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Port assists in sea lion rescue attempt

(NEWPORT, OR) A wounded sea lion and some concerned citizens ultimately brought about an unusual assignment at the Port of Newport's Dock 1 on Thursday.

At the request of the Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network (OMMSN), Port staff positioned a sea lion isolation cage near the dock on Thursday. Alerted by a concerned citizen, the OMMSN learned that the injured animal also had something tangled around its neck.

"We were contacted to assist in the placement of the isolation cage," explained Director of Operations Aaron Bretz. "Commercial Harbormaster Kent Gibson and two staff members used the Port's harbor tug, the MILDRED C, to position the cage," he said.

Jim Rice, the Marine Mammal Stranding Coordinator for Oregon State University, will work with the Oregon Coast Aquarium and a veterinarian to assist the animal if the attempt to isolate him is successful.

"Lots of sea lions use that dock and setting up the cage is opening up a prime pull-out site for those guys," Rice explained. "They seem to enjoy being in the cage so trying to isolate a single animal is challenging. But the fact that we have had this entangled one at the dock repeatedly and, since they will soon migrate to Southern California, we will have very few sea lions left, it seemed like this provides a possible opportunity to isolate this one individual."

Rice said OMMSN sees three or four entanglements each year in the Newport area, but trying to take action is complicated.

If they are successful, treatment will happen right at the dock.

"We did this before in 2010, working in collaboration with Oregon Coast Aquarium and a veterinarian that works with them. They will sedate the animal, examine the wound and make sure he's fit to be released," Rice said.

Currently the sea lion has a necklace-like wound around his neck and what appears to be fishing line is still present. Once the animal is present, Rice will go to work trying to coordinate the team response. "We will do our best," he said, remarking on the challenge of getting a response team on site quickly.

Reporting stranding is an important public service. Although the OMMSN can't always rehabilitate an animal, tracking the number of strandings and understanding why they happen is important. Rice encourages people to call the Oregon State Police tip line at 800-452-7888 to report a stranding.



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People can also view the sea lion dock and the current occupancy of the cage via webcam at <https://mmi.oregonstate.edu/ommsn>

For more information about the Port of Newport, visit www.portofnewport.com

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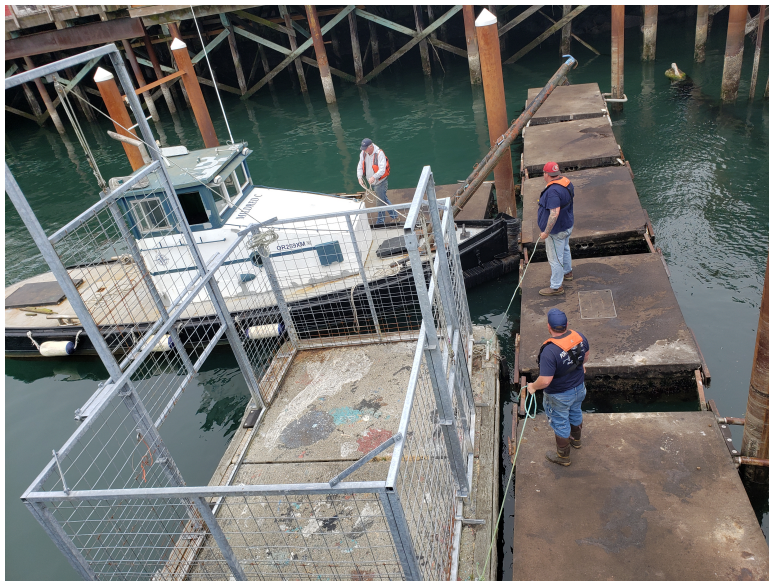


Photo Caption:

Commercial Harbormaster Kent Gibson (left) gets an assist from Port staffers Scott Morales and Alan Straight as they position an isolation cage near the sea lion docks at Port Dock 1.