

April 7, 2014 SANCTUARY MEDIA STATEMENT:

Subadult Humpback Whale Freed of Life-threatening Entanglement in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

Yesterday a NOAA-led response team successfully freed an entangled humpback whale off Lahaina, Maui. This was a different animal than the ones reported on last week.

The entangled subadult humpback whale was first seen and monitored by Pacific Whale Foundation's *Ocean Discovery* in the morning of Sunday, April 6, 2014. Ultimate Whale Watch's *Wiki Wahine* and West Maui Rapid Response Team's response vessel, *Aloha Kai*, also assisted to monitor the entangled whale before an authorized response team on board the sanctuary's response vessel, *Koholā*, arrived at the scene.

The entanglement involved a braided line running through the animal's mouth, and trailing approximately 120 feet behind to a pair of buoys on one end of the line. While the animal was still in good condition, the entanglement was life threatening, and would have impacted the animal's ability to feed on its return to high-latitude feeding grounds.

Around 12:30 pm, the response team was able to entirely free the animal of all gear by adding dragging buoys to the gear on the one side of the body. With the other side being buoy-free, the team was able to literally pull the line from the animal's mouth, freeing it of all gear. The animal is expected to make a full recovery and was last seen heading north, perhaps back to its feeding grounds – a journey that will be much easier now that it is no longer entangled.

The efforts were led by the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, working closely with trained personnel from NOAA Fisheries, NOAA Corps, the West Maui Rapid Response Team and trained responders. Special thanks to the tour vessels of Pacific Whale Foundation and Ultimate Whale Watch for monitoring the whale and making this a successful case.

If you come across an injured or entangled marine mammal, please maintain the required safety distance of 100 yards and call the NOAA Marine Mammal Hotline at [\(888\) 256-9840](tel:8882569840), or the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF channel 16.