



History

Planning began in the early 1980's, after Mayor Joseph Riley visited the Shedd Aquarium, in Chicago, and decided that South Carolina should house their very own aquarium. After choosing Calhoun Park as the location in 1985, and breaking ground ten years later, in 1995, the South Carolina Aquarium opened to the public on May 19, 2000.

The \$69 million cost of building and opening the South Carolina Aquarium was committed from the City of Charleston, Charleston County, the State of South Carolina, the Economic Development Administration, an environmental settlement and numerous private donations. While the City owns the Aquarium building, the facility is leased and operated by the South Carolina Aquarium Board of Directors as a not-for-profit corporation, led by Jerry Zucker, Chairman of the Board of Directors. The Aquarium is a 501(c)(3) registered private not-for-profit corporation. As such, the Aquarium relies on the generosity of individuals, corporations and foundations to fulfill its mission of education and conservation of the aquatic environments of South Carolina.

The Aquarium, jutting out 200 feet into the Charleston Harbor, offers a state-of-the-art environmental learning center that encompasses the entire spectrum of the **Southeast Appalachian Watershed** as found in South Carolina the *Mountains*, the *Piedmont*, the *Coastal Plain*, the *Coast*, and the *Ocean*. The Aquarium's 93,000-square-foot building includes *9 galleries* featuring 6,000-7,000 amazing aquatic animals, from river otters and sharks to loggerhead turtles, in over 100 exhibits. Currently the Aquarium holds 6,313 specimens of animals within 373 species and 12,000 specimens of plants within 215 species.



Aquarium Milestones Timeline

1986:	Calhoun Park identified as the site for the South Carolina Aquarium
October 1995:	Groundbreaking
May 19, 2000:	The Aquarium Opens to the Public
August 2000:	First turtle released from the Aquarium's Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Program
Fall 2000:	The Free Structured School Program begins educating teachers and students from across South Carolina
October 31, 2000:	First Fish or Treat Halloween event
May 2001:	Caretta, the loggerhead turtle, becomes a resident of the Great Ocean Tank
July 18, 2001:	1 millionth visitor arrives from Laurens, SC
September 2001:	South Carolina Aquarium receives AZA accreditation
January 2002:	First Community Appreciation Dollar Days weekend attracts 36,000 people
March 2002:	<i>UFO</i> Unbelievable Flying Objects exhibit opens Macaws, Marvin and Joey, make their debut at the Aquarium
September 2002:	Kiawah, the red-tailed hawk, arrives
October 2002:	Sustainable Seafood Initiative begins to promote wise seafood choices in local restaurants
November 2002:	First Scuba Do Fundraiser
February 2003:	Pandora, the reticulated python, tries to escape while being transported to the Aquarium
March 2003:	Debut of Name That Tuna, the Aquarium's first game show dive program
April 2003:	ACE, the baby river otter, is rescued and brought to the Aquarium
October 2003:	The first members travel program takes place in the Galapagos



- March 2004:** Opening of Secrets of the Amazon, the first major exhibit entirely designed and built by Aquarium staff
- June 2004:** Local high school students begin working at the Aquarium as part of the High School Intern Program
- July 2004:** Wreckfish Reef, the children's play area, opens
- Winter 2005:** Aquarium holds first Group Sleepover
Conservation program, Oyster Time, is launched
- April 2005:** Maya, the anteater, goes on exhibit
- May 19, 2005:** South Carolina Aquarium's 5 Year Birthday
- August 22, 2005:** Aquarium welcomes its 3 millionth visitor
- Fall 2005:** Jetty, a rehabilitated Loggerhead, was the Aquarium's 16th turtle to be released back into the wild
- January 2006:** Aquarium welcomes Kevin Mills as President and CEO
- June 2006:** Pablo Pawcasso: First Animal Art Exhibit
- Summer 2006:** Live feeds allow the public to observe Sea Turtle Hospital activities
- Fall 2006:** South Carolina Aquarium receives AZA Diversity Award for High School Intern Program
- January 2007:** A full-time position, devoted completely to the Sea Turtle Rescue Program, was created
- Fall 2007:** Opening of aquarium eatery, The Sea Turtle Café
- March 2007:** South Carolina Aquarium receives AZA accreditation for the second time.
- March 2008:** Opening of CAMP CAROLINA, major new exhibit located in the Countess Alicia Spaulding-Paolozzi changing exhibit gallery.