



2019  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



*Mahalo* (thank you) to our volunteers, partners, supporters, and the organizations that enable our work. Because of you, we've accomplished so much since our start and have had an incredible 2019. Since our first day as an organization in 2016 I have been so impressed by the hard work and determination of our volunteers, interns and staff who are devoted to the conservation, recovery, response, rescue and research of Hawaii's marine protected animals and the ocean. I am so proud to be a part of HMAR, and like me, I hope you will also appreciate our incredible accomplishments that you'll see in this report.

All of our team members, whether involved in our education, response, hotline operations, rescue, marine debris removal or other HMAR activities are working overtime to amplify the impact of our supporters more than ever. And although the challenges may be daunting, we will not simply accept the continued destructive impacts of humanity on our marine environment and the animals that call it home - impacts that will affect humans. To truly embrace our *kuleana* (responsibility) to the world around us, we'll continue working harder than ever. We're not just helping marine wildlife and the ocean - we're protecting our future.

Our mission still stands: to undertake substantial actions that result in the preservation, recovery, and stewardship of Hawaii's marine protected species and the ocean ecosystem we share. With your support we've been able to embrace this mission through multiple programs and dramatic accomplishments. And it's all because of you.

As we move forward into 2020, we will continue to strive towards our mission. We look forward to working with you to rise to this challenge.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Gelman".

**Jon Gelman**

President & Chairman of the Board of Directors

ABOUT  
**HAWAII MARINE  
ANIMAL RESPONSE**

Established in 2016, Hawaii Marine Animal Response (HMAR) is the largest Hawaii-based marine species response and conservation organization. HMAR is the field operations arm of Hawaii Marine Mammal Alliance, a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. We are deeply committed to advancing marine protected species\* and ocean conservation in Hawaii. Our efforts enable rescue, research, education, and conservation for the present and future to come.

Our primary goal is the reduction of human-caused threats to Hawaii's marine protected species and our ocean ecosystem. To achieve that goal we work to achieve three primary goals: (1) growing active community support, (2) managing and recovering protected animal populations, and (3) savings animals that need help.

We focus on marine life that is most likely to be most affected by humans, such as the highly endangered Hawaiian monk seal, sea turtles, seabirds, dolphins, and whales. Through our outreach, field response, interventions, rescue and stranding support programs, we work every day to move towards our shared vision of Hawaii's ocean ecosystem thriving through sustainable harmony between humans and marine animals.

\* Marine protected species are animals that are afforded special and additional support under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the Migratory Bird Treaties Act (MBTA) and other laws.



**OUR  
STORY**

HMAR began in 2016 as a response and outreach organization that focused solely on the endangered Hawaiian monk seal. What started as a mission to educate beach-goers about this at-risk species to inspire stewardship evolved into a multi-faceted organization committed to the full circle recovery of multiple species and the ocean ecosystem.

Over the years, we've expanded to include additional species and programs. In 2020, we are now engaged in conservation, education, response, rescue, stranding support, and habitat stewardship spanning six programs that positively impact over 35 different marine protected species.

Our efforts are focused primarily on Hawaii's most populated island, Oahu, where many human-related impacts to marine protected animals and the ocean are concentrated. While the issues we address are complex, we are determined to tackle them on all fronts.

**“The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Pacific Islands Coastal Program (PICP) considers HMAR an integral partner for response and protection of marine species on Oahu and elsewhere in the main Hawaiian Islands.”**

**Sheldon Plentovich Ph.D.**  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Pacific Islands Coastal Program

# MOTIVATION & VISION

Our ocean, the lifeline of our planet, is in trouble. In no other place in the country is the threat greater. Hawaii is known as the extinction capital of the United States, and human-related impacts are the primary threats to our ocean ecosystem and the marine protected species that call it home. Loss of any of these important species will have cascading effects on the rest of the marine environment, meaning our entire ocean support system is at risk. No matter where we live, humans are deeply connected with the ocean through the air we breathe, the food we eat, the climate we live in, and the choices we make.

We work towards an environment where humans, marine protected species, and the ocean ecosystem can sustainably coexist and support one another. All of HMAR's programs work synergistically to move us closer to being a community of stewards that will play a role in supporting the ocean. For HMAR, we see it as our *kuleana* (responsibility) in our community to take a proactive role in caring for the ocean and its inhabitants just as we would our own *ohana* (family). By protecting the sea and its animals, we are protecting ourselves and our future.

