

National Aquarium's New Animal Care and Rescue Center: An Upgraded Space for Ethical Animal Care and Behind-the-Scenes Access for Guests

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Public attitudes have evolved. Today, visitors to public aquariums want more than an experience separated by a pane of glass. National Aquarium guests visit to experience other worlds: vibrant reefs, river gorges, lush rain forests. Until now, few visitors have experienced 'our world' behind the scenes, but that's exactly what they're craving. Visitors want to know what goes into caring for our world's aquatic treasures, learn about the animals in detail, and understand the stories behind our beautiful exhibits.

The National Aquarium recently opened an innovative new Animal Care and Rescue Center, the purpose of which is twofold:

1. To provide a new home for the heart of our work—i.e., comprehensive, individualized care for all off-exhibit and rescued animals, as well as saltwater production at 56.78 m³/month (15,000 gal/month), and exhibit fabrication. The new Center can accommodate up to 5,000 animals at any given time.
2. To allow guests to see the inner workings of our organization. This second function responds to the public's expressed desire to have more access to our work, a desire we greatly value and readily accommodate as it increases empathy for marine animals and supports our mission to inspire conservation.

The new, 5,234 m² (56,339 ft²), state-of-the-art Animal Care facility was renovated to our exact specifications and built with public tours in mind. A first-of-its-kind in the industry, this new facility has viewing windows lining its primary hallways, which provide transparency and allow a unique opportunity for paying guests and student groups to view animal care work previously unseen by the public. Unprecedented access allows guests to see the Aquarium's commitment to standard-setting animal care firsthand, while also learning how their favorite exhibits are carefully monitored and maintained.

The National Aquarium's New Animal Care and Rescue Center provides guests an opportunity to observe the heart of all we do and, it is our hope, enhance their overall understanding of animal welfare, aquatic science, and ocean conservation.