The forces of wind and current have conspired to make Lāna`i’s coast a ship’s graveyard of Hawai`i’s past. Strong trade winds are funneled between the islands of Moloka`i and Maui, directly onto the north shore. Vessels emerging from the wind shadow in either direction encounter sudden gusts and rough seas. Also, 19th-century steamship owners once carelessly disposed of aging vessels by releasing them near Lāna`i’s shore. The six-mile stretch of coastline called Shipwreck Beach features wonderful opportunities for hiking, fishing, hunting, photography and exploration. Therefore, wrecking sites along Lāna`i’s north shore reflect both accidental losses and intentional groundings.

Educational programs and the community of Lāna`i are a unique location where environment and history and culture join together. Partnerships are an important part of NOAA’s maritime heritage efforts in the Pacific Islands Region of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Partners on the island of Lāna`i include:

- NOAA Maritime Heritage Program
- University of Hawai`i Marine Option Program
- Lāna`i Culture & Heritage Center
- Lāna`i High & Elementary School
- Lāna`i Archaeological Committee
- Alu Like Inc.
- Coalition for a Drug Free Lāna`i
- Lāna`i Waialua Plantation
- NOAA Preserve America Initiative Grant Program

What Is a National Marine Sanctuary?

Our national marine sanctuaries embrace part of our collective riches as a nation. Sanctuary habitats include beautiful rocky reefs, lush kelp forests, whale migration corridors, spectacular deep-sea canyons, and underwater archaeological sites. Our nation’s sanctuaries can provide a safe habitat for species close to extinction, or protect historically significant shipwrecks. Ranging in size from less than one square mile to over 5,300 square miles, each sanctuary is a unique place needing special protections. The Island of Lāna`i lies within the boundaries of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary.