



PACIFIC
ISLANDS
FISHERIES
GROUP

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May 19, 2020

The Honorable David Y. Ige
Governor, State of Hawaii
Executive Chambers
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

To Honorable Governor David Ige,

On behalf of the Hawaii's Commercial Bottomfish fishermen the Pacific Islands Fisheries Group (PIFG) would like request the State of Hawaii to include in its economic aid discussion support for the bottomfish fishermen that have been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand the State of Hawaii will receive Federal funds through NOAA to support fisheries across the State and is now working on how and to whom the funds will be distributed. Bottomfish fishermen across the State provide fresh, healthy and culturally important opakapaka, onaga, ehu and other deep water snappers that are prized by our local community and visitor industry.

PIFG has worked with this community for the last 10 years conducting Cooperative Fisheries Bottomfish Research throughout the Main Hawaiian Islands and recently conducted a Statewide survey of commercial bottom fishermen on the impacts of Covid-19. The survey indicates that the majority of the commercial bottomfish fishermen have lost their local markets (restaurants, hotels and wholesale buyers) as the tourism industry shut down and government imposed restrictions. These fishermen are small independent businesses that are required to maintain Commercial Marine Licenses and report their catch and fishing activities to the Division of Aquatic Resources. The drop in fishing activities as compared to prior years can be verified through this State monitoring system. Most of the bottom fishermen surveyed have shutdown commercial bottomfish operations completely as of April and will likely continue to be shut down until the markets resume.

However, some fishermen continue to bottomfish on a reduce level and have taken a substantial reduction in prices that barely covers operating expenses for each fishing trip. These fishermen continued to fish to provide food for family, friends and the community as this has been the tradition of local fishermen in Hawaii. Your concern and consideration to support for Hawaii's Bottomfish fishermen as you consider economic relief for Hawaii fishermen will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Neil Kanemoto
PIFG President

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