We want to leave behind a legacy of facing complex challenges to our environment and rising to the occasion by providing comprehensive solutions when and where they're needed most.

Together, we can be a wave of change.



**Nick Keffer**

Long time volunteer & intern, active in our Marine Debris Program, Marine Operation Program, Field Support & Outreach Program, and our Rescue & Stranding Response Program

**“As part of the HMAR team, I love being immersed in nature and being able to bring people closer to such incredible species. *Mauka to makai*, Hawaii has so much to appreciate and conserve for later generations.”**

# GROWTH & EVOLUTION

## 2016

- Organization formed
- NOAA cooperative agreement for Hawaiian monk seal program executed
- Start of Hawaiian monk seal conservation and stranding support project
- Start of Field Support & Outreach Program
- Start of Dispatch & Reporting Program
- Achieved GuideStar platinum rating

## 2017

- Added HMAR operating name
- NOAA cooperative agreement for sea turtle program executed
- Start of sea turtle rescue & stranding response project
- Start of Rescue & Stranding Response Program
- Start of Education & Engagement Program
- Start of Marine Operations Program
- Achieved GuideStar platinum rating for a 2nd year

## 2018

- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service cooperative agreement (multiple species) executed
- Start of sea turtle outreach & monitoring project
- Start of seabird outreach, monitoring & rescue project
- GuideStar platinum rating achieved for a 3rd year
- To date, nearly 150,000 people reached with outreach & education
- To date, over 7,000 field support actions conducted
- To date, nearly 400 rescues & escalations conducted

## 2019

- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service seabird rescue permit received
- Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources (DLNR) seabird rescue permit received
- Additional DLNR agreements signed
- Start of Marine Debris Program
- NOAA Stranding Agreement finalized
- GuideStar platinum rating achieved for a 4th year
- To date, over 250,000 people reached with outreach & education
- To date, over 12,000 field support activities conducted
- To date, over 700 rescues & interventions conducted

## 2020 Goals

- Federal and State of Hawaii seabird rehabilitation permits received
- Federal and State of Hawaii sea turtle rehabilitation permits received
- Sea turtle and seabird nesting habitat monitoring & remediation projects to begin
- Achieve a milestone of 300,000 people reached with face-to-face outreach & education
- Reach a milestone of 13,000 instances of field support activity conducted
- Attain a milestone of 1,000 rescues & escalations conducted

# KEY THREATS



“Since HMAR started in 2016, they have demonstrated a strong ability to develop and run effective conservation programs that aid in the preservation of Hawaiian monk seals, marine turtles, seabirds and the nearshore marine ecosystem.”

**Brian Neilson**  
 Administrator  
 State of Hawaii, Department of Land & Natural Resources  
 Division of Aquatic Resources

## KEY THREATS



**Habitat loss due to climate change** and related impacts affect the marine animals we work with in innumerable ways. With sea level rise threatening coastal nesting and pupping habitats, increasing storm surges destroying nests and other critical coastal areas, and warming ocean temperature threatening the health of the crucial coral reefs, climate change is the driving factor of habitat loss.



**Fishery interactions and marine debris** are some of the most significant threats to marine protected species and cause severe injury and death. Entanglements and ingestion incidents caused by materials and marine debris left behind such as hooks, netting and fishing line are an ever-looming danger for our native marine life.



Other growing threats, such as **human caused trauma, disease, and boat strikes**, are directly caused by humans. Our programs aim to educate, respond, and provide comprehensive action that minimizes the impact of disease on marine populations and connect our community to the ocean to improve stewardship.

Key threats to the marine animals we work with are primarily anthropogenic, or derived from humans. Each of our programs addresses these problems in unique and important ways.

### HOW HMAR PROGRAMS ADDRESS KEY THREATS

|                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Field Support & Outreach    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Rescue & Stranding Response |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Marine Debris               |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Marine Operations           |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Education & Engagement      |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dispatch & Reporting        |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### THREATS

|                      |               |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Fishery Interactions | Disease       |
| Boat Strikes         | Marine Debris |
| Human Caused Trauma  | Habitat Loss  |

Many of the threats to marine life are connected to one another, which is why HMAR applies a full-circle approach to conservation. With the growing impact and presence of these threats, there's no denying the increased critical need for action and support of our marine environment.

