



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Ron Kuhlman Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau | 757.385.4700

Kerry McKeel BCF | 757.497.4811 | kmckeel@boomyourbrand.com

Story Ideas for the New Restless Planet Renovation at the Virginia Aquarium

(Virginia Beach, Va., 2009) – Experience the new \$25 million *Restless Planet* renovation at the [Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center](http://www.VirginiaAquarium.com), featuring four habitats from around the world that existed in Virginia millions of years ago. The Grand Opening – and the adventure – begins November 21. The story ideas below showcase the experiences found at *Restless Planet*. Visit www.VirginiaAquarium.com to learn more. For media information, the media kit, and images, visit www.vbpressroom.com.

The Virginia Aquarium More than Doubles its Number of Animals: Featuring 12,000 square feet of spectacular new habitats, exhibits and aquariums, *Restless Planet* is home to 6,000 new animals and 367 new species – including Komodo dragons, exotic cobras, hedgehogs, and so much more. *Restless Planet* will more than double the Virginia Aquarium’s animal collection. Visitors will explore immersive live-animal exhibits and engage in 36 new hands-on activities designed to demonstrate the processes that shaped Virginia’s current landscape.

Explore the Mysteries Found in Brand-New Habitats: Discover how geological events from millions of years ago shaped Virginia into what it is today. Over millions of years, the landscape that is now Virginia experienced humid, damp environments to searing hot desert heat—and left us clues to prove it. For example, approximately 320 million years ago, vast peat swamps covered parts of Virginia ultimately leading to large amounts of coal found in southwestern Virginia linking Malaysia’s swampy coastal regions to Virginia’s extensive, commercial Appalachian coal beds. Slog through the humidity of a Malaysian peat swamp and find the tomistomas, the world’s most endangered crocodile. Shuffle through North African desert sands where cobras and scorpions reside. Explore a 40-foot tunnel in the Red Sea while eagle rays with 6-foot wingspans and hundreds of colorful reef fishes swim overhead. Then hike across an Indonesian volcanic island in search of Komodo dragons, the world’s largest lizards.

--more--

Come Face to Face with Thrilling New Animals: The *Restless Planet* habitat that mimics the volcanic Komodo Islands of Indonesia features the new **Komodo dragons**. The largest, Teman, is nearly 6 feet long, while a younger brother-sister pair are each about 3 ½ to 4 feet long. The **spotted eagle ray** will soar overhead as visitors stroll through the 100,000 gallon Red Sea aquarium. The Ray’s v-shaped snout and its ability to “fly” completely out of the water when pursued give these spotted eagle rays its bird-like name. Scattered in habitats throughout Malaysia, **tomistomas** are one of the most endangered reptiles on the planet. The Virginia Aquarium hopes to breed its new tomistomas to support their dwindling wild populations. Reputedly the asp that killed Cleopatra, the new **Egyptian cobras** in Restless Planet are extremely venomous. When in defensive posture, the cobra spreads its hood to appear larger and give warning to those approaching. A favorite of snake charmers, the cobra cannot actually hear the music: it follows the swaying movements of the charmer’s flute. And these animals are just the beginning...

The Design Team Showcases Virginia’s Geological Change: Designed by nationally-known, Boston-based architects Chermayeff & Poole and constructed by Virginia-based W.M. Jordan Company, the immersive animal habitats in Restless Planet were recreated to look, feel and smell like the authentic environment and landscape from geological years past. Learn more about the preparations involved in the creation of *Restless Planet*, from seasoning the water to finding appropriate animals indigenous to each ecological time period.

Behind the Scenes of Restless Planet: Restless Planet is home to thousands of new fishes, reptiles, invertebrates and mammals. Learn how habitats are maintained and animals are cared for behind the scenes of *Restless Planet*. Discover interesting facts like, since Komodo dragons require natural light for Vitamin D, both the main exhibit and the holding areas have specially designed UV-transmitting windows that allow sunlight to reach them. Also, find out more about how the Virginia Aquarium must import anti-venom from South Africa and keep it on hand in the event of an accidental staff envenomation from the Egyptian cobras.

Conserving and Sustaining Virginia’s Environment: In the Conservation Station, visitors will meet live animals up close in a “research tent in the field” setting during daily programs led by the Virginia Aquarium’s educators. Oysters are critical to the ecosystem of the Chesapeake Bay. The interactive productivity game, “In or Out of Balance?,” at the Life/Oysters kiosk demonstrates the interdependence of many Chesapeake Bay species with the oyster. Sliding panels show visitors what happens to other animals, from apex predators to snails, when oysters disappear from the Bay, as well as educates visitors on ways to protect and keep the Bay clean.

Restless Planet’s final gallery, appropriately entitled the Reflections Gallery, provides visitors with an emotional connection with the environment. A kaleidoscope of more than 100 still and video images and mirrors stimulates thinking about our planet Earth, and inspires personal reflection about what each person might do to help our environment. A visit through *Restless Planet* will educate, engage and inspire visitors with the world they inhabit while generating awareness of the conservation challenges we face.

Embark on the Journey of Water: In addition to Restless Planet, the Virginia Aquarium also is opening the new Journey of Water galleries, which follows the descending path of Virginia’s watershed from a gentle waterfall in the Upland River Gallery to the near-shore depths of the Chesapeake Bay. A giant holographic globe will show how Virginia and the continent changed over millions of years along with the plants, animals, and fish of today. Children of all ages will enjoy a newly-renovated touch pool with, horseshoe crabs and other ocean critters.

Now’s the time to plan your Virginia Beach getaway. For travel planning, call 800-VA-BEACH or visit www.vbfun.com. For specific information about the Virginia Aquarium, call 757-385-FISH or visit www.VirginiaAquarium.com.

Virginia Beach entices visitors to “Live the Life” every season of the year! Virginia Beach is four hours southeast of D.C. by car and within a day’s drive or less from two-thirds of the U.S. population. For visitor information, call 1-800-VA-BEACH (800/822-3224) or visit the Web site www.vbfun.com for online trip planning. For media information and digital images, click on www.vbpressroom.com.

#