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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**LOS ANGELES AND ORANGE COUNTY STUDENTS TO WORK WITH EXPERTS
ON TURNING THE TIDE FOR THE FUTURE OF CALIFORNIA'S OCEAN**

Aquarium of the Pacific hosts Student Ocean Conference November 14-15

(Long Beach, Calif.—October 15, 2002)—Nearly 100 Southland students and their teachers will join science experts and ocean stakeholders at the Student Ocean Conference at the Aquarium of the Pacific November 14-15, 2002. The 15 teachers and 90 Los Angeles and Orange County students will be briefed by experts on the current state of our ocean and coast and will offer solutions on the steps that we as Californians can take to secure a healthier future for our marine environment.

The conference will focus on California's *Ocean Agenda* and the major issues raised at the state-sponsored California and World Ocean '02' Conference, held the month prior in Santa Barbara and attended by state and national policy makers, scientists, coastal managers, public aquariums, industries that use the coast, and other stakeholders.

At no cost to the teachers and students, the Student Ocean Conference participants will embark on field trips, listen to presentations by experts, explore their findings and proposed solutions and come to their own conclusions and recommendations. The two-day conference will also feature the renowned Dr. Sylvia Earle as the keynote speaker. Dr. Earle is Time Magazine's first "hero for the planet"; one of National Geographic's seven Explorers-in-Residence; project director for the Sustainable Seas Expeditions, a five-year project of NOAA and the National Geographic Society; author of several books, including *Wild Oceans: America's Parks Under the Sea* and *Sea Change*; and a leader of more than 50 expeditions totaling over 6,000 hours underwater.

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The Student Ocean Conference will include free meals and a sleepover in the Aquarium. The experience will give the participants first-hand information about the issues and challenges facing the ocean and our coasts, as well as the progress California is making to safeguard them. “We believe that the Student Ocean Conference will increase the commitment of the next generation’s stewardship of the marine ecosystem as well as greatly enhance students awareness of the critical value of this ecosystem and their potential impact on preserving it,” said Amy Coppenger, Aquarium of the Pacific Education Director. The Student Ocean Conference is being funded by the National Geographic Society Education Foundation, and the Aquarium of the Pacific (one of 15 designated Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers) is hosting the conference in conjunction with Sustainable Seas Expedition and Coastal America.

The high schools selected to participate in the two-day Student Ocean Conference at the Aquarium were chosen based on their conference applications and question responses. Educational materials were provided in advance, in order for the attendees to prepare for the sessions. “We believe the Student Ocean Conference will help us instill a sense of wonder, respect and stewardship of the Pacific Ocean and its inhabitants and ecosystems in the next generation and, through them, create a legacy of a healthy ocean for the future,” said Jerry Schubel, Aquarium of the Pacific President & CEO.

Aquarium of the Pacific

The Aquarium of the Pacific celebrates the planet’s largest and most diverse body of water, the Pacific Ocean. Home to more than 12,000 ocean animals, the Aquarium features 19 major habitats and 32 focus exhibits, exploring the waters of Southern California/Baja, Northern Pacific and the Tropical Pacific. The Aquarium is a non-profit education and conservation institution. For more information, the public may call 562-590-3100 or visit www.aquariumofpacific.org.