

**March 13, 2014 SANCTUARY SUPERINTENDENT STATEMENT:**

**Public actions to remove gear and buoys from entangled Ni‘ihau whale extremely dangerous**

The region’s Large Whale Entanglement Response Network has been informed that well-meaning members of the public may have removed some trailing gear and buoys from an entangled humpback whale that was reported off Ni‘ihau on Tuesday.

Officials warn that such intervention by unauthorized and untrained members of the public is extremely dangerous and not allowed. For the animal's and human safety, federal law prohibits approaching any humpback whale within 100 yards or less in Hawaiian waters. Only trained and well-equipped personnel are authorized under a NOAA Fisheries permit to mount responses.

While the efforts may have helped the animal off Ni‘ihau, they may also do harm and impede removal of any remaining gear. Wraps of gear that remain behind are likely still lethal. In addition, removing trailing gear and buoys makes it difficult to re-locate the animal.

An authorized response involves a boat-based technique that uses specialized tools to safely free the animal and at the same time gain valuable information towards reducing the threat for other animals in the future.

Members of the on-water community have assisted and can continue to assist by reporting sightings of entangled or otherwise compromised whales to the NOAA Fisheries/ Marine Mammal Hotline at [\(888\) 256-9840](tel:8882569840), or the U.S. Coast Guard on channel 16.