

189th WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING

DECEMBER 7-9, 2021

STATE OF HAWAII, DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
DIVISION OF AQUATIC RESOURCES

REPORTING PERIOD: AUGUST 2021 – OCTOBER 2021

1. FISHERIES**DEEP-7 (2020-2021)**

The 2020-2021 season of the Main Hawaii Island Deep-7 fishery ended on August 31, 2021. In total, 320 commercial fishers reported 2,094 trips and caught a total of 163,940 pounds of mixed Deep-7 species. Catch throughout the season tracked relatively close to that of the previous (2019-2020) season but ultimately exceeded it by approximately 3,000 pounds (Figure 1.).

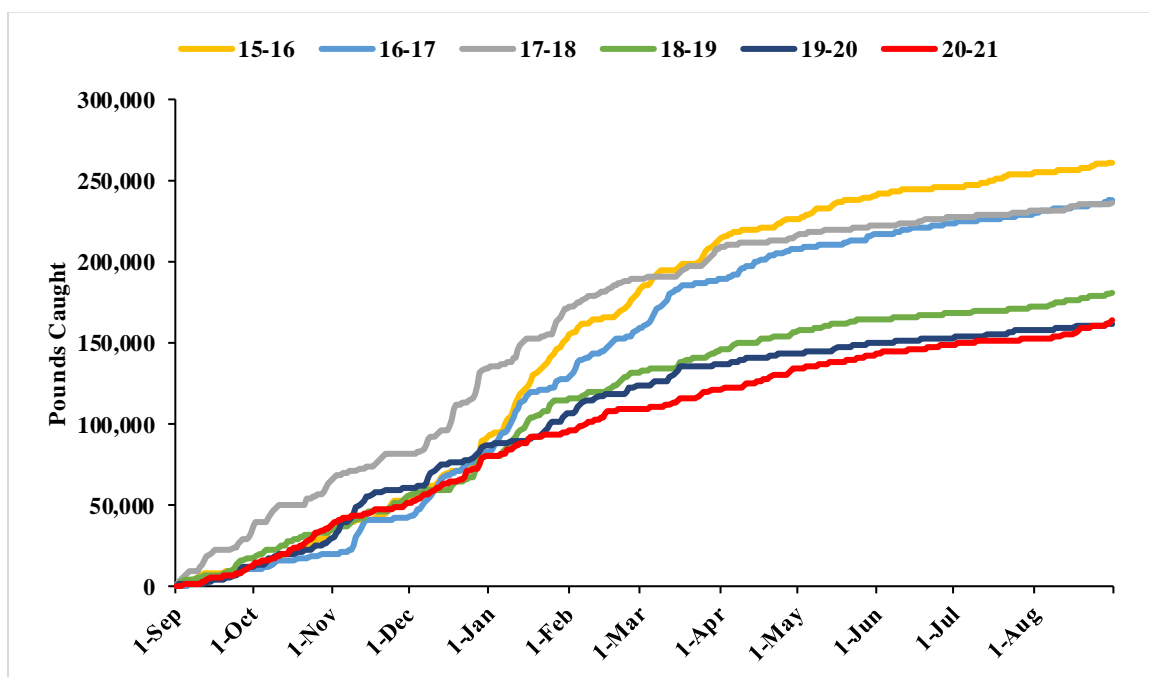


Figure 1. Cumulative Deep-7 catch, 2016-2021 seasons.

‘Ōpakapaka catch during the 2020-2021 season was particularly low in terms of both pounds landed and percent species contribution (Figures 2 & 3). Whereas ‘ōpakapaka typically make up approximately 50% of all Deep-7 landings, they make up just 36% of the total catch during the 2020-2021 season. While total onaga landings for the season were also below the 10-year average, the decrease in catch was not to the extent seen in ‘ōpakapaka (figure 4). Ehu, the third most targeted species in the complex, saw above-average catch during the season with total landings at approximately 1,700 lbs. more than the 10-year average.

