

January 28, 2017

Contact: Cindy Among-Serrao, 808-725-5923

Jean Souza, 808-651-1457

### **Ocean Count Promotes Awareness about Humpback Whales**

*Volunteers with Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Staff Sites on Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Hawai'i islands*

More than 527 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O'ahu, Kaua'i and Hawai'i islands during the first of the 2017 Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Count.

Ocean Count serves to promote public awareness about humpback whales, the sanctuary, and shore-based whale watching opportunities. The count is conducted three times per year during peak whale season and provides a snapshot of humpback whale sightings from the shoreline. Participants tally humpback whale sightings and document the animals' surface behavior during the survey.

Volunteers collected data from 48 sites statewide on January 28, 2017. A total of 70 whale sightings were seen during the 10:00 am - 10:15 am time period, the most of any time period throughout the day's count. Whale viewing conditions were nearly perfect statewide this morning. Many sites observed green sea turtles, spinner dolphins and sea birds. A couple of sites also observed flying fish and a Hawaiian Monk Seal.

Preliminary data detailing whale sightings by site location are available at: <http://www.sanctuaryoceancount.org/resources/>. Additional information is available on the sanctuary's website at <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>.

The sanctuary, which 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, protects humpback whales and their habitat in Hawaiian waters where they migrate each winter to mate, calve and nurse their young.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and our other [social media channels](#).

On the Web:

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary:

<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources: <http://hawaii.gov/dlnr/>

###