

December 11, 2013 SANCTUARY SUPERINTENDENT STATEMENT:

HIHWNMS Whale Disentanglement

Young humpback whale freed from entangling line in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

A young humpback whale, heavily entangled in longline monofilament, had most of that life-threatening line removed by NOAA's Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program team off Kihei, Maui on Wednesday December 10, 2014. The response effort was coordinated by the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, and involved trained personnel from the sanctuary, NOAA Fisheries, NOAA Corps, Hawaii Wildlife Fund.

The entangled whale was likely a yearling and had multiple wraps of heavy gauge, red monofilament longline wrapped around its tail, with bundles of gear trailing. The lines were wrapped around and cutting into the tailstock, resulting in deep wounds. The animal was thin, covered with parasites, and had shark bites on its tail.

The initial report came from the Maui County Ocean Safety Life Guards. They were able to monitor the 30-foot whale until the authorized response team arrived aboard the sanctuary response vessel *Kohola*.

Using knives on a long pole and a cutting grapple, the team was able to remove nearly all of the entangling gear, and it is hoped the remaining line will be shed over time. The recovered gear will be analyzed to better understand the impacts of entanglement, in an effort to reduce the threat in the future.

This is the first large whale entanglement response of the 2014-15 whale season as the humpback whales return from summer feeding grounds in Alaska. Entanglement is one of the major threats to these animals.

If you see an entangled or distressed whale, please call the NOAA Fisheries Hotline at 888-256-9840 or radio the U.S. Coast Guard on channel 16. Do not approach the animal, and maintain the required 100 yds.