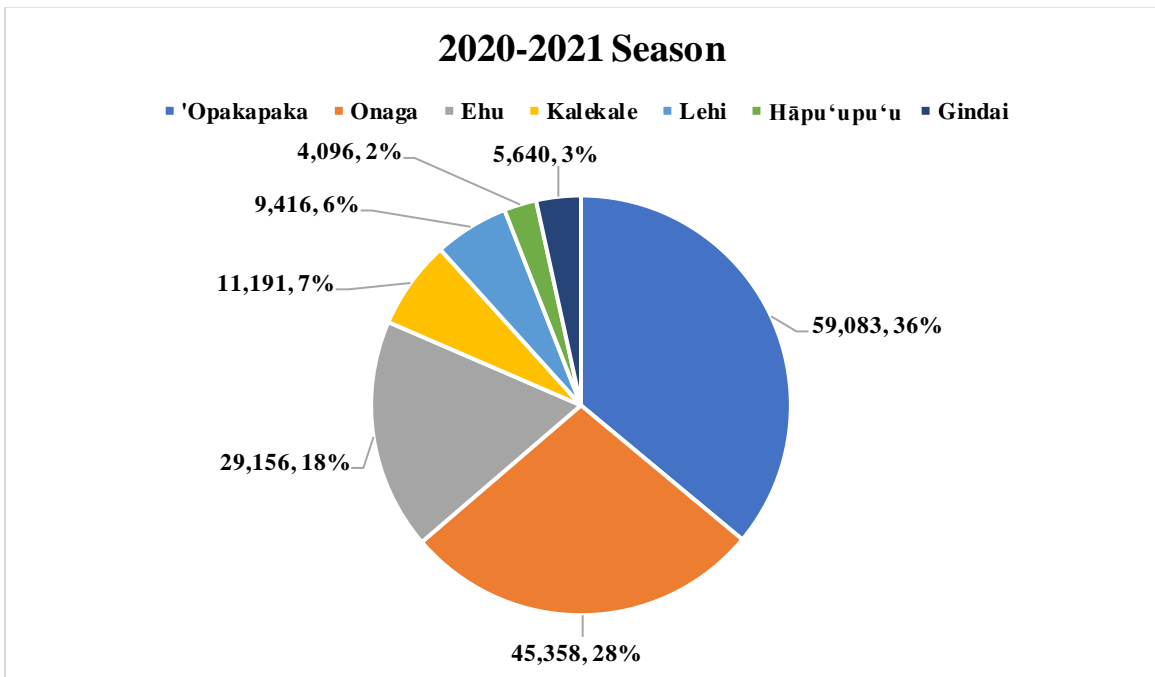


Figure 2. Species composition of Deep-7 catch during the 2020-2021 season.

