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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sea Center on Stearns Wharf Offers Free Admission for Underwater Parks Day Festival

Santa Barbara, California (December 19, 2018) — The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Sea Center located on Stearns Wharf is offering free admission to its [Underwater Parks Day Festival](#) on Saturday, January 19, 2019 from 10:00 AM-3:00 PM thanks to support from the Associated Students Coastal Fund at UC Santa Barbara.

The Underwater Parks Day Festival celebrates Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), or “underwater parks,” that preserve the biodiversity and abundance of ocean life in our coastal waters. Some of the most nutrient rich waters on the planet are located in the Santa Barbara and Channel Islands region. These waters support abundant marine life found in kelp forests, tide pools, and rocky intertidal reef habitats. MPAs restrict fishing and the over harvesting of these incredibly diverse marine ecosystems to promote stable species populations and recreational use for future generations of visitors.

Promoting ocean awareness and stewardship makes Underwater Parks Day the perfect event to showcase the Sea Center’s new *Portal to the Planet* climate literacy program, which will demonstrate the important role of ocean gyres in thermoregulation of the earth’s climate. Ocean gyres are circulating surface currents thousands of kilometers in diameter and transport warm tropical waters from the equator to the poles, while recirculating cool polar waters back towards the tropics. They are the “climate controllers” of the planet. The program will investigate deeper into how the gyres form, where they are located and how they impact global climate.

From 10:00 AM-3:00 PM, the Sea Center will offer educational and interactive activities for all ages covering topics such as kelp forest habitat, ocean gyres and extreme weather, and conservation efforts in the Santa Barbara Channel and beyond. Festival partners include the Associated Students Coastal Fund at UC Santa Barbara, California Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, Explore Ecology, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, Jean-Michel Cousteau’s Ambassadors of the Environment, and Surfrider Foundation. For kids, there will be ocean-themed crafts, poetry, and a “spot the octopus” quest to win a prize. Visitors will also be able to interact with Sea Center divers during a *Live Dive* beneath Stearns Wharf.

Underwater Parks Day is celebrated in unison with many aquariums and science centers in Southern California including the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach and the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium.

The Sea Center is located at 211 Stearns Wharf and is open from 10:00 AM-5:00 PM seven days a week. For more information, visit www.sbnature.org/seacenter or call 805-962-2526.



About the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Sea Center

Discover the wonders of ocean life at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Sea Center. Located on historic Stearns Wharf, this highly interactive aquarium and marine education facility offers visitors close encounters with marine animals, and exploration of the Santa Barbara Channel on the Wet Deck. In addition to permanent exhibits, the Sea Center hosts unique events and special educational programming, including Underwater Parks Day, World Oceans Day, and its *Live Dive* series.

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