



Monterey Bay Aquarium History

The Monterey Bay Aquarium was a vision that turned into a reality. One day in 1977, four marine biologists at Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station were once again contemplating a dilapidated building just a few hundred feet away. Someone said “aquarium,” and the rest is history.

Our building stands on the site of historic Cannery Row's largest fish-packing plant, the Hovden Cannery. Built in 1916, the Hovden Cannery operated until 1972, and was the last of the canneries to close. Demolition of the abandoned building began in 1980, and construction of the Aquarium began shortly after, in spring of 1981. We opened to the public on October 20, 1984—and brought the fish back to Cannery Row.

From the beginning, our founders' intent was to give visitors an intimate tour of Monterey Bay's beautiful natural communities and other fascinating marine environments, and ultimately inspire them to care for and protect the world's oceans.

Thirty years later, we continue to inspire ocean conservation and set trends for aquariums worldwide. We're the only institution to successfully exhibit great white sharks. We created the first living kelp forest exhibit, and pioneered jellyfish exhibits that inspired countless imitations around the globe. We were the first

aquarium to offer changing special exhibitions, and the first with a dedicated exhibit area for children and families. We continue to test the limits of what's possible.

As an ocean conservation leader, we're deeply involved in cutting-edge research—and advocacy—to protect sea otters, Pacific bluefin tuna, great white sharks and other threatened ocean animals. Our Seafood Watch program to advance sustainable seafood practices is transforming the seafood market in ways that protect ocean wildlife. Our exhibits helped inspire creation of the largest national marine sanctuary off the continental United States, and we are now working to ensure the long-term success of the largest network of marine protected areas off the California coast.

More than 55 million visitors have visited the non-profit Monterey Bay Aquarium since 1984. Many have left inspired to help create a better future for the oceans. We'll continue to make a difference in the years ahead.