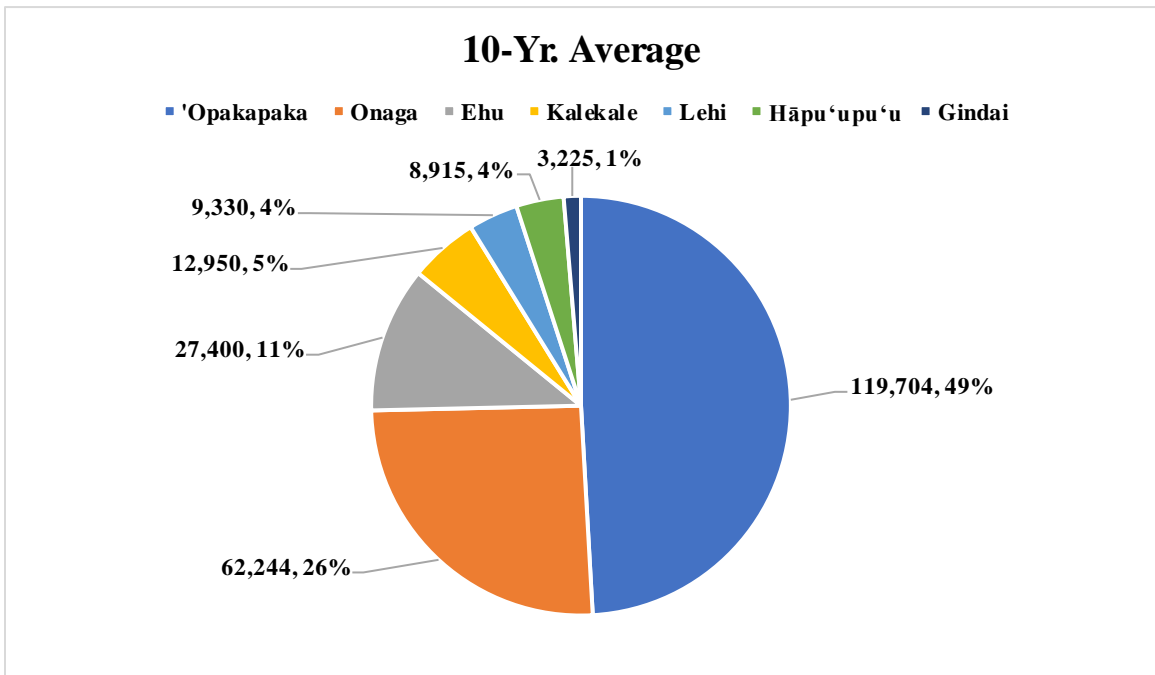


Figure 3. 10-yr. average species composition for the Deep-7 fishery, 2011—2020 Seasons.

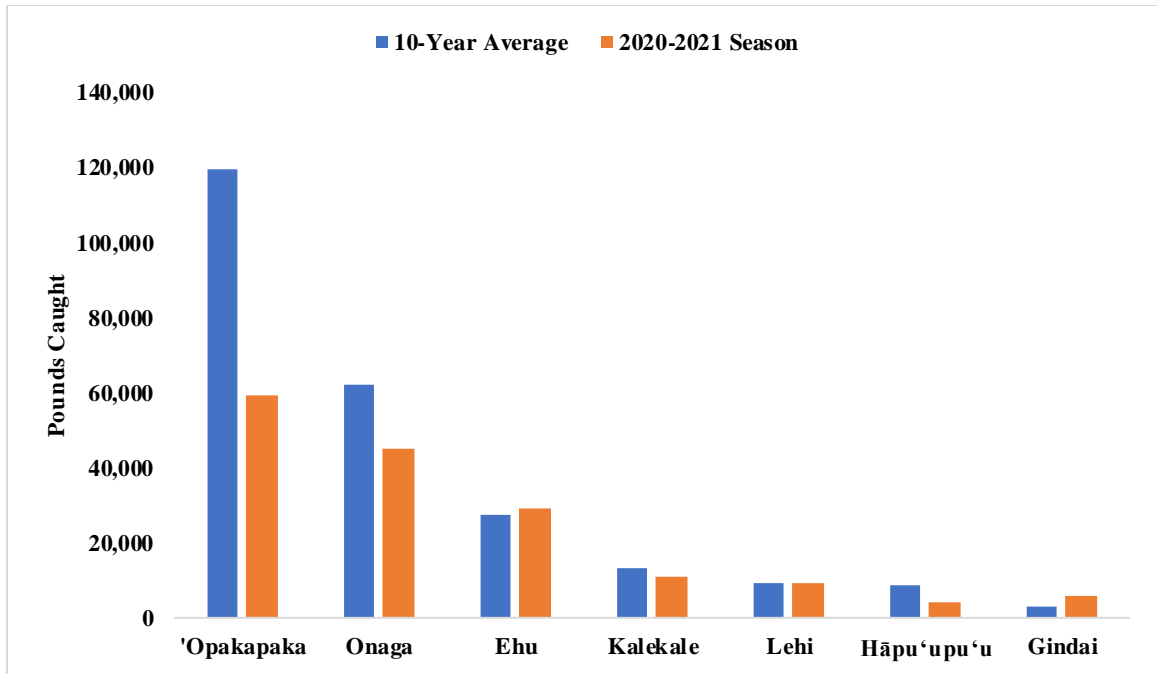


Figure 4. Comparison of species-specific 10-year average seasonal total landings and landings from the 2020-2021 season.

DEEP-7 (2021-2022)

At two months into the 2021-2022 Deep-7 fishing season, 156 commercial fishers reported 324 trips, and caught a total of 24,939 lbs. of mixed Deep-7 species. Catch as of the end of October is relatively low in comparison to the previous five seasons (figure 5). However, as shown by 2016-2017, a slow start does not necessarily foreshadow low total catch for the entire season.

