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Hawai`i resident earns national volunteer award for service in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

Will be honored at Ocean Awards Gala in Washington, D.C.

Silver Spring, Md. – Maui resident Robyn Walters has been selected the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) 2014 Volunteer of the Year for her exceptional contributions to the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. She will be recognized with other honorees, U.S. Senator Carl Levin and Joint Ocean Commission Initiative co-chairs William Ruckelshaus and Norm Mineta, on June 10 in Washington D.C., and has been invited to deliver remarks on her work and importance of volunteerism for national marine sanctuaries.

Walters has been volunteering with the national marine sanctuary in Hawaii since 2010 and logged more than 450 service hours in 2013 alone. She serves in many different roles as volunteer: public lecturer; school group educational activities leader; visitor center docent; meeting organizer; sanctuary representative at community outreach events; speaker and participant on whale watch cruises; volunteer trainer and mentor; and leader in citizen science initiatives.

“Every year it is difficult to select only one of 14 tremendously qualified Volunteers of the Year from the sanctuary sites to recognize nationally. The service of all the sanctuary volunteers is truly inspirational, and recognizing the volunteer programs is one of the most important – and most gratifying – ways that the NMSF supports the national marine sanctuary system.” said NMSF President and CEO Jason Patlis.

Walters’ work supports the national marine sanctuary in Hawaii during a particularly important time, as the sanctuary is proposing to shift from a single species focus on humpback whales to an ecosystem-based approach, and as NMSF stands up its first chapter, the Hawai`i National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, to support the site.

“We could not be more proud of Robyn and all of the sanctuary volunteers that she represents,” said Malia Chow, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary superintendent. “Robyn’s commitment and dedication over the past years has been truly outstanding and we are thrilled that she is bringing this prestigious award home to Hawaii.”

Nationally, volunteers contribute more than 100,000 hours annually to the National Marine Sanctuary System in the areas of research, monitoring, enforcement, education and outreach, and management advisory.

“Robyn Walters embodies the selfless commitment of citizens in sanctuary communities nationwide who lend their time and expertise to help us achieve our mission,” said Daniel J. Basta, director, NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. “Our volunteers are an important part of our team and a reason for our success.”



The awards gala is held in conjunction with [Capitol Hill Ocean Week](#) (CHOW®), Washington's premier ocean-focused conference. CHOW 2014 will take place June 10-12 at the Newseum and bring together policymakers, industry leaders, academics, scientists, and conservationists to shape marine policy and provoke conversation about critical ocean and coastal issues.

CHOW 2014 and the Ocean Awards Gala are made possible by the generous support of [sponsors](#).

About NMSF: The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, was created to assist the federally managed National Marine Sanctuary Program with education and outreach programs designed to preserve, protect and promote meaningful opportunities for public interaction with the nation's marine sanctuaries.

About the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary: The sanctuary 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). The sanctuary works to protect humpback whales through research, education, conservation and stewardship.

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