



## Aquarium at a Glance

### Mission

The South Carolina Aquarium inspires conservation of the natural world by exhibiting and caring for animals, by excelling in education and research, and by providing an exceptional visitor experience.

### Opening Date

May of 2000

### Operating Basis

Private not-for-profit, self-supporting institution

### Location

100 Aquarium Wharf, Charleston, South Carolina

- Easily accessible from major thoroughfares into the City of Charleston
- Located at the edge of the historic Charleston Harbor
- Two-thirds of the building projects over the water, and generous decks provide extraordinary views of the dolphins, ships and landscape of the Cooper River and Charleston Harbor
- Located at Aquarium Wharf, a one-stop entertainment district complete with Fountain Walk retail stores, Ft. Sumter Visitor Education Center at Liberty Square, and sunset harbor and eco-cruises.

### Hours of Operation

- Open daily, with the exception of Christmas Day, Thanksgiving Day
- Hours of operation:
- 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. from August 16 through March 31
- Sunday Hours: 12:00 noon-5 p.m.
- Last ticket sold at 4 p.m.
- 9 a.m. – 6 p.m., April 1 through August 15
- Sunday Hours: 12:00 noon-6p.m.
- Last ticket sold at 5 p.m.

### Admission Fares

Aquarium General Admission

- Child (0-1) free
- Child (2-11) \$10.00
- Adult (12-61) \$17.00
- Senior (62+) \$16.00



## Attendance

- Since opening, more than 4.1 million people have visited the South Carolina Aquarium
- In 2007, 427,101 people visited the Aquarium, with 57,000 visiting from schools
- In 2006, 437,519 people visited the Aquarium, with 52,000 visiting from schools
- In 2007, 36 percent of visitors were Charleston-area residents, 6.6 % were from the Charlotte, NC area, 6.2% from the Greenville, SC area, and 4.9% were from the Columbia, SC area.
- In 2006, 48.5 percent of visitors were Charleston-area residents, 6.1 % were from the Charlotte, NC area, 5.2% from the Greenville, SC area, and 5.1% were from the Columbia, SC area.
- In 2007, 49.8 percent of the visitors were from South Carolina, 12.1 percent from North Carolina and 4.7 percent from Georgia (other states represent other percentages)
- In 2006, 61.3 percent of the visitors were from South Carolina, 11.1 percent from North Carolina and 4.9 percent from Georgia (other states represent other percentages)
- Guests have come from all 50 states, plus Canada, England, Germany, Mexico, Taiwan, France, Japan, Australia, Korea and Italy.

## Ownership and Administration

- Developed by the City of Charleston, under the leadership of Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
- While the City owns the Aquarium building, the facility is leased and operated by the South Carolina Aquarium Board of Directors as a not-for-profit corporation
- Hilton C. Smith, Jr. is Chairman of the Board of Directors
- Staff includes specialists in the fields of conservation, education, animal husbandry, marketing, visitor relations, finance and management

## Aquarium Funding

- The \$69 million cost of building and opening the South Carolina Aquarium was committed from the City of Charleston, Charleston County, the State of South Carolina, the Economic Development Administration, an environmental settlement and numerous private donations.
- The Aquarium is a 501(c)(3) registered private not-for-profit corporation. As such, the Aquarium relies on the generosity of individuals, corporations and foundations to fulfill its mission of education and conservation of the aquatic environments of South Carolina.

## Economic Impact

*Analysis conducted by the Center for Business Research of the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce*

- According to an independent report the 2002 Annual Economic Impact Report of the South Carolina Aquarium's out-of-town visitors was \$361.8 million
- This impact supports an estimated 6,605 jobs in the region
- Total economic impact of the South Carolina Aquarium operations in 2001 was \$23 million
- 241 jobs in the Charleston region were created as a result of the direct spending of the South Carolina Aquarium and its employees
- Direct expenditures by the South Carolina Aquarium in fiscal year 2001 totaled nearly \$10 million within the Charleston region



## Exhibits

- Features 6,000-7,000 amazing aquatic animals from river otters and sharks to loggerhead turtles in over 100 exhibits: 57 exhibits with animals, 45 aquatic exhibits, 54 aquatic back-up tanks, and 10 turtle hospital beds
- Exhibits contain about 600,000 gallons of water, with near 35,000 gallons of freshwater and 565,000 gallons of seawater
- Currently 6,313 specimens of animals within 373 species
- Currently 12,000 specimens of plants within 215 species housed in the Aquarium and its nursery
- Exhibit path leads visitors through the five major regions of the **Southeast Appalachian Watershed** as found in South Carolina: the *Mountains*, the *Piedmont*, the *Coastal Plain*, the *Coast*, and the *Ocean*
- Interactive displays located throughout the Aquarium including the new major exhibit Camp Carolina, Toddler Exhibits, an Education Center, the Touch Tank and several Education Stations

## Volunteers

- The Aquarium relies on a corps of over 350 diverse, enthusiastic and skilled volunteers
- A variety of positions are available including Exhibit Guide, Hospitality Team Member, Aquarist Assistant, Diver, Behind-the-Scenes and in the office
- Receive ongoing training, a newsletter and are invited to share in educational opportunities, field trips and annual celebrations

## Membership

- 8,000 households representing over 27,000 members
- Annual memberships range from \$50 for an individual membership to \$135 for a family plus membership
  - Family Plus, \$135 Best Value
    - *2 listed adults in the same household plus all listed children under 18 plus 2 Guest privileges*
    - *\*The perfect membership for families with babysitters, nannies, grandparents, adult children or visiting guests!*
  - Family, \$90
    - 2 listed adults in the same household and all listed children under 18
  - Grandparent, \$80
    - 2 listed adults in the same household and all listed grandchildren under 18
  - Individual Plus, \$75
    - 1 listed adult plus 1 guest privilege
  - Dual, \$65
    - 2 listed adults
  - Individual, \$50
    - 1 listed adult
- Also available is a donor-level program, the Aquarium Society, which begins at \$250
  - Mountain Forest Friend \$250-\$499:
    - Our Mountain Forest Friends are entitled to any membership level, all member events, 2 Behind-the-Scenes tour passes, parking passes and invitations to



select Society events. At this level, your gift provides funding to feed two river otters for a week.

- Coastal Plains Pioneer \$500-\$999:
  - Our Coast Plains Pioneers are entitled to any membership level, 4 Behind-the-Scenes tour passes, parking passes, all member events, and invitations to exclusive Aquarium Society events. *At this level, your gift enables the Aquarium to feed all of the birds in the Saltmarsh exhibit for six months.*
- Great Ocean Explorer \$1000 or more:
  - Our Great Ocean Explorers are entitled to any membership level, private Behind-the-Scenes and Sea Turtle Hospital tours, parking passes, all member events, invitations to exclusive Aquarium Society events and a special gift from the Aquarium. *At this level, your gift supports medical care and a place in our Sea Turtle Hospital for one rescued Loggerhead for one month.*
- One of the largest membership programs of its kind in the region
- Benefits include Admission Benefits, Members' Express Entrance, 10 percent discount in the Aquarium Shop, Quarterly Membership Magazine, *Tributaries*, Educational Programs, Special Events, and monthly electronic newsletter
- Other opportunities that can be taken advantage of by members include exclusive member-only program and pre-views, community classroom programs and behind the scenes tours.