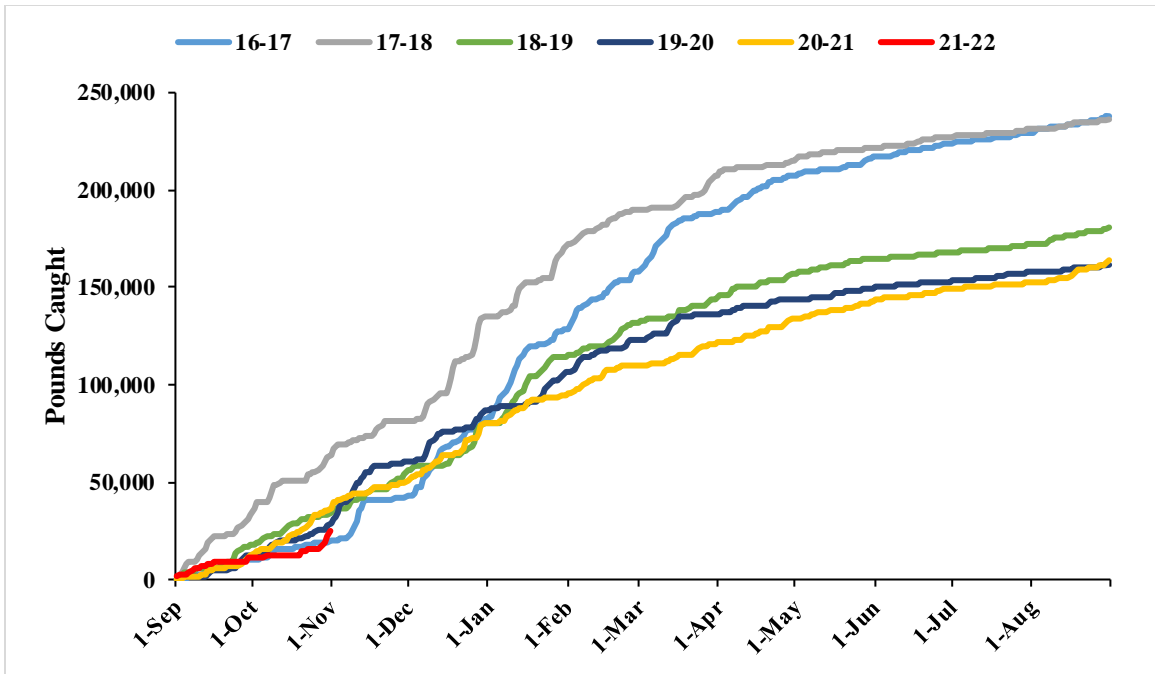


Figure 5 Cumulative Deep-7 catch, 2017-2022 seasons.

Like the 2020-2021 season, percent ‘ōpakapaka catch is currently below average at 38% of all Deep-7 species caught. Ehu catch continues to make up an above-average proportion of the total catch. Though it appears that some of the atypical catch trends noted in the previous season may be persisting, with just two months into the season assumptions about what catch will look like in the long-term cannot be made.

