

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA WATERFRONT DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 19, 2009
To: Harbor Commissioners
From: John N. Bridley, Waterfront Director
Subject: Harbor Operations Report

Gray Whale Visits Harbor Entrance

A gray whale entered the harbor mouth on March 3rd and decided to remain there awhile. The apparently healthy animal, which may have been feeding on sand crabs near the sandspit, drew considerable attention from landside onlookers (Stearns Wharf), kayakers, whale-watching boats and small power boats. The sandspit itself is currently closed to pedestrian traffic, due to the ongoing breakwater cap construction project.

Harbor Patrol repeatedly cautioned boaters and kayakers to not harass or chase the animal. The Department also contacted whale-watching businesses and reminded them of the same. That being said, boaters have a legal right to enter and exit the harbor and its federal navigation channel, observing posted speed limits. As such, general boat traffic in and out of the harbor continued as usual.

Department staff has been in steady contact with officials from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), who reminded us that the 300' "avoidance" rule is, in fact, not a rule at all. It is a guideline. The real test, they say, is whether a boater's actions cause the whale to change its behavior. In our case, "changing its behavior" would essentially mean causing the animal to abruptly leave the area.

Recognizing potential impacts to the whale, AIS Construction, a contractor for the Army Corps of Engineers, agreed to temporarily delay the start of its spring dredging cycle, originally scheduled to begin March 13th. The good news is that channel depths in the harbor remain good, and a modest delay in the start time for spring dredging should not affect navigability in the federal channel. Meanwhile, the two federal agencies (Army Corps of Engineers and NMFS) will determine the best course of action.

Wet Wednesday Races Begin March 18th

In a sure sign that boating season has arrived, Wet Wednesday races begin March 18th. The races are open to any boat entered by a member of a US Sailing Association-recognized club. Locally, this means Santa Barbara Sailing Club and Santa Barbara Yacht Club boats, with occasional out-of-town visitors, are invited to participate. Also, anyone can race aboard an eligible boat in need of crew. Wet Wednesday courses vary with wind conditions and boat size, and range in length from 2-8 miles. The first start is

at 5:15 p.m., followed by six other classes spaced five minutes apart. Following each Wednesday race, an “after party” barbeque open to all racers and their guests is held at the Yacht Club’s clubhouse. Wet Wednesday races will run through October 21st. For more information, contact the Santa Barbara Yacht Club at 965-8112 or visit their website at www.sbyc.org

Save the Date: Harbor Swap Meet and Hazmat Turn-In Day May 16th

- **Harbor Swap Meet:** The Harbor Swap Meet, sponsored by the Waterfront Department and Harbor Merchants Association, returns to Santa Barbara Harbor on Saturday, May 16th, from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Come to the Marina 3 parking lot to buy, sell, peruse or to just enjoy good company or coffee and donuts at this uniquely local event. Typical sales items include sailboat rigging, fishing gear, outboard motors, surfboards, kayaks and all manner of boat parts. Signups for vendor spaces (\$10 apiece) will occur at the Harbormaster’s Office beginning Monday, April 13th.
- **Hazmat Turn-In:** And while taking inventory of what you need to buy or sell, check your dock box, too, since this year’s event is again coupled with a Hazmat Turn-In Day. Located next to the Swap Meet, you’ll find a marked disposal area for hazardous materials you may wish to get rid of before boating season begins—items like old cans of varnish, lacquer or paint, or small amounts of gasoline or diesel. In an effort to limit the Hazmat event to harbor boat owners only, an “entry ticket” will be included in May’s slip billing. The ticket entitles the slip permittee to dispose of any appropriate items that are in his or her boat or dock box. No ticket is necessary to participate in the Harbor Swap Meet.

Look for info about the combined Swap Meet/Hazmat event on flyers soon to be posted around the harbor. Questions? Call Mick Kronman, Harbor Operations Manager, at 805-897-2587.

Prepared By: Mick Kronman, Harbor Operations Manager