



Save Our Seal Campaign Organizations

PONO * The Snorkel Bob Foundation * Marine Conservation Biology Institute * Conservation Council for Hawaii
Surfrider Foundation Hawaii * Maui Tomorrow * Sierra Club Hawaii * Life of the Land * Hawaii Audubon Society * Earthtrust
Lost Fish Coalition * Malama O Puna * Greenpeace Foundation Hawaii * Hanalei Watershed Hui * Center for Biological Diversity
Hui Ho'omalua I Ka Aina * The Humane Society of the United States * Humane Society International * Save Our Seas

Management Plan Review Coordinator
Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary
6600 Kalaniana'ole Highway Suite 301
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96825

Submitted via email: hihwmanagementplan@noaa.gov
October 15, 2010

**Re: Comments for Review of Management Plan/Regulations [75 FR 40759]
Expand the scope of the Sanctuary to include the Hawaiian monk seal and the monk seals Main Hawaiian Islands habitat.**

Dear Management Plan Review Coordinator:

The Save Our Seal (SOS) Campaign is a consortium of conservation and cultural groups working to recover the critically endangered Hawaiian Monk Seal. The SOS Campaign supports the expansion of the scope of the Hawaiian Humpback Whale Sanctuary to include the protection of Hawaii's endemic monk seal. The SOS consortium also recommends expanding the geographic boundaries of Hawaii's Sanctuary to include all Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI). SOS is especially concerned with the health of the main island's rural near shore reef and shoreline habitat where the seal's are able to survive.

The inclusion of the seal in Hawaii's Whale Sanctuary would help to build the public awareness that is essential to the seal's recovery. There are only about 1,000 Hawaiian monk seal left on the planet and the population is declining at a rate of approximately 4% annually in their primary northwestern islands habitat. Although the Main Hawaiian Island (MHI) seal population is only 100 to 150, this small population does not face the hardships of malnutrition and shark predation that is rapidly depleting the northwest islands population. The inclusion of the monk seal in Hawaii's Whale Sanctuary would help to increase the MHI population and compensate for the rapid loss of juvenile seals in the northwestern islands.

The Humpback Whale Sanctuary's educational programs for Hawaii residents and visitors have raised awareness of the whale's plight over the past two decades. We know that similar education and outreach would greatly benefit the monk seal. The Sanctuary already has an outreach and education "arm" in motion that has the capacity to produce educational media and an understanding of the strategies needed to reach diverse ocean stakeholders. Accurate monk seal information needs to reach all ocean users including surfers, paddlers, boaters, swimmers, snorkelers, divers, fishers, educators, students, and tourists.

Over the past three years, The Save Our Seal Campaign has met with rural community leaders throughout Hawaii and we have found that Hawaii residents are not aware that monk seals are

endemic to Hawaii and that the small population is struggling to survive. In 2009, three gun shot killings occurred one after another on Kauai and Molokai. The misinformation and a myth that seal's are "stealing fish" needs to be immediately countered with accurate information. Public education and media outreach for the monk seal is important to offset the news of these tragic events perpetrated by misinformed and disturbed individuals. Residents and visitors have a legal and moral responsibility in the recovery this federally protected species. But they cannot act on this responsibility without good information.

Please expand the scope of Hawaii's Sanctuary to include the protection of this unique marine mammal and include in this expansion an adequate budget to assist in a comprehensive outreach and education program within the Hawaii Sanctuary Management Plan to build awareness of the critically endangered Hawaiian monk seal.

Mahalo nui loa,
Save Our Seal Campaign
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