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Statement from Mayor Todd Gloria and Council President Joe LaCava on Sea Lion Abuse Incident in La Jolla

SAN DIEGO – Mayor Todd Gloria and Council President Joe LaCava issued the following statement regarding the recent incident involving the abuse of a sea lion in La Jolla and the ongoing federal investigation led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA):

“The recent incident involving the abuse of a sea lion in La Jolla is disturbing and unacceptable. This act of animal cruelty has no place in San Diego, and those responsible should be held fully accountable.

“As soon as we learned of the incident, City staff and local law enforcement were directed to determine what actions were available to us. As sea lions are protected under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is leading this investigation. We are in direct contact with federal officials and will fully support their efforts to identify those responsible and hold them accountable.

“We appreciate NOAA's swift response and their leadership in this investigation. We also encourage their continued partnership and enforcement efforts at La Jolla Cove and Point La Jolla. People need to understand that harassing or harming protected marine mammals is not just

irresponsible—it is a federal crime with serious consequences. Visible enforcement and accountability are essential to protecting both our wildlife and the public's respect for these shared spaces.

“We want to thank our City staff, California Coastal Commission, volunteer docents, the Sierra Club Seal Society, and our community partners who work every day to educate visitors and promote the responsible viewing of marine wildlife. Visitors to La Jolla Cove and Point La Jolla should enjoy these remarkable animals from a safe distance, obey posted signs and instructions from City staff, never attempt to touch, feed, chase, or harass marine mammals, and remember that these animals are protected under federal law.

“The actions of a few individuals should not undermine the work to balance wildlife protection with responsible public access to one of San Diego's most treasured natural places. Responsible public access means respecting wildlife, following the rules, and recognizing that we are visitors in their habitat. We can, and must, continue to do both.

“Our response must be to hold those who break the law accountable, continue strong enforcement, and work together to protect these iconic animals and the coastline we all share.”

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