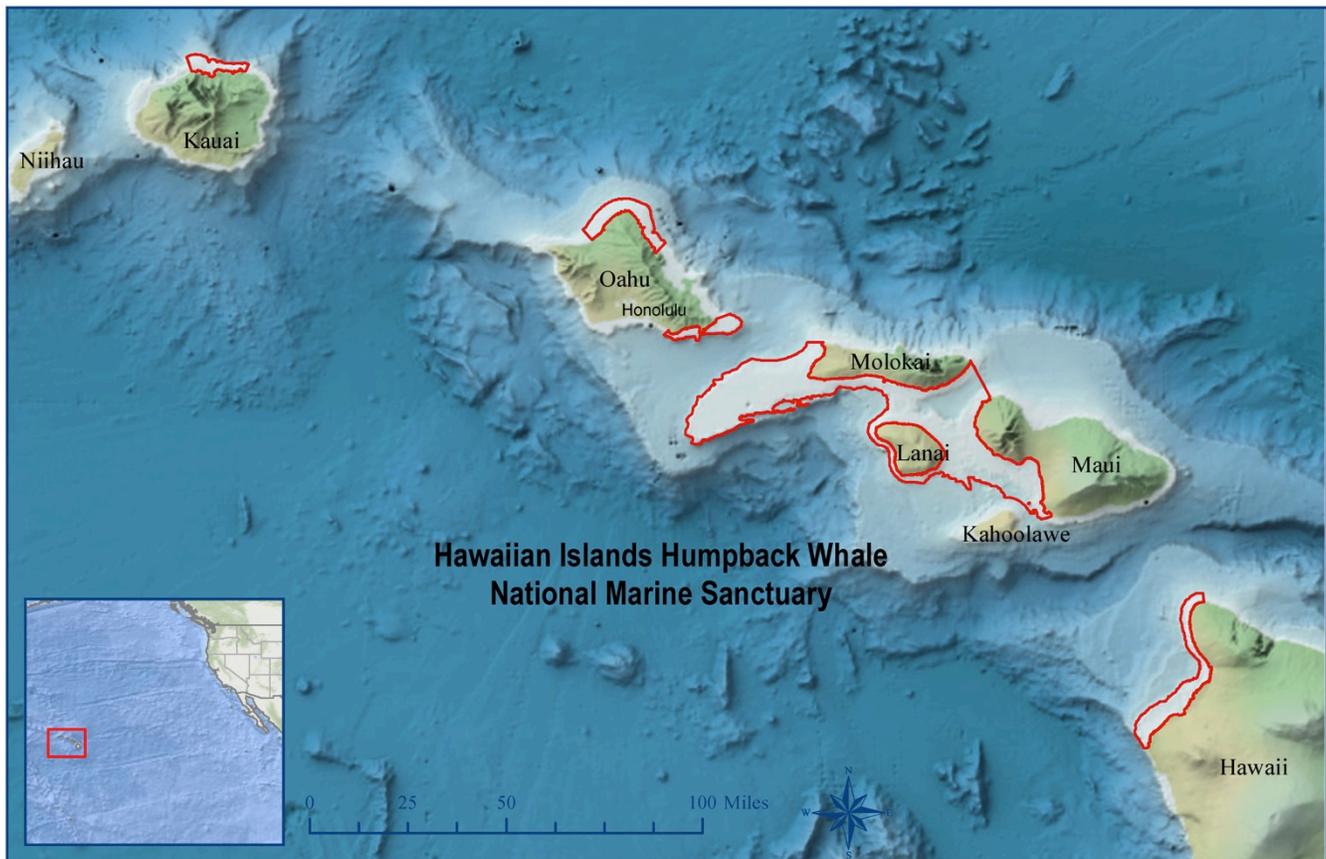


## FY19 Accomplishments



### 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 14 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.



## Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary



Photo: Farden/NOAA

Changing trends in Hawai'i-based humpback whale sightings prompted a workshop for partners to compare findings and offer potential explanations.



Photo: Marc Lammers/NOAA

Staff from the sanctuary took part in a spring expedition to parts of the monument in order to observe the humpback whale population present.



Photo: NOAA

Members of an entanglement response team being trained in Juneau, Alaska pose for a group photo giving the "all clear" signal.

### Sanctuary coordinates workshop to address recent trends observed in humpback whales

As a result of observed changes in sightings/habitat usage of the Hawai'i humpback whale Distinct Population Segment (DPS), the sanctuary coordinated a workshop of researchers and managers to identify information gaps and research/monitoring strategies to better understand and address what might be happening. The workshop, held in November 2018, was comprised of more than 30 participants who provided expertise on humpback whale habitat usage, population estimation and structure, and health/risk analysis in Hawai'i and Alaska. A report on the findings is being finalized.

### Investigating the connectivity between the sanctuary and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

The Hawaiian archipelago is the primary breeding habitat for the north Pacific humpback whale populations, but it is not known in what abundance whales use Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. In April 2019, sanctuary staff participated in a Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center cruise aboard the NOAA ship *Oscar Elton Sette* to explore the islands and banks of the monument for the presence of humpback whales. Approximately 180 whales were sighted, including 13 calves. The data will shed light on the connectivity among whales across the archipelago and of the north Pacific.

### Sanctuary continues efforts with NOAA Fisheries in Alaska to reduce large whale entanglement threat

Since 2005, the sanctuary has provided large whale entanglement response training and associated outreach and response preparedness to NOAA Fisheries Protected Resources Division in Alaska. The training supports future attempts to safely free large whales from life-threatening entanglements, and help gather valuable information that may reduce the frequency and impact of entanglement in the future. This past season focused on training, with 8 training sessions from Kodiak to Ketchikan, Alaska.

### Looking Ahead to FY20

- The Kauai Ocean Discovery learning facility opened on January 11, designed to share the traditions and knowledge of our ocean connections and inspire stewardship. The visitor center is a unique partnership with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and the Kukui Grove Shopping Center.
- Increased use of small Unmanned Aircraft Systems, in partnership with the Center for Collaborative Unmanned Technologies and Planck Aerosystems, will assist in the sanctuary's efforts to free whales from life-threatening entanglements and help the sanctuary's monitoring and research efforts.
- Working with the Hawaii Department of Education, the sanctuary will provide opportunities for teachers to participate in workshops to learn curriculum and activities focused on Hawaii's marine environment and resources.