting opportunity for local water professionals to directly and positively promote marine stewardship in your area. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you are interested in participating either in the water or as surface support. We will also need people to be surface support either on the pier or in a kayak. There are no requirements for these volunteers other than the ability to work hard

for a great cause and have a lot of fun! We look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

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