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**TRACK THE MOVEMENTS OF GRAY SEAL PUP REHABILITATED AT
NATIONAL AQUARIUM IN BALTIMORE**
*“Cookie” Released by Marine Animal Rescue Program
into New York’s Shinnecock Bay*

Baltimore, May 17, 2007 –The National Aquarium in Baltimore’s Marine Animal Rescue Program released a rehabilitated gray seal into the Shinnecock Bay just off the coast of Long Island, New York on Monday, May 14. The seal was affixed with a satellite tag.

The female pup was found stranded in Ocean City, Maryland on February 24 where she showed signs of severe emaciation, dehydration and lethargy, and had a large wound on her left, rear flipper of unknown origin. While in rehabilitation she was treated for a mild case of pneumonia and her wound was cleaned and monitored. She gained 30 pounds on a diet of herring and capelin and enjoyed daily enrichment sessions.

Aquarium volunteers named the seal “Cookies-and-Cream,” because her lanugo coat (or pup fur) reminded them of the ice cream of the same name. Cookie outgrew her pup fur soon after her arrival at the Aquarium and became the dark, glossy gray that gives these seals the species its name.

Cookie was affixed with a satellite tag, provided by the Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation, which will transmit information about where she goes. Like in other releases, the public can monitor Cookie’s whereabouts on the Aquarium’s web site at aqua.org. The satellite tag could track her movements for several months until the adhesive fails and the tag falls off.

Seals are regular visitors to the Mid-Atlantic coast. Beachgoers who suspect an animal has stranded are encouraged to call the Maryland Natural Resources Police Stranding Hotline at **1-800-628-9944** and to keep their distance both for safety and because it is required by law. The stranding network will alert the Aquarium and other rescue facilities.

The Aquarium’s Marine Animal Rescue Program is part of the North East Stranding Network. The rescue program responds to an average of 30 – 35 strandings each year and has the capacity to care for numerous animals at once.

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.