

Despoiling Hawaii's unique sanctuary

IN AN ASTONISHING BUREAUCRATIC LOOPHOLE, MARINE AUTHORITIES ARE ALLOWING THE DUMPING OF TOXIC SEWAGE INTO A UNIQUE BREEDING AND CALVING SANCTUARY FOR HUMPBACK WHALES IN HAWAII

The Marine Connection recently received news from colleagues in Maui, Hawaii regarding whale-watching vessels dumping their sewage into a humpback whale sanctuary. Sharon Fairclo, one of the campaigners, reports from Maui.

Many people visit the Valley Isle to see the whales or join a whale-watching vessel and cruise through the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary during whale season for possibly 'an opportunity of a lifetime'. For whale lovers everywhere, this offers the awesome prospect of perhaps seeing a newborn humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) rise to the surface for its first breath – an unforgettable sight! However, before you visit or sail out to see the whales you might want to ask a very pertinent question.

Who would designate a national marine Sanctuary for endangered animals and then rule that tour vessels may dump their toilet sewage into this water?

The unpalatable answer is: NOAA (US Department of Commerce)! Naomi McIntosh, Manager of the Whale Sanctuary, has revealed that a loophole was purposely written into whale sanctuary rules to allow tour vessel operators to dump their toilet contents overboard. Ms McIntosh confirmed this to a member of the Maui-based group *Pump, Don't Dump*, whose volunteers are working for a No-Discharge Zone within the Sanctuary boundaries.

More than a million passengers annually book excursions on these vessels to see whales and other marine life, some of which are to be found nowhere else in the world. It is estimated that more than

1,000 gallons of tour vessel sewage has been dumped daily into this whale sanctuary and this figure does not include cruise ships! Toilet contents may include chemicals to treat the sewage, tissue, urine and human faeces. Human faeces can contain hepatitis, typhoid, intestinal parasites such as giardia and roundworm and scientists say that pharmaceuticals are excreted in human waste. All this is being dumped into the Sanctuary.

If your cruise trip includes the opportunity to snorkel, you'll be being dropped off into the very water where this dumping takes place!

Nearly the entire population of the North Pacific humpback whale (approximately 5,000) travels to Hawaii to the waters of this Sanctuary each winter to breed, give birth and nurse its young. According to NOAA, this area is 'critical to the survival' of the animal, yet it is formally allowing

this dumping to take place. The sanctuary is also frequented all year round by dolphins, threatened Green Sea turtles, and the critically endangered Hawksbill turtles and Hawaiian Monk seals. I am sure that visitors would be horrified to know that, completely unwittingly, they have contributed to this serious threat to the endangered humpback whale and to the pollution of the same marine environment that they so want to protect and enjoy.

It is fantastic to have the Marine Connection's support with our campaign – will you also join us to stop this outrageous despoilation?

Please visit <http://www.pumpedontdump.com> for contact details for Sanctuary and Hawaii Governmental officials and further information about how your action will help to redefine this invaluable Sanctuary. Thank you!

