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OCEAN CONSERVATION LEADER JASON PATLIS

NAMED PRESIDENT & CEO

OF THE MARITIME AQUARIUM AT NORWALK

NORWALK, CT – Jason Patlis, the executive director of Marine Conservation Programs for the Wildlife Conservation Society and a former president of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, will be the new president and CEO of The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk.

Patlis brings to Norwalk a 27-year career of executive management and public policy in ocean and natural-resource conservation on a national and international scale. His experience combines science literacy and education, research and conservation, and law and advocacy. He begins his role at The Maritime Aquarium on Mon., Nov. 4.

“We feel like we’re a band that got Paul McCartney to come sing lead,” said Audrey Weil, co-chair of the Aquarium’s Board of Trustees. “Jason brings to The Maritime Aquarium an incredible depth of knowledge, vision and leadership in national and international marine conservation, as well as proven experience in not-for-profit management. He is impressively accomplished in all his endeavours, and we are so pleased and fortunate to welcome him to The Maritime Aquarium.”

Patlis will take the helm of the one of Connecticut’s largest family attractions, which draws nearly 500,000 visitors a year through its live exhibits and educational programming focused on Long Island Sound. The Maritime Aquarium is just one of three facilities in Connecticut earning top accreditation by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), which this month honored two of the Aquarium’s educational initiatives with national awards.

“I am deeply honored and profoundly excited to lead The Maritime Aquarium forward,” Patlis said. “An institution that is beloved by the community for its live exhibits and educational programs, The Maritime Aquarium has an opportunity to grow into a more powerful champion for Long Island Sound and its coastal environment.”

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Patlis arrives as The Maritime Aquarium begins an exciting physical transformation, through its response to the planned replacement of the Walk Bridge, the railroad bridge that narrowly slots between the Aquarium and its IMAX Theater. Budgeted at \$40 million, the Aquarium work involves building a new 4D movie theater to replace the IMAX Theater, which must be razed, and enclosing and enlarging its popular seal exhibit. The simultaneous projects are to begin in October and take about a year.

“During this coming year, we will continue to serve the community as we have for the last 30-plus years, and we will emerge with something for everyone: a state-of-the-art theater for our guests, a more comfortable home for our harbor seals, and significant momentum for future growth of The Maritime Aquarium,” he said.

A native of northern Queens, Patlis grew up along Long Island Sound and began his career as a financial analyst on Wall Street. With a passion for the environment, he received a law degree from Cornell Law School in 1992 and joined the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) from 1992-97 as an attorney specializing in the Endangered Species Act.

He worked on both sides of the U.S. Capitol, serving as Majority Counsel on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee under Sen. John Chafee (1997-2000) and as Deputy Staff Director for the House Science Committee (2006-07). His positions on Capitol Hill bookended a six-year tenure in Indonesia (2000-2006), which began with a Fulbright Senior Scholarship and evolved into a consulting practice in which he helped to shape new laws relating to forestry and coastal-resource management as the country moved from dictatorship to democracy. His efforts paved the way for the establishment of Indonesia’s first national law on coastal management, enacted in 2007.

Patlis served the World Wildlife Fund as vice president and managing director of U.S. government relations (2007-09), and then joined the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation as president and CEO (2009-2016), where he managed all aspects of the non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening the nation’s marine sanctuaries through fundraising, communications and awareness, conservation, advocacy and education.

Most recently, since October 2016, Patlis has served as executive director for marine conservation of the Wildlife Conservation Society, whose five institutions include the Bronx Zoo, Central Park Zoo and New York Aquarium. The marine-conservation portfolio included projects in 25 of the 60 countries around the globe where WCS has a presence, and focused on creating and managing marine protected areas, safeguarding coral species, reversing the decline of sharks and rays, and stewarding the recovery of marine-mammal populations.

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Patlis has testified several times before Congress to advocate for funding for the National Marine Sanctuary System, and has written extensively on marine and natural-resource conservation in books, blogs, op-eds, policy journals and law reviews. In all of his writings, he has espoused a strong link between fundamental principles of law and science, and aspirational and innovative solutions to today's most-pressing environmental challenges.

“What I have learned over the course of my career is that it is – without exception – direct, immediate local engagement with communities that result in the greatest and most-successful impact in protecting the natural world around them,” Patlis said. “The Maritime Aquarium connects its visitors to the wonders of Long Island Sound and our planet's marine environment, and it is through this connection that The Maritime Aquarium can have its greatest impact on both its community and its surrounding environment. This is what excites me.”

Patlis will be the ninth president in the Aquarium's 32-year history.

Learn more about the popular Connecticut family attraction at www.maritimeaquarium.org.

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About The Maritime Aquarium

The Maritime Aquarium is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to educate visitors about – and to create stewards for – Long Island Sound. It accomplishes this by allowing visitors to get close to more than 300 species native to the Sound and its watershed, including sharks, seals, sea turtles, river otters, jellyfish and other animals. One of the top places for family fun in Connecticut and accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), The Maritime Aquarium also features hands-on educational programs and displays, public study cruises out onto the Sound, and Connecticut's largest IMAX movie theater, with a screen that's six stories high. TripAdvisor.com reviewers rate The Maritime Aquarium as one of the Top 20 aquariums in the U.S. and No. 1 in New England. Learn more at www.maritimeaquarium.org.

Press materials are available on the Aquarium web site:
www.MaritimeAquarium.org/newsroom

Download a variety of Aquarium photos, whenever they're needed, on Flickr at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/maritimeaquarium>. You can also receive specific photos via e-mail or a photo CD. Contact Dave Sigworth.

An accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit institution whose mission is to inspire people of all ages to appreciate and protect the Long Island Sound ecosystem and the global environment through living exhibits, marine science and environmental education.

The Maritime Aquarium receives support from the State of Connecticut DECD's Offices of Culture and Tourism.

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Photo Credit: Maritime Aquarium

NORWALK, CT – Jason Patlis, the executive director of Marine Conservation Programs for the Wildlife Conservation Society and a former president of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, will be the new president and CEO of The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk. His first day will be Mon., Nov. 4. Learn more about the popular Connecticut attraction at www.maritimeaquarium.org.

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