



UC San Diego  
SCRIPPS INSTITUTION OF OCEANOGRAPHY



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Local Students Experience On-the-Water Field Trip in Seaport Climate Science Program

*Educators from Birch Aquarium and San Diego Unified Lead Pilot Program To  
Inform Design of Future Seaport Learning Center*



*With the backdrop of the Downtown San Diego site for the proposed Seaport San Diego project, students from Pacific Beach Middle School gather plankton samples for analysis.*

*Photo Credit: Seaport Climate Science Program*

**NATIONAL CITY, Calif. (April 6, 2023)** – Today local leaders had an exclusive opportunity to tour the Seaport Climate Science Program. The one-of-a-kind program is a partnership between Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego, San Diego Unified School District and Seaport San Diego. The pilot program was established as a proof-of-concept to inform the design of the future permanent facility at Seaport San Diego.

During the tour, Port of San Diego Vice Chair Sandy Naranjo, San Diego Unified Trustee Richard Barrera and other leaders learned more about the Seaport Climate Science Program, which engages middle school students in hands-on, climate science-focused field trips. Approximately 70 seventh-grade students from Pacific Beach Middle School participated in the tour, rotating

among STEM learning stations aboard a research-equipped vessel that launched from Pepper Park in National City.



*Local leaders had a special opportunity to learn about the Seaport Climate Science Program on April 6, 2023, observing students as they rotated among hands-on STEM learning stations in Pepper Park, National City.*

“Seaport San Diego is a proposal to revitalize an important part of the San Diego Bayfront thoughtfully and boldly for the next century, and the Learning Center is a cornerstone of our vision for connecting students and adult learners throughout California with the ocean in a meaningful way,” said Seaport San Diego developer Yehudi “Gaf” Gaffen, CEO of 1HWY1. “We are honored to have the partnership of San Diego Unified School District and Birch Aquarium at Scripps as we embark on the design of our Learning Center. I’m delighted to see how the Seaport Climate Science Program is already inspiring young minds and look forward to having a permanent center for ocean-centered learning at Seaport San Diego.”



*A conceptual rendering of Seaport San Diego.  
Credit: Seaport San Diego/Master architect CallisonRTKL Inc.*

Guided by educators from Birch Aquarium at Scripps, the students dissected lancetfish stomachs and examined the contents for clues about the ocean ecosystem. They used echosounder technology to monitor fish populations, gathered ocean water samples for testing and examined plankton under a microscope — all activities that take place as part of Seaport Climate Science Program field trips.

The Seaport Climate Science Program “is allowing kids from all over the district to be able to come and explore the ocean,” said Pacific Beach Middle School student Collin Scott, 13. “Some kids have dreams about being scientists and I think this could definitely help them. You get to learn about the environment, fish and animals, water temperature – all the stuff out here in the Bay.”

The lesson plans for the Seaport Climate Science Program are based on the research and education being conducted at Birch Aquarium. “The partnership between the Birch Aquarium at Scripps, San Diego Unified and Seaport San Diego allows us to introduce a new generation of students to ocean research and the methods by which researchers evaluate the health of our oceans,” said Margaret Leinen, Director of Scripps Institution of Oceanography and Vice Chancellor for Marine Sciences at UC San Diego. “The Seaport Climate Science Program is a shining example of a public-private partnership that benefits youth in a unique and meaningful way while contributing to our understanding of best practices in climate science education.”

The Seaport Climate Science Program is aligned with curriculum standards for STEM education.

“It is increasingly important that our students are equipped to become good stewards of the environment. Through this collaboration, students will have the opportunity to thrive as they engage in hands-on, climate and marine-science focused learning experiences,” said San Diego Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Lamont Jackson. “This is so important in San Diego because the ocean is connected to our environment, our lives, our culture, and is an essential resource for current and future jobs.”

The Seaport Climate Science Program, now in its second year, will have served more than 1,000 students from San Diego Unified and Sweetwater Union High School District by the end of April 2023.

### **About the Seaport Climate Science Program**

The Seaport Climate Science Program is a pilot program that demonstrates the partnership between [Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego](#), [San Diego Unified School District](#) and [Seaport San Diego](#). The program is a proof-of-concept for the future Seaport San Diego Learning Center within the Port of San Diego, which will be a resource for San Diego Unified and other schools throughout California, and will be operated by Birch Aquarium at Scripps. The Seaport Climate Science Program seeks to engage middle school students in hands-on, climate science-focused field trip experiences in a way that informs the future permanent facility at Seaport San Diego. Students experience curriculum-aligned, STEM learning onboard a research-equipped vessel operated by Pacific Maritime. Between 2022 and 2023, approximately 1,000 students will have participated in the pilot program.