

September 20, 2010

To: Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

From: Trisha Kehaulani Watson, JD, PhD



Re: Comments on Management Review Plan

Review of Past Practices

The Native Hawaiian culture has not been a priority of the HIHWNMS.

Sanctuary documents are largely absent information on the First People of Hawai'i. Despite some rhetoric of wanting to include Native Hawaiian culture and community, Hawaiian knowledge does not get meaningfully integrated into the sanctuary's activities. This is not only inappropriate from a cultural or community perspective, but leaves the management lacking from a scientific and management perspective. It is widely accepted that First People have much to offer western science in the way of data collection and management.

Recent Activities

I was disappointed to read the 2010 Conditional Report and find it largely absent content or participation from the Native Hawaiian community. The activities and management of the area / programs continues to lack involvement and integration of Native Hawaiian practices and knowledges at a level otherwise becoming standard in Hawai'i.

Native Hawaiian knowledge and participation should be integrated into all areas of the sanctuary, most importantly:

- Resource Protection
- Education and Outreach
- Science
- Management
- Maritime Heritage

Future Need

SAC

The SAC is beginning to make incremental improvements towards better including the Native Hawaiian community in the advisory council. The additional of a Native Hawaiian working group would go a long way to improving the sanctuary's use of Hawaiian knowledges as long as there is implementation of the working group's input at the staff and programming levels.

Staffing Needs

The HIHWNMS needs cultural and community specialists. The recent issues that have emerged on some of the island communities are reflective of staffing deficiencies, not necessarily in educational qualifications, but in cultural knowledge and community relations qualifications. Areas where Hawaiian knowledge could and should be easily implemented would be education and outreach. While there is fishpond curriculum, this and its related pieces are not enough. I would advise hiring a Hawaiian education specialist to develop curriculum

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and provide outreach. It would be important to hire someone with substantial Hawaiian cultural knowledge and strong ties to the local community.

Resource / Management Needs

Directed Inclusion of Hawaiian Issues and Practices in the Management Plan

The management plan needs to include Hawaiian issues and practices. These should be integrated completely and effectively into all areas of management.

- Resource Protection
- Education and Outreach
- Science
- Management
- Maritime Heritage
- Cultural Heritage

I would suggest removing “cultural heritage” and instead integrating Hawaiian culture into all areas – Resource Protection, Education and Outreach, Science, Management – and create a single “Heritage” category. The plan needs to be more fluid and wholly inclusive of Hawaiian practices and knowledges.

Conclusion

The scoping process has brought to light the many concerns in the Hawaiian and fishing communities about the sanctuary. I believe there are many honorable members of the Hawaiian community who deserve better opportunity to dialogue about the sanctuary, its goals, management, and roles. There needs to be better dialogue. There needs to be better outreach. There needs to be better communication. I believe much of this could be resolved by implementing some of the staffing recommendations I provided above.

While I oppose closing the sanctuary, I do understand why that sentiment is felt in the community. There is a great deal of frustration and/or confusion as to who is the sanctuary is and what they do. While certain marine resources have been managed well, the management team has yet to learn to effectively manage cultural and community resources. I also believe that the jurisdiction of the sanctuary should not be expanded, whether via expansion to increase geographic area nor via the inclusion of additional species. I believe that the sanctuary must learn to better manage their existing jurisdiction through better community partnerships and educational programs that effectively include and integrate Hawaiian cultural knowledge before any jurisdiction expansion should be considered.

Further, I do not think it continues to serve the sanctuary to only serve a single species, rather it should provide programming, educational and outreach support for all protected species in the area. I would therefore remove the Humpback Whale specificity and rename the area is “Hawaiian Islands National Marine Sanctuary.”

The sanctuary has tremendous potential. Rather than expanding, it should take this review opportunity and the upcoming years to refocus on what it has done well and what it should be doing better.