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NOAA offers reward for info on the killing of a Hawaiian Monk Seal in April 2009

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement is offering up to \$5,000 for information leading to the successful arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for killing Hawaiian Monk Seal RI-19 on April 19, 2009. The 5-year-old male seal was found dead due to foul play on a remote beach near the town of Kaunakani, on the west side of the Island of Kauai.

"The killing of this endangered Hawaiian Monk Seal is not only a violation of federal law, but a crime against all the people who call Hawaii their home," said Special Agent in Charge William Pickering of NOAA OLE's Pacific Islands Division. "It is our hope that this reward will bring someone forward that can supply us with the information needed to arrest and convict those who would commit such a heinous act."

Hawaiian Monk Seals are protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, with about 1,200 estimated alive today. Under the ESA, it is illegal to unlawfully "take" – meaning to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect – or to attempt to engage in any such conduct with any endangered species or wildlife listed on the Endangered Species List. Violations can result in criminal and civil penalties of not more than \$50,000, a term of imprisonment of one year or both.

This is a separate investigation and crime from the one involving a pregnant Hawaiian Monk Seal that was killed May 21, 2009. Charles Vidinha of Kauai pled guilty in September to violating the Endangered Species Act and is currently serving time for that crime.

The mission of NOAA OLE is to ensure compliance with the laws and regulations enacted to conserve and protect our nation's marine resources. Those with information about the death of RI-19 should contact the NOAA OLE national hotline at 1-800-853-1964.