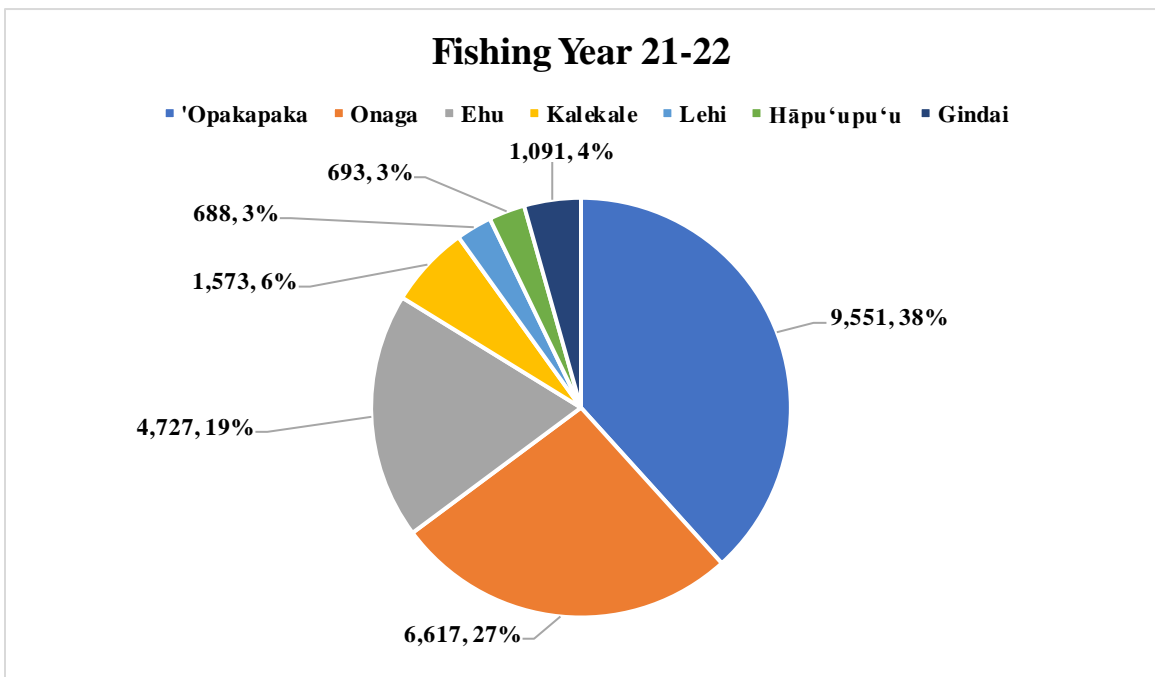


Figure 6. Species composition of Deep-7 catch during the 2020-2021 season, September-October.

KONA CRAB

By the end of October, 18 CML holders reported 53 trips and caught a total of 3,346 lbs. of Kona crab during the 2021 season. Commercial catch following the reopening of fishery was relatively low, with just 582 lbs. caught between September 1 and October 31. Multiple factors including weather conditions will likely contribute to fishery performance during the remainder of the season. It appears though that the 2021 Kona crab season will likely yield a total catch similar to what was seen in 2020.

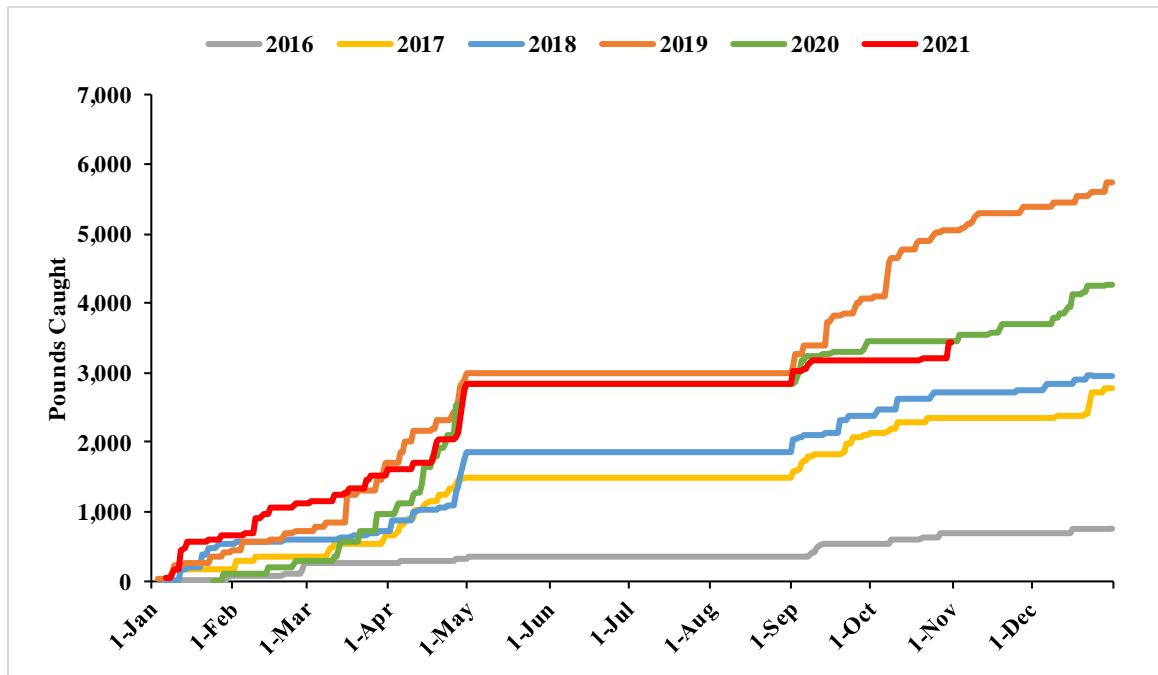


Figure 7. Cumulative MHI Kona crab catch, 2016-2021

UKU

As of the end of October, 195 CML holders reported a total of 777 trips, and caught a total of 49,082 lbs. of uku (Figure 5). Uku catch peaked in August with 8,143 lbs. caught, the second highest total monthly catch for the year so far after May (10,294 lbs.). With two months remaining in the 2021 season, catch has already exceeded what was caught in the entire 2020 season by approximately 1,000 lbs. However, without an unusually large increase in landings in November and December, total annual uku catch will likely fall below what was caught in recent years (2016-2019).

