

## **February 19, 2014 SANCTUARY MEDIA STATEMENT:**

### **Adult Humpback Whale Freed of Life-threatening Entanglement in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary**

On the morning of Wednesday, February 19, 2014, a response effort to free an entangled humpback whale off Lahaina, Maui, was mounted and the animal was successfully disentangled.

The humpback whale had been first sighted several times off the island of Hawai'i over the last week. On Sunday, February 16, an authorized response team was able to assess the entanglement and attach a transmitter package to the gear.

On February 19, 2014, the animal was re-sighted off Lahaina, by Ultimate Whale Watch tour vessel who stood by along with the West Maui response vessel Aloha Kai until the authorized response team arrived at 9:20 a.m.

The entanglement was wrapped around the whale's mouth and head, and along the right pectoral fin. A long pole with a specially designed hook knife was used by trained and permitted personnel to cut through the entanglement. Hundreds of feet of small gauge line were collected after the successful disentanglement.

The entanglement was considered life threatening and the whale is confirmed to be totally free of gear. Even though the animal is in poor condition, being emaciated and light in color, it has a much better chance of survival.

There is the possibility that this is the same humpback whale reported by a commercial fisherman off the windward side of Hawai'i island over a week ago.

The efforts were lead by the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, working closely with trained personnel from NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, State of Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources, NOAA Corps and the West Maui Response Team. Special thanks to the Hawaii Marine Mammal Consortium, Jupiter Foundation, Ocean Sports, The Nature Conservancy and the tour vessels Ultimate Whale Watch and Wild Hawaii Ocean Adventure.

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 channel. 16.