# WHERE WE ARE

To provide a truly impactful and comprehensive approach to our marine life conservation efforts, HMAR is engaged with devoted volunteers, interns and partners spanning six different programs.

## Field Support & Outreach Program

Our Field Support & Outreach Program conducts marine protected animal and habitat monitoring, collects critical field data for research and conducts face-to-face public outreach along shorelines. We share information with beach goers about marine protected species to inspire stewardship, and gather information to help monitor population and habitat health. Since our start, our team members in this program have provided field support more than 12,500 times and have reached more than 260,000 people with face-to-face outreach.

## Rescue & Stranding Response Program

Our Rescue and Stranding Response Program helps animals in distress to assess, disentangle, de-hook, transport for care, release into the wild, and facilitate scientific research to gain more insight on threats and improve species management plans. To date, our first responders have performed over 750 animal rescues and escalations.

## Marine Debris Program

Member of our team involved in our new Marine Debris Program dive the near-shore coastal waters of Oahu to remove hazardous threats to marine animals and proactively minimize impacts to marine life. We've removed hundreds of entanglement or hooking hazards since this program began in August 2019.

## Marine Operations Program

Our Marine Operations Program utilizes HMAR vessels and crews to support on-water response, habitat surveys, rescue, and transportation of injured or stranded marine animals in distress. Since this program began in 2017, we've conducted hundreds of hours of training and performed over 60 on-water missions.

## Education & Engagement Program

Our Education & Engagement Program visits community events, classrooms, and local businesses to connect our communities and inspire stewardship for Hawaii's marine life and our shared ocean. To date, members of this team have participated in over 200 school or community events reaching over 10,000 people.

## Dispatch & Reporting Program

Our Dispatch & Reporting Program manages our hotlines that receive thousands of calls every year from the public and government agencies to ensure we can mount the most appropriate field action needed. This program also records and shares data obtained in the field with government research and species management partners to help conservation and recovery efforts. To date, our Dispatch & Reporting Program has received over 30,000 hotline calls regarding marine protected animals that may need support.





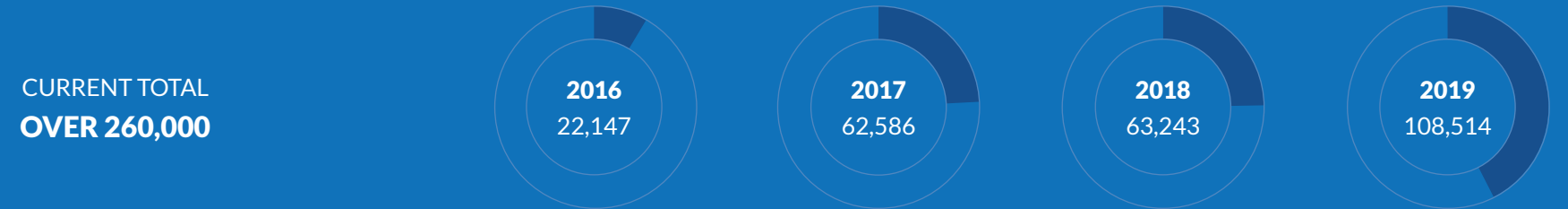
**Steve Depaoli**

Active volunteer in our Marine Debris Program, Rescue & Stranding Program, Marine Operations Program, and Field Support & Outreach Program.

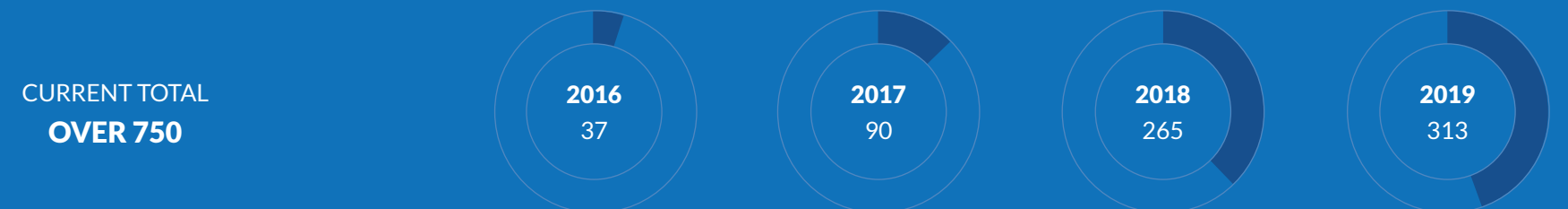
“HMAR is one of the best organizations if you want to work with and learn about the wonderful marine animals we are blessed with in the Hawaiian islands. Their well-structured training programs allow you to reach your full potential with their mission.”

## OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

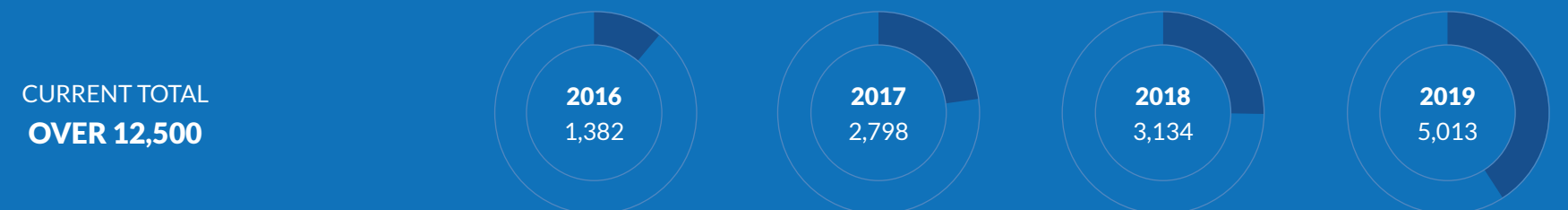
### TOTAL PEOPLE REACHED WITH OUTREACH & EDUCATION



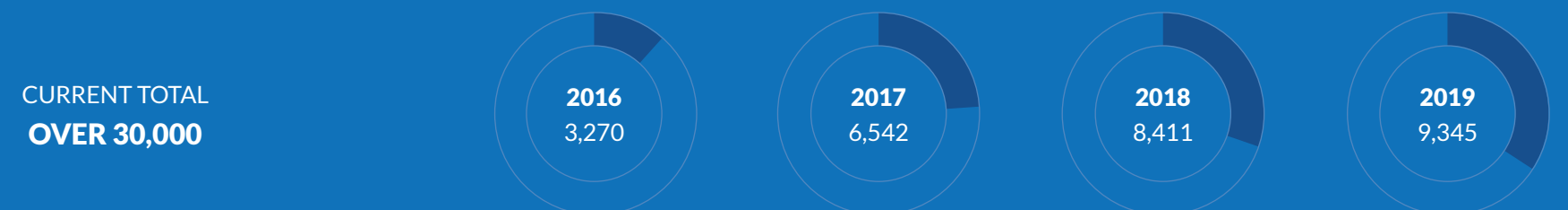
### ANIMAL RESCUES & ESCALATIONS



### INSTANCES OF FIELD SUPPORT ACTIVITY



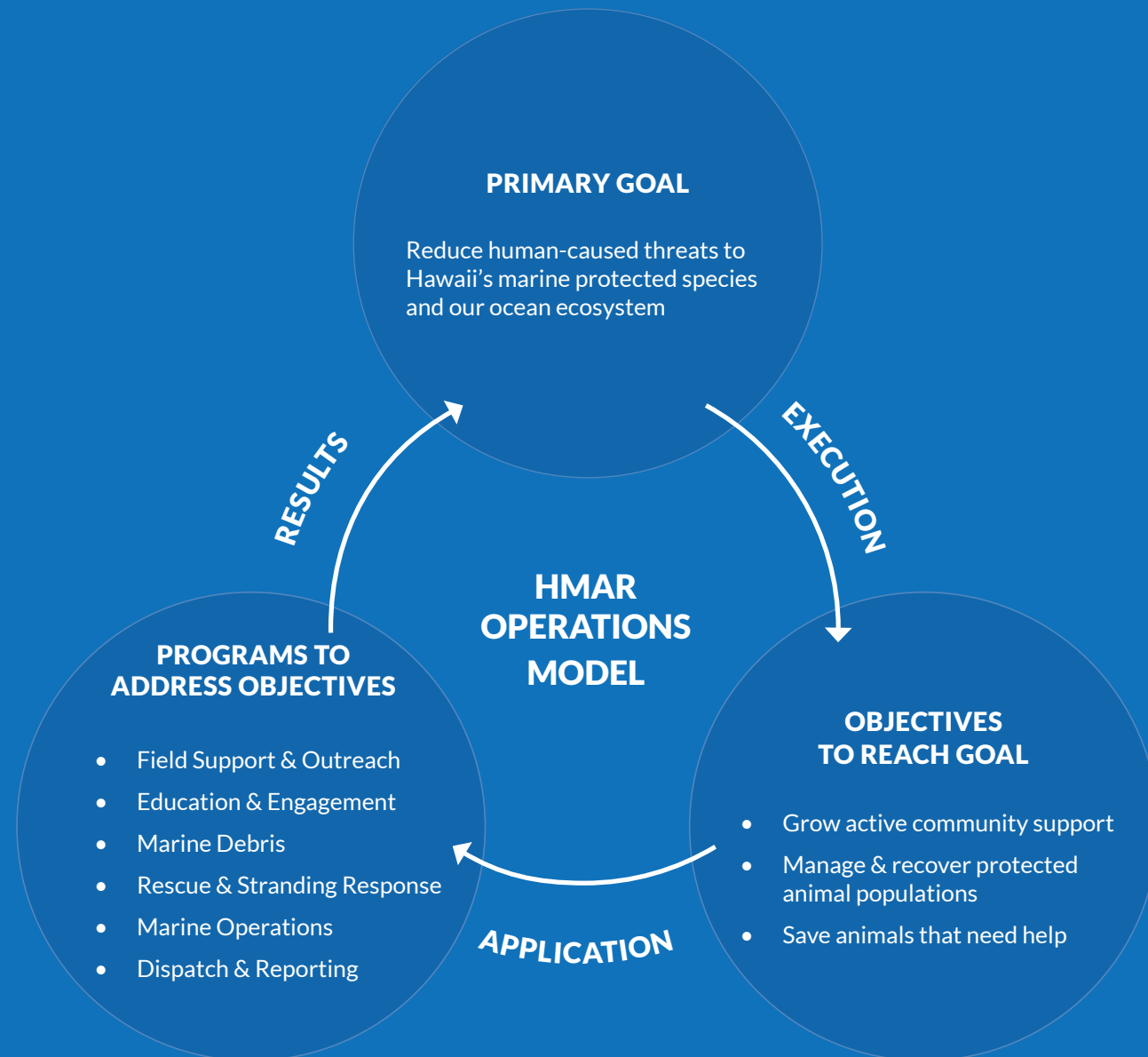
### HOTLINE CALLS ANSWERED





## THE HMAR OPERATIONS MODEL

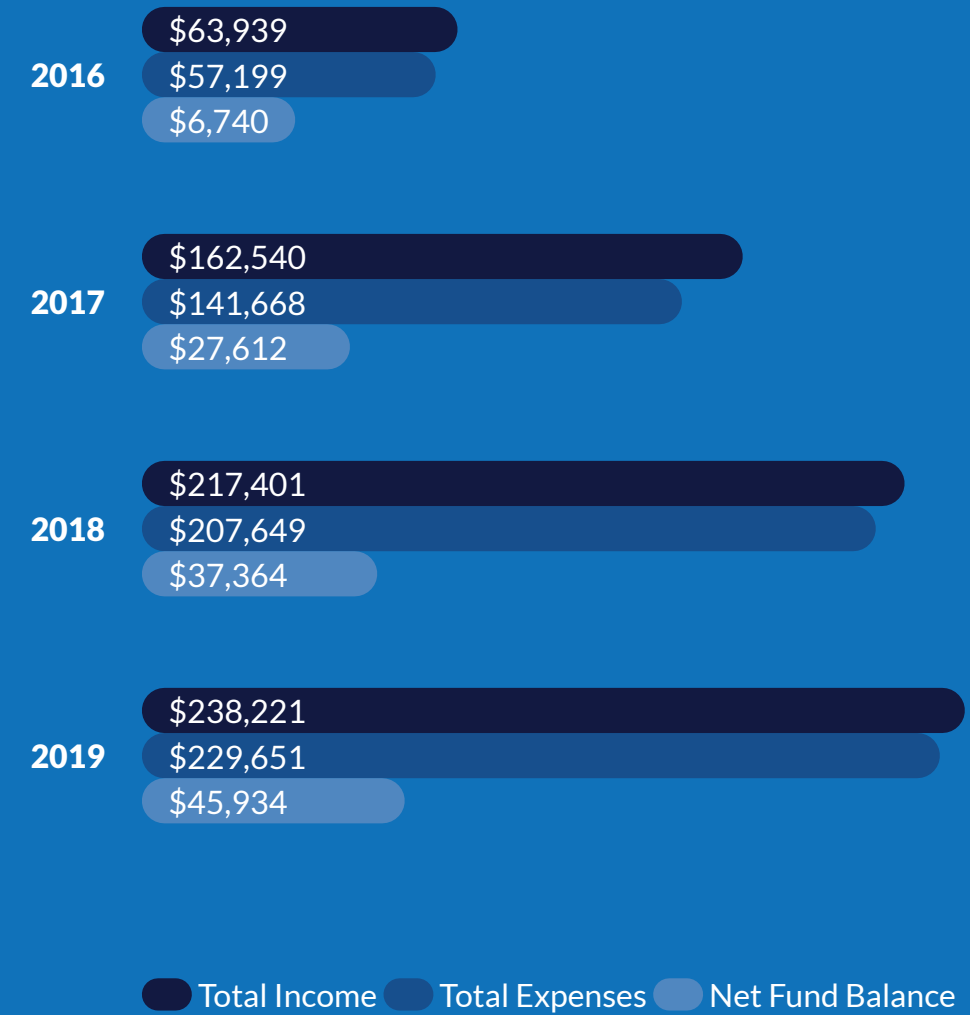
While HMAR is a non-profit organization, we strongly believe that we must be guided by a structured and rigorous application of principles used in successful for-profit businesses. This means strategically planning and tactically executing an operations model focused on specific goals, objectives and programs that will provide desired results. We also believe in carefully measuring our activity so we can be sure we are applying our financial and human resources most effectively. Our operations model allows us to focus our efforts and generate significant results year over year.



## HMAR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & DISCIPLINE

HMAR management understands that to achieve success as a non-profit organization, we need to embody the financial management and discipline incorporated by the most successful for-profit companies. We work hard to ensure our income from donations, grants, contracts and in-kind contributions are used in the most effective ways to honor our mission and the intent of our funding partners.