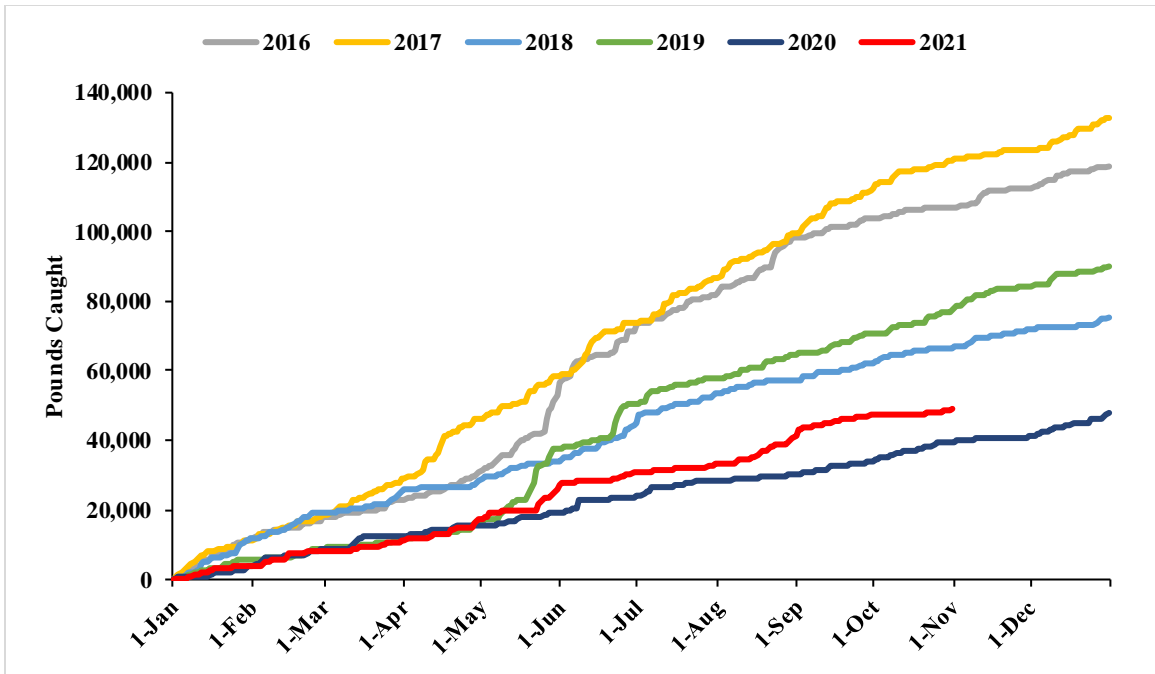


Figure 8. Cumulative MHI uku catch, 2016 - 2021.

LICENSE AND REPORTING

As of the end of October, DAR has issued a total of 2,767 CMLs in the year 2021 for a total revenue of \$280,180. The total 2021 January through October CML's granted is below the ten-year average of 3,145 licenses for the same ten-month period.

