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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Ocean users urged to use care as abundance of mother/calf pairs are seen in Hawai'i**

An abundance of mother/calf pairs have been recently observed in Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary and nearby waters.

Humpback whale season in Hawai'i generally runs from November through May, although whales may be encountered in limited numbers during other months. Thousands of humpback whales return to Hawaiian waters each year to breed, give birth, and nurse their young.

With recent reports of multiple mother/calf pairs in Hawai'i, ocean users are reminded to keep a safe distance from these annual visitors to the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. Collisions with vessels are a risk to both the animals and humans.

Boaters are reminded to post a lookout at all times throughout the year, not just when whales are visiting our waters. An extra set of eyes scanning the waters ahead and to the side of a boat can prevent collisions with marine life, obstructions, divers and other vessels. Slower speeds may also reduce the risk of collisions with the animals.

Humpback whales are protected in Hawai'i. Federal regulations prohibit approaching within 100 yards of whales when on the water, and 1,000 feet when operating an aircraft. These and other regulations apply to all ocean users, including vessel operators, kayakers, paddle boarders, windsurfers, swimmers and divers throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

Ed Lyman, Natural Resource Management Specialist for the sanctuary, said "ocean users are a great resource in helping monitor the humpback whales in the sanctuary and nearby waters. By locating distressed animals, reporting and providing the initial documentation and assessment on the animal, ocean users are the foundation of our conservation efforts."

If you come across an injured or entangled marine mammal, please maintain the required safe and legal distance, and call the NOAA Marine Mammal Hotline at 1-888-256-9840 immediately, or the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF channel 16. If reporting a suspected approach zone violation, please call the NOAA Fisheries Enforcement Hotline at 1-800-853-1964. Additional guidelines and safety tips can be found at <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>.

The sanctuary is administered by a partnership of NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the State of Hawai'i through the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR). The sanctuary works to protect humpback whales through research, education, conservation and stewardship. Join us on [Facebook](#).

**On the Web:**

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary:

<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

State of Hawai'i Division of Aquatic Resources: <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dar/>

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