



Pacific Islands Region

News Release

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NEWBORN MONK SEAL PUP ABANDONED ON KAUAI Pup Brought Into Captive Care Rehabilitation

Early yesterday morning NOAA Fisheries dispatched a team of recovery experts to follow up on reports of an abandoned monk seal pup in a remote area on the Island of Kauai. When they arrived on scene they found the pup alone on the beach and estimated that the pup is a male about one to two days old. Shortly afterwards, a female and male joined the pup. Attempts to reintroduce the pup to the female were unsuccessful as she exhibited aggressive behavior toward the pup and seemed more interested in the presence of the male. This female is the same one that abandoned a pup last year at about this time in the same location. The recovery team determined that the pup, if left alone, would have no chance of survival and made arrangements to transport it to Oahu for captive care rehabilitation. As they have done in the past, the U.S. Coast Guard provided transportation for the animal from Kauai to Oahu on a C-130 early this afternoon.

Although an extreme intervention, NOAA Fisheries considers the life of each and every monk seal precious as the population continues to decline at about 4% per year. It is estimated that less than 1200 Hawaiian monk seals remain.

NOAA Fisheries is assembling the best team of experts available and is relying on assistance from the Marine Mammal Center, a world leader in marine mammal care and rehabilitation with lots of experience with harbor seal neonates. The Marine Mammal Center also partnered with NOAA Fisheries on the successful rehabilitation in the captive care of monk seal twins two years ago.

“We’ve never dealt with a seal this young before and are guardedly optimistic because dealing with a neonate (newborn) is tricky business. The animal will be stressed and susceptible to disease so strict quarantine measures will be observed,” said Dr. Charles Littnan, NOAA Fisheries, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, Hawaiian Monk Seal Research Program.

“An operation like this takes the support of many people. NOAA Fisheries is fortunate to have partners like the Coast Guard, the Marine Mammal Center, and DLNR supporting us as we could not do this without their help. We continue to be amazed at how quickly the Coast Guard is able to respond to our requests and are grateful for their assistance,” said David Schofield, NOAA Fisheries, Pacific Islands Region, Marine Mammal Response Coordinator.

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NOAA Fisheries asks for the patience of the media as our experts will be busy tending to the needs of the pup in these critical first few days. Our researchers and experts will be available to answer questions about the pup at a media availability on Monday at 10:30 a.m. (Details will follow). NOAA Fisheries will provide photos and video of the pup since the animal is in quarantine and unavailable for viewing.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

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On the Web:

Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center: <http://pifsc.noaa.gov>

Pacific Islands Regional Office: <http://fpir.noaa.gov>