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The Marine Mammal Center to administer Hawaiian monk seal volunteer program on Maui in spring 2022

(KAILUA-KONA, HAWAI‘I – December 9, 2021) – The Marine Mammal Center will be expanding its Hawaiian monk seal outreach and education programs to Maui this spring, in coordination with NOAA’s Pacific Islands Regional Office.

The Center’s team currently manages the Hawai‘i Island monk seal volunteer response network and is excited to begin enhancing Maui’s existing network. These education and outreach efforts are being funded through a cooperative agreement with NOAA.

“With only a few hundred monk seals living in the Main Hawaiian Islands, the survival of each individual is critical to the recovery of the population,” says Dr. Jeff Boehm, CEO at The Marine Mammal Center. “We are honored to begin working with the Maui community, to learn from their experience and, together, to foster co-existence with monk seals and continue to conserve this endangered species in collaboration with NOAA.”

NOAA Fisheries’ current monk seal haul-out response volunteers on Maui will be welcomed into the Center’s ohana and will begin onboarding into the Center’s volunteer program in early 2022. Recruitment for new volunteers is planned to launch in February. The Center hopes to be fully operational on Maui by spring 2022 and will continue to work closely with partners at NOAA.

The transition will provide time for the Center’s team to learn about the current Maui monk seal outreach efforts, which include responding to seal haul-outs, molting, and pupping events. It will also give the team time to engage with established volunteers and the broader community of monk seal stewards on Maui.

The Center values volunteer engagement and inclusivity, and is proud to welcome existing and new volunteers into its ohana to create an even more robust and diverse community of volunteers.

“Our Maui volunteers have been nothing short of amazing,” said Nicole Davis, NOAA’s Maui marine mammal response coordinator. “As we realign volunteer management to The Marine Mammal Center, I’m confident they will be in good hands. The Center’s depth of experience and resources will help create new opportunities for our volunteers to continue supporting these endangered seals.”

This transition is a testament to the long-standing working relationship between the Center and NOAA, and the positive impact that the Center has had on Hawaiian monk seal conservation. The Center will continue to partner with NOAA throughout and beyond the transition.

The Marine Mammal Center operates the only dedicated hospital for Hawaiian monk seals. Since 2014, the Center has rehabilitated 37 monk seals at its hospital, Ke Kai Ola, most of which have been rescued from and returned to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) as part of the partnership with NOAA, utilizing resources in the NWHI to identify seals in need, rescue and rehabilitate them, and give them a second chance at life. The Center's partnership with NOAA and other cooperating agencies is more important than ever to prevent this endangered species from becoming extinct. Approximately 30 percent of the 1,400 monk seals that are alive today are due to conservation efforts led by NOAA Fisheries and partners like The Marine Mammal Center.

How The Public Can Help

Visit MarineMammalCenter.org/volunteer for more information on becoming a volunteer. Also, remember to keep a safe distance of at least 50 feet from monk seals—on land and in water—and report monk seal sightings to NOAA's statewide toll-free hotline at 1-888-256-9840.

About The Marine Mammal Center

Headquartered on the site of a former Cold War missile base, The Marine Mammal Center is a global leader in marine mammal health, science and conservation, and is the largest marine mammal hospital in the world. The Center's teaching hospital and training programs operate globally, with its headquarters in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, part of the National Park Service. Expert teams from the Center travel around the world to work with emerging first responders and has itself rescued more than 24,000 marine mammals from 600 miles of its authorized rescue area of California coastline and the Island of Hawai'i. The Center's mission is to advance global ocean conservation through marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation, scientific research, and education.

For more information, please visit MarineMammalCenter.org. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).