

BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION

Wet and Wild

➤ Despite funding and weather challenges, the Marine Mammal Center project in Sausalito, Calif., was successful thanks to teamwork and flexibility. *By Libby John*

"It was still an active hospital with animals coming and going. We had to maintain access and keep the noise and pollution down to not disturb the recuperating animals."

> Gregg Bilse, project manager

Left The center is on an old missile base, so G&S used an adaptive reuse design to convert two missile silos. **Right** The center was built on California's coast, which experiences severe weather and caused project delays.



Gonsalves & Stronck Construction Co. — Marine Mammal Center

www.gs-construction.com

Cost: \$32 million

Location: Sausalito, Calif.

Scope: Animal care center

➤ **This past June, the Marine Mammal Center** in Sausalito, Calif., celebrated the grand opening of its new, award winning \$32 million animal rescue and rehabilitation center. General contractor Gonsalves & Stronck (G&S) Construction Co. built six new buildings on the site which included a retail and education center, administrative offices, mechanical shop and locker room, as well as a veterinary hospital with a food

prep kitchen, research lab, specimen storage and a necropsy facility. Set on four acres in the Golden Gate National Park, the center is the largest animal facility of its kind in the country.

The new hospital design includes 40 pools and pens for animal patients, allowing the facility to treat up to 1,200 marine mammals, mostly sea lions and harbor seals, each year. "These are all rescue animals," Project Manager Gregg Bilse says. "Through a state-wide network of volunteers, the facility handles all dispatch operations from the Sausalito location and coordinates rescue efforts up and



Photos: David Wakeley Photography ©2010

down the California coast."

Construction phasing that was tied to available funding was the main challenge of the project. In fact, there wasn't a confirmed budget when it began. "From the onset, G&S worked closely with the center and the design team to conduct extensive value engineering and cost analysis in such a way that would allow

the center's ongoing fundraising efforts to stay in line with projected construction milestones," the company says.

The project site was a difficult environment to construct on, Bilse says. "It was right on the coast, which is known for severe weather," he says, such as heavy rain, high winds and dense fog. "We had a lot of challenges getting the project out of the ground. In fact, we were shut down for the better part of six wet months in 2006."

Another challenge that faced the team was that the existing hospital was operational during the construction process.

Former Missile Base

Bilse says the most unique part about the Marine Mammal Center project was that it was located on an old NIKE missile base within the Golden Gate National

Recreation Area (GGNRA). As part of an adaptive re-use design, G&S converted one missile silo to house electrical and mechanical equipment for the buildings. A second silo holds state-of-the-art life support equipment.

"Housing the facility's infrastructure underground required extensive water protection measures," Bilse says. "There was an old drainage system that needed to be upgraded and tied into to keep groundwater out and to keep the equipment going."

The company also had to work closely with the GGNRA for equipment deliveries. "One delivery – transporting eight 10-12,000 gallon fresh and saltwater pump-down, recovery and storage basins – required police escorts and the closure of many high-traffic, federal roads," he says.

Designed to meet LEED silver criteria,

the facility incorporated many sustainable features, Bilse notes. For example, it has photovoltaic solar shade panels in each pen that provides about 20 percent of the electrical power.

The panels also provide shade relief for animals and conserve energy by reducing heat gain on water and eliminating the need for chillers.

G&S worked for the center in 1999 when it completed a renovation to its Harbor Seal Hospital and Surgery Center. "G&S was honored to be called upon again for such a monumental renovation for the Marine Mammal Center," the company says.

Bilse says the center plans to construct the final 20 pools and pens once funding is in place. "It all depends on federal grants and donations," he says. G&S will participate in that project, as well. ☺

