



Northwest Regional Office



NOAA Fisheries

National Marine Fisheries Service

Fisheries Service Says Orca Rescue Made Possible Only Because of Community Support

Contact: Brian Gorman
206-526-6613

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 18, 2002

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) said today that the successful rescue and relocation of Springer, the orphaned killer whale, could not have happened without the support of the conservation community and the “extraordinary generosity” of corporations and private organizations in Puget Sound.

“Everything about this rescue has been exceptional,” said Bob Lohn, head of the agency’s Northwest regional office in Seattle, “including the capture and care of the whale by Jeff Foster and his team. But the most heartening part has been the outpouring of help from so many people.”

He cited contributions ranging from small, like the gift of a foam pad from the Foam Shop in Seattle for the whale’s trip to her rehabilitation pen or centrifuges from Woodland Park Zoo for blood analysis, to large donations, like the hundreds of pounds of live salmon to feed her donated by Cypress Island salmon farm, the crane from Manson Construction Co. or the high-speed catamaran for transporting the whale to Canada made available by Nichols Bros. Boat Builders.

Besides agency staff, scientists and veterinarians, Lohn said that more than 20 Puget Sound companies and organizations were involved in the rescue. The value of the corporate contributions alone will surpass \$100,000 he said. NOAA Fisheries itself contributed about \$280,000, most of that from the Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Fund, a special Congressionally earmarked grant program for marine mammal rescues.

“In addition,” said Lohn, “there were the contributions you can’t put a value on like the unstinting assistance from Donna Sandstrom in pulling all the whale-advocacy groups together to create the Orphan Orca Fund or the work of Bob Wood and Bob McLaughlin, who spent hours on the water monitoring the orphaned whale in Puget Sound and organized several of the major contributions of vessels and cranes. There were also were innumerable contributions of time, energy and services from ordinary people throughout the U.S. and Canada. And the media displayed poise and objectivity throughout this event.”

- more -

“But perhaps most remarkable of all,” said Lohn, “was this whale herself, who seemed to know just what to do and when to do it. She’s fantastic.”

When the 11-foot killer whale, known as A73 or Springer, was removed from Puget Sound on June 13 she was suffering from a skin disorder and had intestinal worms and a condition known as ketosis, characterized by an acetone smell to her breath. After a month of rehabilitation in a net pen at a NOAA Fisheries facility in Manchester, Wash., her ketosis disappeared, her skin improved and she was given medicine to eliminate her worms. She gained 112 pounds during her stay in Manchester, weighing about 1350 pounds when she was hoisted onto the transport vessel for the ride to her home waters off northern Vancouver Island.

She was transported to Johnstone Strait on July 13 and placed in a net pen there. She has been under the temporary care of the Vancouver Aquarium and Canada’s Department of Fisheries and Oceans ever since. She was released from the pen the next day in the presence of her family pod.

A complete list of contributors can be found at the National Marine Fisheries Service’s web site at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>.

###