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THE NATIONAL AQUARIUM IN BALTIMORE MOURNS BOB THE DOLPHIN

Baltimore March 14, 2005 – Officials at the National Aquarium in Baltimore are saddened to announce that despite extensive medical treatment during the past six months for a severe infection, Bob, an Atlantic bottlenose dolphin, showed signs during the last two weeks that his health was worsening. Over the weekend Aquarium veterinary and marine mammal staff reviewed Bob's condition and prognosis and determined that the most humane action to take was to euthanize him.

Bob's condition improved in late November, and staff became hopeful that the trend would continue. His condition declined again late last month, and he steadily lost weight and was clearly suffering.

Since onset of Bob's illness in September, Aquarium veterinarians have used a number of diagnostic tests to identify the scope of the dolphin's illness, and most recently, a partial CT scan was conducted to better understand his ailment. The medical staff had attempted to arrange the procedure for months, but Bob was too large for the apparatus. Late last week, staff and volunteers completed construction on equipment that could accommodate him during the scan. Results of the procedure confirmed the presence of infection in his lungs. Today's necropsy (autopsy) will provide veterinarians with a better understanding of the scope of his illness.

"This is a very difficult time for staff, who have poured enormous time and energy into helping Bob recover," said Sue Hunter, director of marine mammals and animal programs for the Aquarium. "The trainers and Aquarium staff grew very attached to Bob and we will miss him."

The Aquarium's training staff, who have forged strong relationships with the dolphins, were alerted to possible illness in early September 2004 when Bob began exhibiting unusual behaviors. The Aquarium's medical staff diagnosed him with a serious respiratory infection.

Collaboration between the Aquarium, experts from Johns Hopkins Hospital and the University of Maryland and marine mammal staff and veterinarians from Bob's home institution, the Living Seas at Epcot at Walt Disney World, helped Aquarium staff devise a treatment plan. In addition to providing oral and injectable antibiotics, Aquarium staff designed and built a nebulizer to deliver aerosolized medication directly to his lungs. They also administered fluids to prevent dehydration. Members of the Aquarium's Marine Animal

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Rescue Program, who are accustomed to working with critically ill animals through their rehabilitation, were also called in to assist staff with observations – sometimes 24 hours a day, depending on Bob’s condition.

“Bob’s infection was severe. We knew when he pulled through his first bout with it last fall that we would be treating him for a life-long infection,” said Brent Whitaker, MS, DVM, the Aquarium’s director of animal health. “Bob received the best medical care available and we are saddened that even with exhaustive treatment, it wasn’t enough.”

Bob was in his mid-20s and arrived in Baltimore in March 2003. He was on breeding loan from the Living Seas at Epcot at Walt Disney World.

Members of the public who wish to express their condolences may e-mail dolphins@aqua.org.

Raven, the three year old male introduced to Bob to help keep him company in November, rejoined the other dolphins when Bob’s condition deteriorated three weeks ago. The Aquarium has eight other dolphins, including three born at the Aquarium in 2001. All are in good health.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, a non-profit organization, is Maryland’s most exciting and popular cultural attraction, as well as one of the region’s leading conservation and education resources, hosting more than 1.6 million visitors per year. The Aquarium’s mission is to connect people with aquatic life in order to create a better world for both. It is dedicated to education and conservation through more than a dozen programs that serve the environment and the community.

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