We closely monitor and manage spending and debt to ensure HMAR funding is used to maximize our positive impacts on Hawaii's ocean ecosystem and its marine protected species.



# ON THE HORIZON



The coming year brings new promises of hope to meet the challenges facing Hawaii's marine protected species and the ocean they call home. In addition to the significant program operations already underway, in 2020 and beyond we will increase our efforts and work harder than before to deliver positive impacts for the many people who contribute to our organization and to increase stewardship and conservation for our marine environment and animals. Thanks to you, we are continuing to grow and expand. Here are some projects we are embarking upon in 2020.

## Sea Turtle Nesting Habitat Survey and Improvement Project

Green Sea Turtles living around the main Hawaiian islands are at a uniquely critical position. Climate change and rising sea levels are impacting traditional sea turtle nesting grounds in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Therefore, identifying nests and improving sea turtle nesting habitat and outcomes in the main Hawaiian Islands, like Oahu, can protect this species from extinction.

## Seabird Nesting Habitat Surveys and Improvement Project

Several vulnerable seabird species face significant threats from invasive predators that decimate their ground-based nests. It is critical that we increase surveys and invasive predator controls to reduce increasing threats to our seabird nesting habitats.

## Fishing Debris Bins Project

As part of our growing Marine Debris Program, we have partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the State of Hawaii to divert fishing gear from ending up in our coastal ecosystem. By implementing fishing debris bins at heavily-used fishing locations, we can provide fishers the option to dispose of gear responsibly, help keep our ocean cleaner, and stop hooking and entanglement hazards from entering the ocean at the source.

## Hawaii Marine Science Center (HMSC)

Our ultimate goal is to bridge the full circle of marine protected animal conservation through education, response, rescue, rehabilitation, and release. To this end, HMAR is developing our Hawaii Marine Science Center (HMSC) project.

HMSC will be a centralized facility that focuses on ocean conservation education, marine animal rescue, rehabilitation, and recovery through an onsite marine animal hospital. HMSC will be a one-of-a-kind facility in the Pacific devoted to ocean literacy and marine protected animal support and recovery while providing a deeply personal and motivational experience for our guests.



