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## **ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDS THAT HUMPBACK WHALE SANCTUARY CONSIDER ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT**

The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council (council) has recommended that the humpback whale sanctuary (sanctuary) consider expanding its focus from humpback whales and their habitat to the ecosystem as a whole. The recommendation is part of the sanctuary's management plan review process that is currently underway and comes out of reports presented to the council from working groups that have been considering new strategies to better inform sanctuary management.

The sanctuary is engaged in a process to review, evaluate, and update its management plan and will release a draft management plan for public comment in 2013.

The council asked the sanctuary, which is jointly managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the state Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), to look at a variety of recommendations as part of its future marine resource conservation efforts. The recommendations include consideration of special management areas and vessel speed limits, as well as increased collaboration with communities and state and federal agencies. The recommendations reflect an approach that considers the whole ecosystem, including humans and the environment, rather than managing one resource or issue in isolation.

The recommendations are the result of more than 60 working group meetings, several workshops, and 2,000 hours of voluntary service by technical experts, cultural advisors, and stakeholders during the past year.

"These management recommendations are a monumental achievement and a first for the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council," said Dr. Adam Pack, council chair and an associate professor at University of Hawai'i at Hilo. "The documents that contain our working group recommendations reflect the hard work and thoughtful consideration of a diverse team of dedicated members of our island community who have come together to help ensure a bright future for Hawai'i's marine resources.

"I support a management plan review process that takes into account our need to assess the biocultural resources of Hawai'i so that we can ensure use and enjoyment by residents and visitors now and into the future," said Governor Neil Abercrombie. "As co-manager of the sanctuary, the State of Hawai'i is committed to an open, public process that fully considers the uniqueness of Hawai'i's people, culture and environment, including the needs and perspectives of different islands and communities."

"NOAA is committed to working with the State of Hawai'i to conserve, protect, and enhance biodiversity, ecological integrity and cultural legacy of Hawai'i's marine resources," said Dr. Malia Chow, sanctuary superintendent. "We encourage the public to stay involved and continue to participate in shaping the future direction of the sanctuary."

(more)

“An ecosystem-based approach would allow the sanctuary to better support community efforts to protect and sustainably use their natural, cultural, and historic resources, and would also complement the current efforts of the state Department of Land and Natural Resources that are aimed at the holistic management of our watersheds” said Elia Herman, state co-manager of the sanctuary.

The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 1996 to ensure continuous public participation in the management of the sanctuary. The council’s 19 voting members and 15 non-voting members, who serve on a volunteer basis, represent a variety of local user groups, the general public, and state and federal governmental agencies. The council provides advice on the sanctuary’s resource protection, research, education, and outreach programs to the sanctuary superintendent and state co-manager. The opinions and findings of the council do not necessarily reflect the position of any individuals or agencies, including the sanctuary, NOAA, or the State of Hawai‘i.

The sanctuary was designated by an act of Congress in 1992 to protect humpback whales and their habitat, and is jointly managed by NOAA and the DLNR.

On the Web:

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary:

<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.facebook.com>