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

Over 650 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 57 sites statewide. A total of 287 whales were seen during the 9:00 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. time period, the most of any time period throughout today's count (54 sites reported data). Weather conditions caused cancellations at a few sites, but overall, viewing around the state was fair.

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

One more Sanctuary Ocean Count is scheduled to take place on Saturday, March 30. For more information on becoming a Sanctuary Ocean Count volunteer visit sanctuaryoceancount.org or 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/>