**Robin Vinson**

Active volunteer in our Education & Engagement Program and Field Support & Outreach Program.

**“It has been a privilege to be able to empower children through outreach, awareness, and education. It is rewarding to see children want to actively make a difference for this planet, both land and sea, through acts of sustainability and stewardship.”**

# LEADERSHIP & STAFF

## STAFF



**Jon Gelman**  
President



**Dr. Micah Brodsky**  
Director of Development  
& Veterinarian



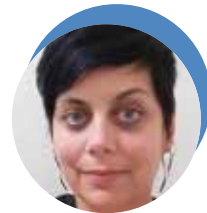
**Elisabeth Bogle**  
Field Support &  
Outreach Lead



**Carissa Cabrera**  
Programs  
Manager



**Christina Castaldo**  
Field Support &  
Outreach Lead



**Kristina Dauterman**  
Dispatch & Reporting  
Manager



**Nico Lopez**  
Field Operations  
Manager

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Jon Gelman**  
Chairman of the Board  
of Directors



**Whitney Beer-Kerr**  
Board  
Member



**Dr. Terry Norton**  
Board  
Member

## BOARD OF ADVISORS

Patrick Ching, Matt Kerr, Dr. Gregg Levine, Sarah Pifer, and Rachel Sprague Ph.D.

# WE WANT TO THANK YOU

We would not be where we are today without the generous and compassionate support from our team of volunteers, our corporate and private donors, and our government partners. This support allows us to continue to make significant impacts for Hawaii's communities, ecosystem, and beyond.

**“For over 3 years, HMAR has worked with NOAA under cooperative agreements to support protected marine animals, which for sea turtles, has included extensive field support to respond to stranded turtles. Our ability to collect scientific data to advance our knowledge of sea turtles is enhanced by our collaboration with HMAR and their efforts to strengthen sea turtle stranding response in Hawaii.”**

**Summer L. Martin, Ph.D.**

Leader, Marine Turtle Biology & Assessment Program  
Protected Species Division  
NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

We'd like to especially thank our network of collaborators, partners, and sponsors, including:



HAWAII TOURISM



HAWAII COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



TURTLE BAY



# HOW YOU CAN HELP

2019 was more than just a great year for HMAR. It was one of our many steps towards a greater focus on stewardship and conservation for our marine environment and the life that lives within.

While we are beyond thankful for the efforts of all of our volunteers and staff, and for the support of donors and funding partners, there's always more work to be done.

If you're ready to make real change possible through our organization and our education, response, rescue, conservation, or outreach programs, please consider doing any of the following.

## Donate

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Your generous donation of funds, supplies, equipment, vehicles, and in-kind services are the fuel that keep our organization running. HMAR is a volunteer-driven organization, and your support will go directly towards the preservation and stewardship of our marine protected species and our ocean.

[Learn more at h-mar.org/get-involved](https://h-mar.org/get-involved)

## Volunteer

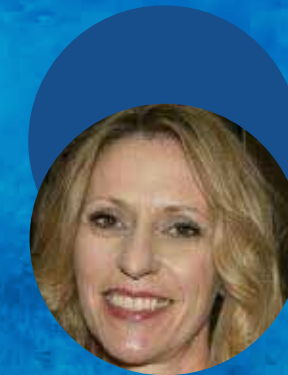
We're always looking for dedicated volunteers looking to make a lasting impact on the world around them and take strides to save our marine protected species and our shared ocean ecosystem.

[Learn more and apply to be a volunteer at h-mar.org/apply](https://h-mar.org/apply)

## Sponsor

Your company can become a corporate sponsor and help our efforts to support our marine protected species and the ocean in which they live. Our sponsors are creating a better world for our oceans and reducing man-made impacts, while enjoying well-deserved recognition for their support.

[Learn more at h-mar.org/sponsor-programs](https://h-mar.org/sponsor-programs)



**Seiglina Meyer**

Active volunteer in Field Support & Outreach Program and Rescue & Stranding Response Program.

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**“I’ve been with HMAR about a year and I joined HMAR because I had the desire to be a part of something bigger than myself. HMAR gives me that opportunity to give back to this beautiful island I call home.”**

Together, we can be  
a wave of change.



Learn more at [h-mar.org](http://h-mar.org)