



Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Monk Seal Found Dead in Lay Gillnet

NOAA Fisheries conducted a necropsy on an adult male Hawaiian monk seal yesterday after it was found entangled in a lay gillnet. Although the animal did not have tags the approximately 450 lb seal was identified by its markings as an adult male that was regularly sighted in the Kaena Point area.

Late Sunday evening, DLNR Conservation officers responded to a report of a dead Hawaiian monk seal entangled in an unattended lay gillnet in the waters off Makua Beach. Responding officers located the body but were challenged by the presence of another monk seal that refused to leave the side of the dead seal. After the officers successfully brought the dead animal ashore, a second monk seal hauled out alongside the dead seal and remained there barking loudly at people as they approached. A third seal was sighted in the water but did not come on the beach.

The seal was transported to a facility where Dr Robert Braun, NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center contract veterinarian, conducted a necropsy on Monday morning. Dr Braun reported, "Although the results are still preliminary, the findings are consistent with a drowning." The seal appeared to be in excellent condition. The body was tightly wrapped in a net with no other significant findings.

Recently passed lay gillnet regulations mandate that nets not exceed 125' in length. The nets must be anchored, floated on both ends, and be registered with identification numbers attached to it. Within a 24 hour period, a net can remain in the water for no more than a four hour period. After the first two hours the net must be physically checked and after four hours the net must be removed. No lay gillnet can be left unattended for more than 30 minutes and can only be set during daylight hours. For more complete regulations on lay nets please go to www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/dar

The public is reminded that we all need to be proactive for the benefit of these endangered animals. Monk seals are among the oldest marine mammal species in the world and thought to have been in this region for about 15 million years.

It is imperative for beach goers, recreational fishermen, and divers to be aware that though they may appear docile, Hawaiian monk seals can be aggressive and have been known to injure individuals. In the best interests of the seal and public safety, it is recommended that people stay at least 150 feet away from monk seals on the beach.

Anyone with information on this incident or any illegal or unattended nets can report it anonymously 24 hours a day and 7 days a week by calling the DLNR Enforcement Hotline at 643-DLNR.

To report an entangled or otherwise injured seal call NOAA's Marine Mammal Hotline at 888-256-9840.

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