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**MEDIA STATEMENT**  
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### **Volunteers Count Whales in Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary**

Over 800 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O'ahu, Kaua'i, and Hawai'i Island during today's annual Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Count. The count is a yearly shore-based census that provides snapshot data on humpback whales. Participants tally humpback whale sightings and document the animals' surface behavior during the survey.

Volunteers collected data from 59 sites statewide. A total of 267 whales were seen during the 11:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. time period, the most of any time period throughout today's count (57 sites reported data). Weather conditions and sea states were ideal for viewing humpback whales, but fog made seeing whales at a distance difficult.

Preliminary data detailing whale sightings by site location is available at: <http://www.sanctuaryoceancount.org/resources/>

Two more Sanctuary Ocean Counts are scheduled to take place on Saturday, February 23 and March 30. For more information on becoming a Sanctuary Ocean Count volunteer visit <http://sanctuaryoceancount.org> or <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov> or call 1-888-55-WHALE ext. 253.

The sanctuary which is administered by a partnership of NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the State of Hawai'i through the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), protects humpback whales and their habitat in Hawaiian waters where they migrate each winter to mate, calve, and nurse their young.

**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 Department of Land and Natural Resources: <http://hawaii.gov/dlnr/>