

Homeless dolphins to get back together in Bahamas



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JACKSON, Miss. (AP)—Several dolphins that were swept out to sea by Hurricane Katrina will soon be reunited at a resort in the Bahamas.

A resort on Paradise Island in the Bahamas will take on 17 dolphins from the Marine Life Oceanarium—eight of which were rescued from open water in September.

“The dolphins, I think, are a symbol of everything that’s happened on the Gulf Coast and to find a new home for them—that’s something that we hope will happen for everybody on the coast,” said Howard Karawan, president and managing director of the company that owns the resort.

The animals lived at Marine Life Oceanarium in Gulfport until the facility was severely damaged by Katrina on Aug. 29.

The dolphins have been spread out around the country. Five are living at the Gulfarium in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Eight are at the Seabee base on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Two are in a national aquarium in Baltimore. Two are at a theme park in New Jersey.

While the dolphins are being well cared for now, cold weather and the effects of separation could take

a toll soon, said Frank Murru, chief marine officer for Kerzner.

“They’re very social animals,” Murru said. “These particular animals have been living together off and on for quite a few years, so they’re quite used to each other. Getting them back into a unified place, I think, will be very good for them.”

Mike Rothe is the manager of the Navy’s marine mammal program in San Diego. He helped set up temporary pools for the dolphins that remained on the Gulf Coast after the hurricane.

Rothe, a civilian, said the Navy generally does not keep animals in the temporary pools for more than three weeks. While they are not in immediate danger, the dolphins living in Mississippi have been confined to the pools for several months.

“The animals really ought to be getting into a larger environment,” Rothe said.

There is an immediate need to move the dolphins to a permanent location, Karawan said.

“They’re safe where they are now, but at the facilities that they are in now (in Mississippi), the dolphins are starting to show some stress,” Karawan said. “They can’t survive there healthfully much longer. They live in pods, so to bring them back and unite them—we’re very excited and we plan on having a big celebration when they get here.”

The dolphins will live in seven interconnected resident pools at the resort, with more than 6 million gallons of sea water. The dolphins will each have 250,000 gallons of water—more than 10 times the amount required by U.S. regulations.

The resort will also take on 24 sea lions and 22 exotic birds from Marine Life.