

NOAA Fisheries

National Marine Fisheries Service
Pacific Islands Region



Contact: Wende Goo
(808) 721-4098

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 27, 2006

North Shore Pup Successfully Weans and is Relocated

Hawaiian monk seal R5AY, who gave birth on the North Shore of Oahu, successfully weaned her pup late last week and left it to fend for itself; as all Hawaiian monk seal mothers do. On Sunday, a team of researchers and volunteers from NOAA Fisheries Service, Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, and volunteers from the Oahu Hawaiian Monk Seal Response Team and Hawaii Pacific University relocated the pup to an undisclosed location on Oahu where she will be with other monk seals and away from possible human disturbance.

RO32, as the seal is now tagged, was born on June 1, 2006 at a North Shore location frequented by tourists and locals. While monk seal pups have been born on Rabbit Island for the last three years this was the first seal born on Oahu in a public area since 1998.

The female pup is 136 cm in length with a girth measurement of 126 cm. It is estimated to weigh about 175 lbs. Researchers commented that she is in good condition and that her girth measurement is in the higher range of normal. Girth measurement is used by researchers as an indication of fat stores. Weaned monk seal pups rely on their fat stores to survive until they learn to forage for themselves.

Over 2000 hours of volunteer time was amassed during the seven weeks the mother and pup were watched over. Two to four person volunteer teams were on site daily from 8 a.m. to sundown observing the animals, collecting data, and performing outreach and education to passers by.

The mother, R5AY, has frequented both Oahu and Kauai since she was first identified as an adult in 2002. Her only other recorded pupping event was last year on Kauai. She is most frequently seen in the Hauula and Kualoa area.

In 2007 NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, celebrates 200 years of science and service to the nation. Starting with the establishment of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA. The agency 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 and more than 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management, and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the

nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

On the Web:

Pacific Islands Regional Office: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/pir/>

Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center: www.pifsc.noaa.gov

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

###