

Notes from Dolphin-Human Interaction Meeting held on October 15, 2016 at the New Thought Center of Hawaii

Preamble:

Following two hearings held in Kailua-Kona on September 7 & 8, 2016 by NOAA titled “Enhancing Protections for Hawaiian Spinner Dolphins to Prevent Disturbance - Proposed Rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement” (see http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd_spinner_EIS.html), it became apparent there was little consensus amongst the local community on how to address NOAA’s proposal.

It was acknowledged by those who attended the public hearings that all stakeholders needed to come together to have their voices heard and to formulate an agreed response to NOAA’s proposals. It was evident that this was as much to do with the wellbeing of the spinner dolphins as it was to do with the wellbeing of a divided community.

In response to this, community member Asolaria Liberalis invited stakeholders within the community who had previously shown an interest to come together in the first of several meetings to address this issue. Nigel Patterson, a recent resident of Kailua-Kona was asked to facilitate the first meeting.

The objective of the first meeting was to build an environment of TRUST amongst those present. The facilitation thus focused on creating a culture of collaboration and respect between all attendees. Subsequent meetings will leverage off the environment of trust to then come to an agreed community response to NOAA’s proposal. NOAA are invited to participate in this process.

Stakeholders Identified and those Present:

52 in total attended (several stakeholders present had more than one area of interest)

- NOAA – 0
- DLNR – 0
- “Dolphinville” – 33
- Boat/Commercial operators – 5
- Those effected financially by the proposals – 23
- Local Hawaiians – 0 (represented by 1 proxy)
- Chamber of Commerce – 1
- Captive Dolphin Group – 0
- Independent Scientists – 2

Points Raised:

1. We need increased awareness around human-dolphin interaction, and those businesses that support a healthy interaction.
2. Education – how to behave appropriately during dolphin resting/activity phases
3. Co-operation amongst all stakeholders
4. Peace and harmony (with NOAA and within community)

5. Peaceful solution – united
6. How to contribute to community
7. Collaboration – consensus as community
8. Continue the practice as is (supported by 2 attendees)
9. Seek alternatives – not us (NOAA) vs. them (community)
10. What’s best for the dolphins – how to understand and respect their needs
11. Strength in bringing community together
12. Pragmatic deadline for comments (Oct 23rd) – request more time
13. Economic issues and the impact of proposed regulations
14. Would welcome local Hawaiian input
15. Create a dolphin forum
16. Need further clarification on NOAA’s motivation for proposals

Common Consensus

To seek an “Irresistible Agreement” amongst all stakeholders, embracing Aloha and clarifying Rules of Engagement with the dolphins.

Themes Emerging:

1. Education (rather than legislation)
2. Hawaiian Local Culture
3. Self-Regulation vs NOAA

Action Items:

1. Request extension to October 23rd deadline – individuals to request this via Website
2. Create sub-committees at next meeting (TBA) focusing on:
 - a. Community-based research
 - b. Education
 - c. Self-Regulation vs. legislation
 - d. Respect and integrate with Hawaiian local culture
 - e. Social media
 - f. Holding a space of Spirit
 - g. Others?

Follow up:

1. It was agreed that those present would contact NOAA as a matter of urgency to request an extension to the comment period.
2. A second meeting is to be convened within one month to progress the discussions. The purpose will be to reinforce common ground and seek ways to get closer to attaining an “Irresistible Agreement” with all stakeholders.

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