After several months and reviewing over 40 resumes, the Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Kathryn Ann Zagzebski as the Center’s new President and Executive Director.

Ms. Zagzebski is currently the Manager of the Stranding Department of the Marine Mammal Center (TMMC) in Sausalito, CA. Prior to her work at TMMC she served as Program Manager at the Georgia Coastal Management Program for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources from 1996 until 1998. She has also worked as a Fisheries Policy Research Assistant for the School of the Environment at Duke University and as an Administrative Coordinator for the Hopkins-Nanjing Program Office at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

Ms. Zagzebski is a magna cum laude graduate of Augustana College. She also possesses a Master of Environmental Management degree from Duke University. She is a member of the Society for Marine Mammalogy, and a member of the Board of the American Cetacean Society.

The NMLC Board Chairman, Mr. Townsend Hornor, in speaking for the entire Board said that he was “very pleased to be able to offer the position to Ms. Zagzebski. She is an experienced and dynamic individual who will be able to realize the mission and vision of the National Marine Life Center.” He also added that “not only will Ms. Zagzebski be of great help to the Center, but she will be an asset to all individuals and organizations on Cape Cod interested in protecting our ocean environment.”

“I think she has exactly the experience and the skills needed, but she also has the enthusiasm and the energy. She is in my opinion, a very warm, friendly, outgoing person.” Mr. Townsend said.

In thanking Mr. Hornor for the appointment, Ms. Zagzebski commented that “fulfilling our shared dream of creating a marine mammal veterinary hospital is a challenge and one that I welcome.”

Ms. Zagzebski’s first day on the job will be March 17, 2005.
An important function of the National Marine Life Center is to educate the public about our mission. Our education programs include hands-on activities for children of all ages. The activities cover a wide array of topics from dangers turtle hatchlings face, to basic information on the different species of marine life.

An example of a hands-on activity is our Oil Spill Demonstration which I had the pleasure of conducting many times over the past several years. The oil spill presentation consists of three parts: a demonstration, a hands-on activity, and a discussion. The activity is started by asking the participants to discuss uses for oil and transportation of oil, we also ask them to guess how much oil is used in the United States and in the world on a daily basis. We show them a fish tank full of clear water, representing the ocean and a bottle filled with a mixture of black paint and vegetable oil, representing a tanker. Next, we slowly have our tanker "leak" its oil into our ocean.

We then describe and discuss as a group what happens when an oil spill occurs, the effects, the cleanup procedures etc... We also display and go over a poster with information on the Exxon Valdez spill, and the most recent Buzzards Bay oil spill in 2003. The information about the damage caused by the Exxon Valdez and the Bouchard #120 tanker, why they happened and the amount of manpower needed to clean up appalls participants, even little children seem to comprehend the magnitude of these disasters.

We also use fake fur to represent seals and use them to demonstrate and discuss the cleaning of the animals and the damage the oils causes them. Participants are given a small amount of fake fur and they can attempt to clean the "seals" using water, soap, etc... Finally, we summarize what we have learned and discuss ways to use less oil. The children seem to find this activity, especially the hands-on portions, fun and informative. The really get involved in the discussions, and seem to care a great deal about damage caused by the spills.

Educating today's children is an important step to ensuring a more environmentally friendly population for the future.

The volunteers and staff of the NMLC are looking forward to another exciting and educational year.

Kara Lindelof, Education Volunteer

The 2nd Annual Polar Bear Ball and Swim Weekend was held January 14th and 15th, 2005. Jackie and Michael Kennedy, owners of the Point Independence Inn in Onset, hosted the event and dedicated all net proceeds to the NMLC. Friday night saw folks dressed in winter whites and faux fur for the Polar Bear Ball held at the Harbor Watch Inn’s Blue Oyster Grille restaurant. There was a buffet dinner, raffle ticket sales, a DJ and silent auction. Folks were urged to eat, dance, and bid on the items generously donated by local businesses. Such items included local art and photography, scuba lessons, night stays at inns in the area, massages, guitar lessons, and even a cleaning service!

Saturday the 15th dawned clear and cold, daring the polar bear swimmers to run into the chilly Onset Bay waters. The event was free, and approximately 80 people came to either be a swimmer or a warmly dressed cheerleader. There was a positive showing of media including reporters from local newspapers, and Fox News 25 filmed a sequence which aired that evening at 10 pm. People from all walks of life went dipping into Onset Bay; kids, newspeople, a chef, massage therapists and some people even went in multiple times. Michael Kennedy always goes into the water twice, it’s a tradition. He says, “It’s my Viking blood!”

Danielle O’Neil, NMLC Animal Care Manager
From the Trustee Chairman
Townsend Hornor

The last several months have seen a number of significant changes at the Center. After nine long years and a superior job of launching the NMLC and growing it to where it is today, Sallie Riggs has resigned to pursue her consulting business. She continues as a consultant to us at this time and we look forward to her continued help and support.

