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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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White Shark Research Organization Charged in Illegal Filming Activities

NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the Commerce Department, has charged the Pelagic Shark Research Foundation (PSRF), located in Santa Cruz, Calif., with two counts of violating conditions of their Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary permit for white shark research.

In its Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA), NOAA assessed a \$21,000 penalty against the PSRF for illegally luring a white shark to attack a Hollywood mockup of a South African fur seal off of Ano Nuevo, Calif. The white shark was lured in order to get it to breach out of the ocean for the production of the cable television program *AIR JAWS II*. Attracting white sharks for this purpose is not allowed under PSRF's permit. Allegedly, Shark Entertainment Inc., paid Sean Van Sommeran and Callaghan Fritz-Cope, of PSRF, in order to use the two researchers' sanctuary permit authority to illegally attract the white shark. In addition to the NOVA, portions of the PSRF Permit Conditions are subject to sanctions, which will affect how the PSRF conducts future research operations.

The NOVA is issued as a result of a joint investigation by the Office for Law Enforcement (OLE) of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and the California Department of Fish and Game. The incident took place on October 22, 2001, near Ano Nuevo Island. PSRF has 30 days to respond to the NOVA and permit sanctions.

White shark enthusiasts from around the country informed the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and OLE of the televised airing of *AIR JAWS II*, which depicted the activity within the boundaries of the sanctuary. The intentional attraction of white sharks within the sanctuary was prohibited in 1997. An immediate investigation ensued.

"The deliberate attraction of white sharks for unauthorized purposes is a very serious violation that harms the management objectives within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Furthermore, this type of violation for monetary gain harms the legitimate research activities conducted within the sanctuary boundaries" said Mike Gonzales, Special Agent In Charge for the OLE's Southwest Division.

(MORE)

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources.

NOAA's Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary stretches along 276 miles of central California coast and encompasses more than 5,300 square miles of ocean area. Renowned for its scenic beauty and remarkable productivity, the sanctuary supports one of the world's most diverse marine ecosystems, including 33 species of marine mammals, 94 species of seabirds, 345 species of fishes and thousands of marine invertebrates and plants.

The NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program seeks to increase public awareness of America's maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. Today, 13 national marine sanctuaries encompass more than 18,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources.

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