



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
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NOAA Awards Grant to Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation to Strengthen Marine Mammal Stranding Response Efforts and Establish Regional Archive to Support Study of Infectious Diseases in Marine Mammals

Today, NOAA Fisheries announced that it has awarded \$10,000 to the Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation in Riverhead, New York. With this funding, the Riverhead Foundation will be able to help NOAA increase the number of trained personnel, enhance our ability to respond to unexplained marine mammal stranding events that involve the die off of a large number of marine mammals, known as Usual Mortality Events, and establish a regional archive for biological samples collected from stranded marine mammals to aid in the study of marine mammal health and infectious disease.

“The work that the Riverhead Foundation has done in marine mammal and sea turtle research, rescue and rehabilitation and public education is really impressive,” said John Bullard, administrator, Northeast Region, NOAA Fisheries. “Through this continued partnership, we will be able to strengthen the effectiveness of our regional stranding network and our dedicated team of first responders.”

Specifically, the Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation and the Marine Mammal Stranding Center in Brigantine, New Jersey intend to conduct a multi-day workshop at the Northeast Regional Stranding Conference. The workshop will cover emergency response techniques related to Unusual Mortality Events and address issues related to catastrophic events such oil spills and natural disasters. The Riverhead Foundation also intends to purchase a sub-zero freezer to store biological samples collected by stranding network members who lack capacity in their own facilities.

Unusual mortality events have been on the rise and more space is needed to house archival samples collected from animals involved in these events, as required by NOAA. In collaboration with other members of the Northeast regional network, the Riverhead Foundation will manage the collection, storage and inventory of biological samples from across the Northeast and coordinate with NOAA to disseminate and analyze samples as needed to support future research.

“As a long standing member of NOAA’s stranding network, we recognize the importance of broadening public understanding of marine mammal species and the interconnectivity

between the ocean and human health, said Robert DiGiovanni, Jr, foundation director and senior biologist. “We see this as a great opportunity to help advance our own mission and support our fellow network members.”

NOAA’s mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth’s environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/usnoaagov>.