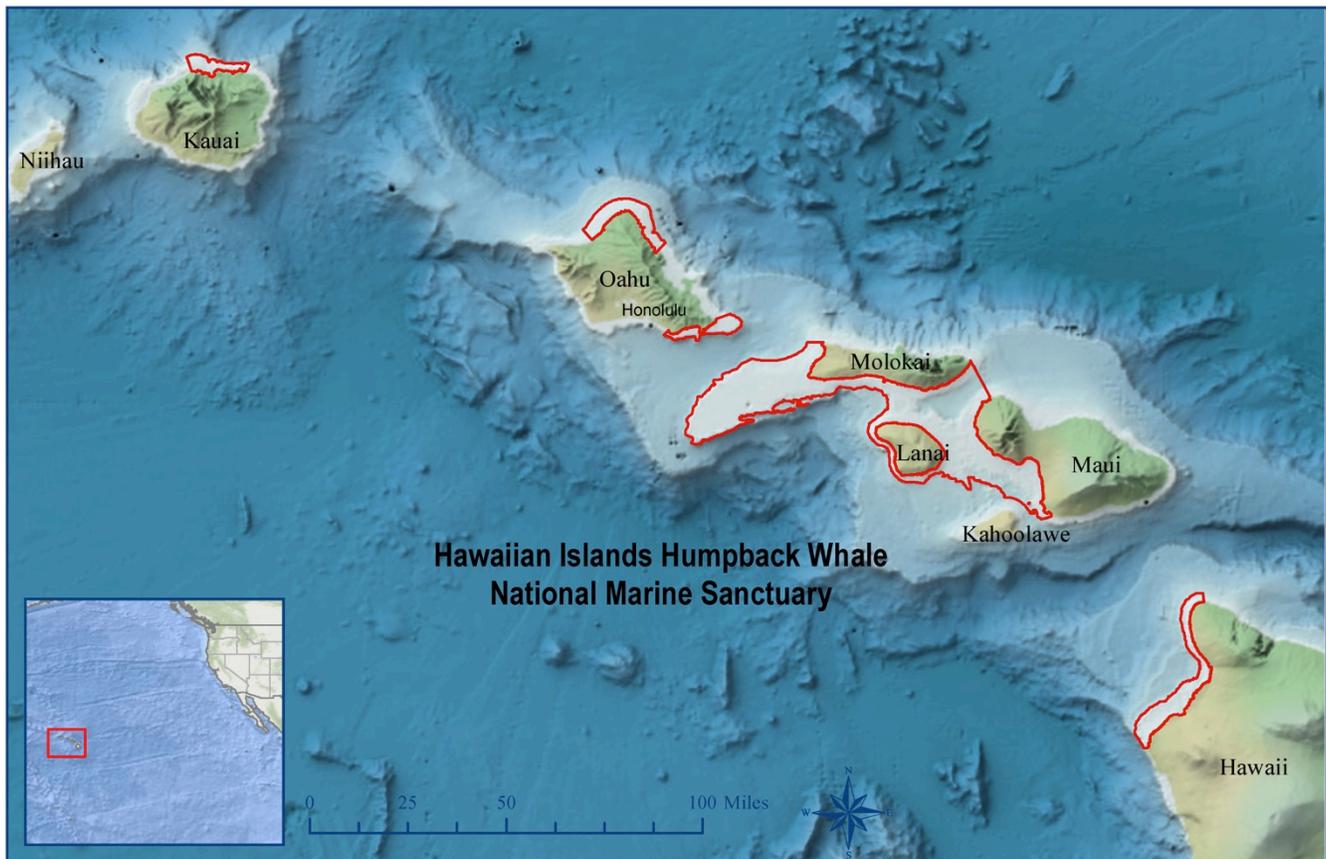


FY18 Accomplishments



BACKGROUND

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary was established in 1992 to protect and preserve humpback whales and their habitat in Hawai'i. Surrounded by soft sediments of the continental shelf seafloor, the sanctuary is located from the shoreline to the 100-fathom isobath (600 ft. depth) in the four island area of Maui; Penguin Bank; and off the north shore of Kaua'i, the north and south shores of O'ahu, and the north Kona and Kohala coast of Hawai'i Island.

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary is part of the National Marine Sanctuary

System, which is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. National marine sanctuaries are managed for the conservation of their natural and cultural resources, while supporting sustainable recreation, tourism and compatible commercial activities. The network includes a system of 13 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.



Photo: Anke Kuegler

A scientist attaches an acoustic monitor to a humpback whale.



Photo: Jason Moore/Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (NOAA MMHSRP Permit # 18676-03)

A Humpback whale breaches after the sanctuary-led team frees it from a life-threatening entanglement.



Photo: Patty Miller/Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

An inflatable life-sized humpback whale is a new education tool at Waikiki Aquarium.

Acoustic Monitoring of Humpback Whales

Sanctuary research staff members were involved in efforts examining the occurrence, behavior and habitat use of humpback whales while in sanctuary waters. Acoustic monitoring was used to examine long-term trends in whale occurrence off of Maui, showing that whale presence has been declining over the past 3 years. The sanctuary also played a leading role in collaborative tagging efforts aimed at understanding the behavior and acoustic environment of humpback whales. Finally, sanctuary researchers collaborated with partners at the University of Hawaii to examine questions related to whale distribution and singing behavior.

Stewardship, Monitoring, and Authorized Response to Protect Humpback Whales and Their Habitat in Hawaii

The sanctuary worked closely with a community-based network of state and federal partners, the tourism industry, fishermen and many others to monitor the health of and risks to humpback whales around the Hawaiian Islands. Over 16 years it has led efforts to free whales from life-threatening entanglements and gain information to reduce this and other threats. 30 large whales have been freed of gear, including 6 this past season. The sanctuary also engaged the community and promoted stewardship through its highly-successful, long-term 22 year Ocean Count citizen-science program.

Education and Outreach a priority for Hawaii

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary provided a variety of educational opportunities for students and the public throughout the year. Sanctuary staff visited dozens of classrooms on Oahu, Maui and Kauai, teaching hundreds of students about humpback whales and the importance of research and stewardship. Staff also provided in-the-field opportunities for classrooms. Nearly 2,000 students visited the NOAA IRC building on Oahu, where they learned about NOAA and humpback whales in the sanctuary. All 3 islands participate in various community outreach events reaching thousands of residents and visitors.

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Looking Ahead to FY19

- Sanctuary researchers will focus on acoustically monitoring the presence of humpback whales in sanctuary waters, as well as in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Tagging efforts will also continue in partnership with researchers from the University of Hawaii and Syracuse University.
- The sanctuary will continue to work closely with its partners and community in research and health and risk monitoring of humpback whales through increased use of unmanned aircraft and engagement of the on-water community (e.g. tour industry surveys).
- The sanctuary plans to increase public interaction and sanctuary message sharing by growing in-the-field volunteer opportunities. A new program, "Sanctuary Beach Naturalists" begins in November and volunteers will be working on whale watch boats when the whale season begins.