Joining us in her place will be Kathryn Zagzebski who is currently the Manager of the Stranding Department of the well known and highly respected Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, California, a post she has held since 1998. We feel strongly that her skills, experience and knowledge of the marine mammal stranding field are exactly what we need at this time and will enable us to obtain the help and cooperation that we need to move ahead with our Center.

We are adding two new members to our board of directors in March: Connie Merigo and Rob Brennan. Connie has been with the New England Aquarium for eleven years and is the Stranding Department Coordinator. She has been involved with the design of several facilities similar to what we have planned and will help us avoid costly mistakes and other pitfalls. She is very well known in our field and has long term ties with many stranding network members. We believe she will be of great help as we move forward and welcome her with great enthusiasm.

Rob Brennan is an associate at Goodwin Procter, a well known Boston law firm where he specializes in real estate development and permitting, land use litigation and environmental practices. Rob is very interested in our plans and we anticipate that with his legal experience and inquiring mind he will be a strong addition to our board. These changes and additions reflect the changing needs of the Center and we believe will facilitate our progress.

At the same time we are looking very hard at our physical plans, with an eye to reducing costs wherever possible without compromising quality, and subdividing the construction process into more easily fundable pieces. We have not reached a definitive conclusion yet as to how this will best be done, but we expect to do so within the next few months. The overall goals and facilities plans will not be changed significantly, but the path to reach them may be somewhat different and, we hope, shorter.

Where Are The Sea Turtles?

The 2004 sea turtle stranding season is the lowest recorded stranding season in over six years, in terms of number of turtles found on Cape beaches. Sea turtles follow the Gulf Stream current up north from the southern breeding grounds to feed on high prey areas such as Stellwagen Banks in summer when the waters are warm and plentiful. As the temperature drops with the onset of winter, turtles migrate back down south. However, some turtles remain too long and end up getting stuck in Cape Cod bay. Turtles instinctively want to swim due south instead of navigating around the arm of the Cape. This is when turtles end up stranding, cold stunning, in the bay’s chilly waters.

Wellfleet Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary (WBWS) director Robert Prescott has recorded 37 sea turtles this season that have stranded. New England Aquarium (NEAq) currently has 12 sea turtles in rehabilitation...as of January 21, 2005 all turtles were eating and swimming. Sea turtles normally strand on Cape beaches from October to January. These turtles are found by WBWS beach walker volunteers. Most turtles are diagnosed with hypothermia, or cold stunning, pneumonia or even boat strikes. These turtles are transported to NEAq for critical care which involves slowly warming the turtles core temperature to approximately 70 - 75 degrees and administering medications and other veterinary care as needed.

NMLC is one of the facilities that the NEAq will transfer turtles almost ready for release and in need of more swimming, diving and feeding before release so that the NEAq can free up space in their rehab department for more critical cases.

One theory heard about why this year was such a small stranding year was that the Cape didn’t see very hot weather continuously throughout the summer months and thus the waters didn’t warm up to typical temperatures. It is possible that turtles chose not to migrate this far north to feed, but stayed down in the warmer waters of the more southern states. Good for the turtles, curious for the rehab centers of New England.

Danielle O’Neil, NMLC Animal Care Manager
Thanks to Jackie & Michael Kennedy, owners of the Point Independence Inn in Onset, for donating the proceeds of their 2nd Annual Polar Bear Ball and Swim benefiting the NMLC. They raised $2,000 through raffle ticket sales and a silent auction! See inside for story.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the following:

- NorthEast Restaurant Supply for assistance, advice and contribution of equipment which outfitted our food prep area in the first phase facility. Special thanks to Bill Hirt.
- Matt Griffin, President-Griffin Steel for materials and labor in the installation of a moveable wall in the warehouse.
- Gene Cormier & Porter Woodcock of Cape Cod Alarm, for their contribution of labor and camera equipment for live viewing of animals in our first phase facility rehab tanks.
- Gregg Seibert, Owner-Turtle Productions for his contribution of time and materials in documenting admission, rehab, and release of our 1st patient, Eco.

The National Marine Life Center Mission
Dedicated to rehabilitating and releasing stranded whales, dolphins, seals and sea turtles, and to advancing scientific knowledge and education in marine wildlife health and conservation.

National Marine Life Center News & Notes is published by the National Marine Life Center to report progress in developing a rehabilitation hospital and science/education center, and to provide information about marine animals.

The National Marine Life Center  P. O. Box 269, Buzzards Bay, MA 02532-0269  Ph: 508 743-9888
E-mail: nmlc@nmlc.org  On the Web at www.nmlc.org

Gifts to the NMLC are tax deductible and can be sent to the address above. Thank you.

New Executive Director appointed
... see inside
Elizabeth has always been a dependable, dedicated volunteer who has the spirit that lights up a room. On February 27, 2005 turns 80 years young.

Happy Birthday and thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to the National Marine Life Center!

Joanne Scally, NMLC Volunteer

I met Elizabeth Gary on a warm summer day in June of 2002; she walked into the NMLC Exhibit Center with a smile on her face. She came to us from Lunenburg MA where she had been the Docent and Head of Volunteers at the Fitchburg Art Museum for many years. Elizabeth said she wanted to make friends and volunteering was a great way to accomplish that.

She works closely with the managers and Education Coordinator in the Exhibit Center, and also works on mailings for the NMLC. She is always willing to help with the smallest of tasks, such as cutting out paper turtles for an education program or changing a video tape for a visitor. Elizabeth certainly reached her goal of making new friends, and I am thankful that I have had the chance to get to know Elizabeth and consider her a great friend.

Elizabeth is also very involved in the community, where she volunteers at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy Admissions Office two mornings a week and is also very involved in her church, St. Peters, which is also located in Buzzards Bay. At St. Peters she is on the vestry and also volunteers in their consignment shop.

She is always more than willing to help the National Marine Life Center; her help in education programs, clean-ups, the visitor’s center, and mailings was and is a valuable asset to us.

The Fins and Flippers Club

With the hope of meeting an educational need for creating awareness of environmental problems and fostering care for stranded marine animals, NMLC volunteers Kathy Frucci and Lindsay Hirt set to work on developing a fun summer program for kids.

By June 2004, the Fins and Flippers Club was born. An hour long weekly program, club activities consisted of two components. Storytime, led by Lindsay on Tuesdays at 10:00 am, brought a new theme to each meeting, including the human-related dangers to sea turtles, mass strandings of some species of whales, the diverse environment of coral reefs, and much more. After a book reading, visitors could bring up questions about the goals of the center or watch Eco the loggerhead turtle, our first long-term rehabilitation patient, swim in her tank via a newly installed camera!

On Thursdays at 10:00 am, Kathy’s well prepared art project ideas followed up on the theme from Tuesday’s story. With a variety of supplies, children of all ages painted, glued, cut out, and fashioned colorful sea turtle mobiles, googly-eyed jellyfish, paper machiere puffins, ocean floor stepping stones, and shiny rainbow fish to brighten our lecture hall and art project area. We hung sea turtle cutouts made by visitors to the exhibit center and with the help of several skillful volunteers teens, Lindsay traced and painted a huge underwater fantasy mural that spanned one entire wall.

Overall, the summer program was jam-packed and productive. Everyone involved had waves of fun!

Lindsay Hirt, NMLC Volunteer
U.S. Naval Sea Cadets Help Clean-Up NMLC

On November 21st, 29 young cadets, ranging in age from 13 to 17, sacrificed their Sunday to clean-up the NMLC. They brought rakes, shovels, shears, saws, brooms, paint, paint brushes & rollers, masks, coveralls, and most importantly a great attitude and lots of energy.

Organized and led by their Commanding Officer, James McLoughlin, the cadets and several adults did what the staff of NMLC could never have accomplished. They scrubbed and disinfected our two tanks, repainted the tank room floors and under the tanks, they painted the Stranding Network’s seal holding pen. They also emptied out the warehouse and powerwashed the floor, insulated pipes, installed much needed cabinetry, and moved furniture. And that was just the interior.

Outside they pulled weeds, pruned trees and bushes, raked leaves, and cleared out the back entrance of all vines, bushes, and debris allowing the Stranding Network’s marine mammal ambulances easy access in and out of the building.

Our deepest thanks to all of the cadets, their parents, and Jim McLoughlin.

We’ll see you for Spring Clean-up Day!

Seal Euthanized - No Rehab Space Available

On Saturday evening February 5th the Cape Cod Stranding Network (CCSN) received a call from a concerned citizen reporting a stranded seal on a beach in Dartmouth...the seal appeared to be sick. A CCSN trained volunteer checked on the animal Feb 6th, 7th, and 8th. The seal appeared lethargic and slightly dehydrated.

Since the animal had been onshore for 4 days and did not sound very healthy, CCSN staff member, Sarah Herzig and AmeriCorps volunteer, Sherri responded. They observed the seal eating rocks and sand. They decided to collect the seal with the help of the Dartmouth Fire Department at about 3:00 pm on Tuesday, Feb. 8th. The patient was a juvenile female harp seal. Although the seal’s attitude changed from lethargic to feisty, preliminary bloodwork showed the seal was severely dehydrated.

The seal remained in CCSN’s holding pool overnight while staff tried to find available rehab space. Although the results of a second blood test Wednesday morning indicated the seal had significantly improved, CCSN staff determined the seal was not ready for release, but was a good candidate for rehabilitation.

Unfortunately, the University of New England in Biddeford, Maine, Mystic Aquarium in Connecticut, and the New England Aquarium in Boston did not have the space or the resources available to admit the seal into their facilities.

After confirmation that there was no space available and the seal would most likely not survive if released, the decision was made to euthanize the juvenile.

A necropsy will be performed by Stranding Network staff to hopefully determine the cause of this young seal’s condition.

Euthanasia is always a tough choice, but was the most humane thing to do under these circumstances.

Please help the Cape Cod Stranding Network, and the National Marine Life Center avoid this type of heartwrenching situation in the future.

DONATE TODAY TO THE NMLC BUILDING FUND!