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NEWS RELEASE

Fish Tales Are Flying Again at Tampa International Airport

Tampa, Fla. (October 22, 2010) – Just in time for the holidays, Airport and Florida Aquarium officials have completely repaired the broken 1,500 - gallon aquarium and restocked it with colorful clown fish, tangs and wrasse.

Months ago, in a freak accident, a vehicle crashed into the Indo-pacific salt water aquarium in Blue Baggage Claim. Despite airport staff efforts to rush the fish into salvaged water all but three of the animals perished.

The force of the impact severely damaged the plumbing under the tank causing the water to drain rapidly from the bottom – the seam which held together the one-inch thick acrylic viewing windows, plumbing and base of the tank had split. Crews worked to repair the damaged areas but eventually found it necessary to re-build most of the tank.

The Florida Aquarium maintains and feeds the fish in the Airport's tanks. "It's a great community partnership," stated John Wheat, Interim Executive Director at Tampa International Airport. "We are pleased to be working with The Florida Aquarium to offer this marine exhibit for airport patrons to enjoy."

The Florida Aquarium goes through an extensive and time consuming process to prepare animals and exhibits prior to use. It is vital to "seed the tank" and "feed the tank."

"Once we know the species and numbers of fish we want, we contact different vendors to locate new fish," said Eric Hovland, husbandry supervisor at The Florida Aquarium. "Our preference is always for captive-bred animals."

Once at the Aquarium, the fish must be put into smaller quarantine tanks for a period of 30-45 days. During this time the fish will be treated for any parasites, eating and competition habits between individual fish will be addressed and diagnostics run.

John Wheat *Interim Executive Director*



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While the fish are being prepped for their new tank, the tank must be prepped for the fish. New tanks must have an established and working life support system. This entails "live sand," which is living bacteria that breaks down any waste. Nitrogen bacteria are busy in the tank ensuring filtration is ready for the fish. Biologists put in their finishing touches, specific decorum and substrate in preparation for the tank's aquatic inhabitants.

The exterior of the blue side marine exhibit is part of the airport's Public Art program. The artwork, titled *El Movimiento del Mar*, was created by local artists Terry Leonard and Josh Johnson. It was unveiled on June 15, 1999.

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John Wheat *Interim Executive Director*