



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

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### **Conference Builds Momentum for Protecting Marine Mammals Globally**

The First International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas concluded in Maui today with recommendations from the steering committee to continue the momentum built by conference workshops to address common challenges and share solutions for the management of marine mammals around the globe. The more than 200 marine mammal scientists, MPA managers and other experts from 40 countries agreed that this gathering in Hawaii was a valuable exchange of management practices and opportunity for networking.

An announcement that came out of the final proceedings included the opening of discussions to explore a bilateral “sister sanctuary” agreement between NOAA Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary and the Komandor Islands Biosphere Reserve in the Russian Aleutian Islands.

“An agreement between the sanctuaries will provide a mechanism to improve conservation and management of the North Pacific humpback whales that migrate between these two critical habitats,” said David Mattila, science and rescue coordinator of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary and the conference coordinator.

The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society announced the need for a worldwide effort to identify and define whale and dolphin critical habitats and hot spots and create MPA networks in national waters and on the high seas.

“Probably less than 1 percent of the world’s marine mammal critical habitat has been identified much less protected,” said Erich Hoyt, WDCS Research Fellow. “We have discussed strategies for cost-effective measures to attack this huge workload with surveys and other studies.”

An executive summary of the five-day conference will be available on [www.icmmpa.org](http://www.icmmpa.org). A document will be produced for presentation to the International Whaling Commission, and the full conference proceedings will be published and posted on the Web site.

The conference was hosted by the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs.

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ICMMPA: [www.icmmpa.org](http://www.icmmpa.org)

HIHWNMS: [www.hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov](http://www.hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov)

NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ia/index.htm>