

Donna Wieting  
chief of Marine Mammal Div.  
Office of Protected Resources, NMFS  
1315 E-W Hwy.  
Silver spring, MD, 20910-3225

Dear Donna Weiting;

Nov. 8, 1999

I am writing to you regarding the Navy's program to use u/w sound to track submarines.

The Navy came here to Kona, where I operate my year-round whale watching activity, during the 1997-8 Humpback season. I have been in operation here in Kona since the 70's and have included with this letter my brochure and card so that , hopefully, what I am writing to you will be believed.

Prior to the Navy's testing here in our waters we enjoyed a yearly increase in the numbers of Humpback whales visiting us. That was true during the testing season of 1997-8. The next season, 1998-9, showed a dramatic drop in numbers of Humpbacks in Kona waters. After reviewing my daily sightings logs for the 1997-8 vs. 1998-9 I determined that I saw, in 1998-9 only 67% of the numbers of Humpback whales that I saw in 1997-8! This occurred only along the lee coast of the island of Hawaii where the Navy had tested the previous season. The remaining areas of the Hawaiian islands reported excellent numbers of Humpbacks, at least equal to the previous year or as in the case of Kauai much greater.

To my knowledge the Navy did not do follow up research by observing the population count after the year of testing. Nor did they get any baseline population data prior to the season of testing. If that is the case the Navy has done extremely poor research .

The whale watching businesses along our coast took a financial hit last season because the word went out that there were very few whales to be seen in Kona. That's because, I believe, the whales remembered the testing. Will the whales stay away from Kona this year? We shall soon see. Just as important is the question - will the tourist not go whale watching on Kona waters because the word is out that Kona has few whales?

Sincerely,



Thomas Bottrell