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Newport Aquarium launches world's first Shark Ray Breeding Program and adds rare male Shark Ray

Newport, Ky. -- Efforts to save threatened aquatic animals will be helped by the Newport Aquarium's acquisition of a rare male Shark Ray. Starting on February 14, the Newport Aquarium in Newport, Ky., will be the first and only location in the Western Hemisphere to display a male and female Shark Ray pair. This new permanent addition makes it possible for a first-of-its-kind international Shark Ray Breeding Program to begin at the Newport Aquarium.

The extremely rare male Shark Ray is currently held in a Newport Aquarium acclimation tank before it will be released into the 385,000-gallon *Surrounded by Sharks* exhibit where it will join Sweet Pea, the female Shark Ray. In June 2005, Newport Aquarium made history by becoming the first aquarium in the Americas to display a Shark Ray. Sweet Pea was an instant favorite of Aquarium guests and has come to represent all that is still unknown about oceans.

"The Shark Ray, as a species, is a mystery and it faces many challenges. In some ways, you can consider it the 'panda' of the aquatic world," said Mark Dvornak, Newport Aquarium Aquatics Curator. "We are very excited to take these steps forward in marine conservation. Sweet Pea's success over the last two years is a testament to the dedication of the animal husbandry team at the Newport Aquarium."

The introduction of the Shark Ray pair to America is only a first step in Newport Aquarium's conservation work with this species. By working closely with Fred Fan, a highly regarded and visionary fish procurement specialist from Taiwan, Newport Aquarium is initiating the world's first dedicated Shark Ray Breeding Program. This program, a long-time dream of Fan, is becoming a reality due to the professional dedication and conservation vision shared between Newport Aquarium and Fan.

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