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Adventure Aquarium and New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences designated the region's first Coastal America Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center
Agreement with government offers federal resources, research collaboration

(Camden, N.J.) -- The Adventure Aquarium and New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences, one of the country's top aquariums and a leading regional educational institution, will join 23 other marine facilities when it becomes part of the growing network of Coastal America Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers in a ceremony at the aquarium today.

By becoming a Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center, the Aquarium and the Academy will gain access to the scientific resources of 16 federal agencies that will offer items such as ship time, technical expertise, exhibits, and educational materials, as well as chances to collaborate on research projects. The arrangement also provides the government agencies access to millions of visitors each year.

"This designation is just as important for our nation as it is for the city of Camden and Adventure Aquarium and the Academy," said Monica Medina, principal deputy under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere. "By improving public awareness of coastal issues through education and outreach, Adventure Aquarium and the New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences play a vital role in raising public awareness. We hope that the young aquarium visitors of today are the marine scientists of tomorrow."

As a Learning Center, Adventure Aquarium and the New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences will focus on educating their visitors about the nature and value of coastal resources. They will join an international network of marine educational institutions that are addressing our growing coastal problems by creating a better informed public.

"The New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences has been working on environmental education impact in this region for more than two decades. This CELC designation is a major step forward in increasing our ability to be even more effective in reaching our youth, family and professional educator audiences. We are extremely proud to be a part of such a distinguished group of partners," said New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences President and CEO Brian DuVall.

"We are thrilled that Coastal America has designated Adventure Aquarium and the New Jersey Academy of Aquatic Sciences as the Region's only Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center," said Adventure Aquarium's Executive Director Kevin Keppel. "This valuable partnership only further strengthens our ability to educate and enlighten Adventure Aquarium guests and our surrounding community about the importance of protecting our coastal environment."

Billing itself as the country's "most touchable" aquarium, the Adventure Aquarium on the Camden Waterfront is the fifth largest aquarium in America. The Aquarium and its education partner, the New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences take special pride in offering a rich and culturally relevant environmental program for underserved urban audiences in the Camden/Philadelphia region.

Coastal America, an interagency federal partnership that works to protect, preserve and restore the national coastal ecosystems, established the Learning Center network in 1996. The 24 designated Learning Centers work with federal partners to educate and engage the public in protecting coastal ecosystems.

Adventure Aquarium houses 200,000 square feet of public space, more than two million gallons of water and 431 species. The Aquarium and the Academy serve over 800,000 visitors annually and draw well over 300,000 participants to a wide variety of shows, movies, lessons, tours and field programs.