



## Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Historical Timeline

**1973** Virginia Beach City School Board proposes an idea for a science resource room. C. Mac Rawls, a science supervisor for Virginia Beach Public Schools was asked to head a panel to study the idea.

**1975** The panel recommends a marine science museum devoted to Virginia's marine environment and hiring an expert to check the committee's plan and offer further recommendations. The project is known as the Virginia Beach Marine Science Museum.

**1979** The City of Virginia Beach donates the site for the facility and Rawls is named director of the museum.

**1980** City Council appoints three task forces to aid in the development of the Virginia Marine Science Museum (VMSM). The name of the facility is changed to the Virginia Museum of Marine Sciences.

**1981** Ten members of the Museum Foundation Task Force officially form the Virginia Marine Science Museum Foundation, Inc.

**1982** The museum seeks \$2 million in allocations from the Virginia General Assembly, but receives only \$125,000.

**1983** The VMSM Foundation, and other museum supporters, successfully lobby the General Assembly to appropriate \$2 million for the construction of the Virginia Marine Science Museum. The City of Virginia Beach adds its \$3.5 million contribution and construction on the facility begins.

**1984** The Foundation launches a successful \$2 million capital campaign to pay for the museum's exhibits. Rawls, and his staff of six, move from their office at 1917 Arctic Avenue to their new quarters in Camp Pendleton. Harold, the 17-pound lobster caught by Hagan Seafood Corporation, is donated to VMSM as its first live animal exhibit.

**1985** The name changes for the third time to Virginia Marine Science Museum.

**June 14, 1986** The Virginia Marine Science Museum officially opens to the public. It is a 41,500-square-foot facility on a 9-acre site. Attendance for the first summer exceeds projections by about 45% with more than 109,000 visitors for the first three months.

**1989** Museum staff and volunteers begin responding to stranded marine mammals and sea turtles that wash up sick, injured or dead along the beaches. The Foundation agrees to fund the activities of this newly formed VMSM Stranding Team. Also during this year, the Foundation funds the

development of an outreach program that has developed into the present day ***Ocean in Motion*** traveling aquarium program.

**1990** Plans for Phase II of the Virginia Marine Science Museum begin. The project will triple the size of the current facility to 120,000 square feet, more than 45 acres of land, and two buildings.

**1991** The museum begins winter whale watching trips. These trips helped develop an off-season tourism industry for the City of Virginia Beach.

**1992** Virginia Beach City Council approves \$32.8 million from the Tourism Growth Industry Fund (TGIF) for the museum's expansion.

**1994** The Foundation launches its second capital campaign. This \$5 million campaign funded the exhibits for the museum's Phase II expansion. Ground breaking on the new facility begins.

**1995** The museum receives a \$1 million pledge from The Family Channel. This is the largest pledge of the capital campaign.

**June 14, 1996** Phase II of the Virginia Marine Science Museum opens to the public. During the first year more than 692,000 people visit the newly expanded museum (projected attendance was 650,000).

**1998** Plans begin for Phase III of the museum. This new expansion will include a 100,000-square-foot building housing a 1.6 million gallon Atlantic Coast habitat, two indoor aviaries, new classroom, hands-on interactive exhibits and a museum store.

**April 26, 1999** Bay Lab at First Landing State Park opens. It includes a hands-on educational laboratory filled with aquariums, touch tanks, and microscopes where VMSM staff will conduct programs focusing on various Chesapeake Bay topics.

**January 1, 2001** C. Mac Rawls, Executive Director of the Virginia Marine Science Museum and the City of Virginia Beach Director of the Department of Museums and Cultural Arts retires.

**July 1, 2001** Lynn Clements, former Deputy Director and Interim Director, was officially named the Executive Director of the Virginia Marine Science Museum and the City of Virginia Beach Director of the Department of Museums and Cultural Arts.

**July 1, 2004** Based on the recommendations of the staff and VMSM Foundation, the Virginia Beach City Council endorses the facility's name change to the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center.

**May, 2005** Initiation of Windows to the World \$25 million capital campaign, successfully completed in June 2008.

**2009** The ***Restless Planet*** exhibit, the bulk of the \$25 million renovation opens.