



## **Public Information Bulletin**

In February 2006, the Newport Beach City Council adopted an Ordinance relating to sea lion deterrence and wildlife feeding in Newport Bay (NBMC 17.22.150, 17.24.085 and 7.30).

### **Purpose of Ordinances**

The purpose of these ordinances is to: 1) deter sea lions from hauling out on vessels and docks in Newport Harbor, and 2) minimize the introduction of non-domesticated animals into the urbanized area of Newport Bay where continuous inhabitation may cause problems related to water quality (fecal pollution and oil pollution with sinking vessels), property damage, human safety, noise, smell or damage to in-bay fisheries.

### **Some Interesting Facts about Sea Lions**

Sea lions are protected under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act; however, they are not listed as a threatened or endangered species. In fact, the current population of California Sea Lions is estimated to range from 237,000 to 244,000. The population has grown at an average annual rate of 10.2% since 1983. They migrate along the Pacific Coast waters from Baja to British Columbia and their primary breeding rookeries are the Channel Islands. Their natural food source is about fifty different species of fish and they consume about 5% to 8% of their body weight per day. That's a lot of fish for a male that can weigh up to about 880 pounds. Since heat loss for a sea lion is about 27 times faster in water than in air of the same temperature, sea lions tend to "haul out" for up to seven hours per day. Haul out refers to the abrupt projection of a sea lion's weight from the waters of the harbor onto a solid and dry surface. Single or frequent haul outs can cause significant damage to vessels, docks, navigation buoys and other surfaces.

### **The Problem with Sea Lions in Newport Bay**

Sea Lions are beautiful animals to watch swim and frolic in our coastal waters and they are an important part of our ecosystem. However, with the federal protection and lack of predators, their numbers have grown significantly. They are opportunistic in their search for plentiful and easy sources of food and haul out sites. Newport Bay provides many opportunities but not without significant impact on environmental, public and private resources. Their continued presence in large numbers can:

- Impact the juvenile fisheries population significantly in Newport Bay especially with the return of the eelgrass beds as nurseries for many species of fish
- Cause water quality problems related to fecal pollution and oil pollution when they sink small vessels

- Sink boats when many of them haul out for an afternoon sunning session
- Damage docks, piers and boats due to weight, impact when jumping aboard and fighting with other sea lions for territory
- Increase the aggressive incidents with humans
- Create an almost continuous noise problem when they are communicating with other sea lions in the fight for and defense of territories
- Create local pungent odor problems at sites used for haul out

### **A Legal and Environmentally Friendly Solution**

The NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is the federal agency responsible for protecting the sea lions under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The City has consulted with NMFS to determine approved deterrent measures that do not harass the animals but have been shown to be effective in reducing the problems just discussed. The City of Newport Beach has recommended environmentally friendly measures to boat and property owners for reduction of property damage. These measures are published on the City of Newport Beach/ Harbor Resources website and will be updated periodically with the assistance of NMFS. <http://www.city.newport-beach.ca.us/HBR/>

The City of Newport Beach is also seeking to reduce the sea lion population in Newport Bay by reducing the direct and indirect feeding of sea lions through the introduction of an ordinance and an educational program regarding improper practices of recreational and commercial fisherman and commercial boat operators.

Also, moored boats and infrequently used docks are inviting haul out locations for sea lions. Please be aware that sea lions can cause significant damage in their quest for a dry and quiet place to haul out. In employing appropriate deterrent measures, you help in protecting your property and providing uniform harbor wide deterrence for the benefit of the community as a whole.

### **The City of Newport Beach is Requesting Your Help**

- Please do not harass the sea lions, in any way
- Please do not feed sea lions
- If you see someone else feeding sea lions, please remind them that this activity causes many problems in our bay
- If you own a boat or dock, please check it at least weekly for signs or sea lion use and then refer to the City's website for appropriate deterrent measures
- Please be mindful that the "ocean begins at your front door." Do not wash anything from your property, dock or boat that could find its way into the bay.
- Please do not throw anything overboard when enjoying the waters of our bay