

Pacific Islands Region Partners with Maui Ocean Center

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Pacific Islands Regional Office is pleased to announce an exciting partnership with Maui Ocean Center. Formalizing their collaboration with a Memorandum of Agreement, the two parties have joined together in their shared commitment to the conservation of Hawaii's precious marine ecosystems.

Hawaii enjoys the highest endemism of land and ocean species in the world. As Maui's sole public aquarium, Maui Ocean Center's mission is to foster understanding, wonder and respect for these unique marine ecosystems. Its underwater tunnel, where visitors can stroll through the 750,000-gallon open ocean exhibit and see many of these special creatures, is the only one in the state.



Maui Ocean Center's underwater tunnel gives visitors a fisheye view of the exhibit.

Maui Ocean Center has the largest collection of live coral in the world, and recently, the sanctuary program installed an underwater camera to capture the annual coral spawning event. Led by the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary's Maui Program Coordinator Patty Miller, staff placed a video camera installed in a state-of-the-art underwater housing and linked to a laptop controlling the camera into the coral display. At the same time, a projector displayed the live video feed onto an outdoor screen for the public to view. The coral spawned on cue, and visitors experienced an event few ever see. The spawning was also broadcast on KHNL-TV.



A docent shares a seastar at the Tide Pool exhibit

The Maui Ocean Center has supported the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries in other ways. They hosted an exhibit of National Geographic's Archipelago, a stunning photographic depiction of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, and have a sign showing the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, whose boundary is just offshore of their facility. Their Marine Mammal Discovery Center provides excellent and authoritative interpretation of humpback whale, monk seal and dolphin lore.

The Pacific Islands Region looks forward to a collaborative partnership with the Maui Ocean Center.

For more information about the Maui Ocean Center, go to www.mauioceancenter.com.

