

Injured sea lion in La Jolla draws sympathy

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LA JOLLA — A La Jolla shop owner is trying to get help for an injured sea lion wounded by fishing line that is tightly wrapped around its neck.

Angela Harrell, owner of Hike Bike and Kayak Sports, first spotted the injured, bleeding mammal Saturday sitting on rocks below The Cave Store.

It appears to have a lure stuck in the side of its head and several feet of heavy fishing line wrapped around its neck, Harrell said.

She said that she sees the sea lion while taking customers on kayaking tours and that it appears to be deteriorating.

"It's hard for me," she said. "I have to see her every day."



Angela Harrell, owner of Hike Bike and Kayak, first spotted this injured, bleeding sea lion Saturday sitting on rocks below The Cave Store. It appears to have a lure stuck in the side of its head and several feet of heavy fishing line wrapped around its neck, Harrell said. (Photo by Angela Harrell) -

She said the sight of the suffering animal leaves her as well as her customers feeling helpless because there is nothing they can do.

Harrell said she has spent hours trying to get help but every agency she has talked to has directed her to SeaWorld and officials at the park say they cannot rescue the animal due to the danger.

SeaWorld spokesman Dave Koontz said they received several calls about the sea lion. He said its location on rocks along the craggy coast makes it inaccessible.

Rescuers can't get to it by foot, he said, and an attempt to reach it by boat would be too dangerous. "It's purely a question of safety," Koontz said.

Additionally, the wild animal could take action to protect itself if approached and might become aggressive, he said.

"We have to make sure that the animal and the rescuers are safe," Koontz said.

Members of the park's rescue team went to the cove Thursday to see if they could locate the sea lion, and then have been in contact with lifeguards who know to alert them if it shows up, Koontz said.

If the animal does come ashore, rescuers from the park will retrieve it, Koontz said.

Harrell said it breaks her heart to see the animal suffering, and while she has nothing against fishermen and knows they sometimes have to cut their lines, she said it saddens her that a creature in its natural habitat is being harmed by things left behind by humans.