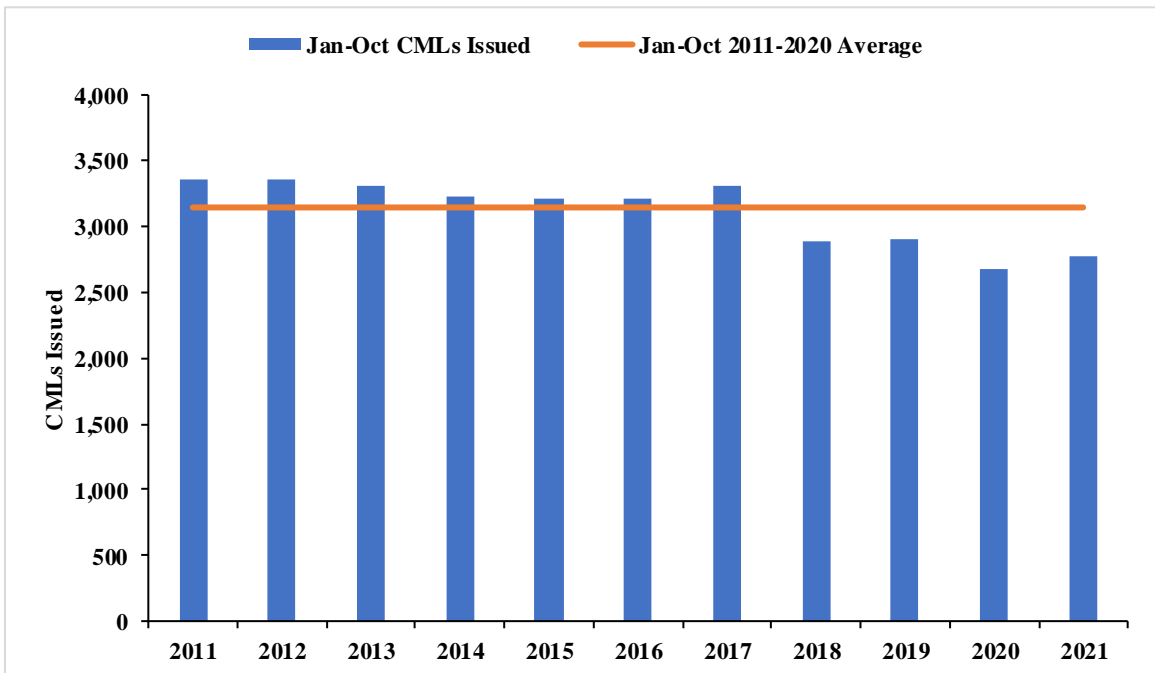


Figure 9. Total CMLs issued between January and Oct, 2011-2021.

2. RESOURCE PROTECTION

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT (PMNM)

One (1) new permit was granted during this period (August 1st, 2021 to October 31st, 2021): One (1) PMNM Research permit (final permit issued in August; permit did not require BLNR review).

Note: If permits did not require BLNR review/approval it was due to the activities taking place in federal waters (in either or both the PMNM Expansion Area and the PMNM original boundaries) or on land only (besides Kure Atoll), which are all outside of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine Refuge.

Permit applications currently under review and their corresponding research, conservation, management, educational, cultural or special use objectives or activities can be found here on the PMNM website: (<https://www.papahanaumokuakea.gov/permit/applicationrev.html>). A summary of a sample of activities permitted for each year can be found here (2020 is in the process of being updated): (<https://www.papahanaumokuakea.gov/permit/annualrep.html>).

The decrease in the number of access permits requested in recent months was likely a result of fall and winter weather restraints (rougher sea states) and potentially also a result of the increase in COVID-19 restrictions on travel on research vessels and restrictions on work environments that require researchers, educators or managers to work in close proximity with each other, due to the increase in cases from the Delta Variant in Hawaii during August to October

The permit coordinators group is continuing to review or process a limited amount of requests (less than three (3) at this time) for the next application periods for late fall or winter of 2021/2022, to conduct research, conservation, management, educational, cultural or special use activities. The actual conducting of the activities in the field are still likely contingent on the maintenance of COVID transmission/infection rates remaining low within the State of Hawaii.

The Permit Working Group (PWG) for the PMNM (group that works on BMPs, policy suggestions, etc.), the *Chondria* Working Group (CWG), and Permit Coordinator's Group met again in August/September 2021 to continue the revising of PMNM BMP #011 (Disease And Introduced Species Prevention Protocol For Permitted Activities In The Marine Environment) in order to address activities where the algae *Chondria tumulosa* is present within areas of Pearl and Hermes Atoll and now also Midway (where *Chondria* was discovered by the Marine Debris cruise conducted by PMDP in August/September). This *Chondria* specific BMP will become it's own BMP with a separate # once finalized – finalization anticipated in the fall. In addition, this group continued to provide final feedback on a protocol to address biosecurity issues with the transportation of marine debris (both terrestrial and marine - to be conducted by the Papahanaumokuakea Marine Debris Project (PMDP)), which may potentially have *Chondria tumulosa* attached, from Pearl and Hermes Atoll and Midway in August/Sept. 2021.

3. ECOSYSTEM & HABITAT

FISH AGGREGATION DEVICES (FADs)

During the period of August 2021 to Oct 2021 activity was light for the FAD Program.

During August and September 2021, there was no activity.

During October 2021, seven FADs were replaced as detailed below:

HH – Pearl Harbor, Oahu (deployed on 10/9)

P – Penguin Bank, Oahu (deployed on 10/9)
SO – Kealalaikahiki Kahoolawe (deployed on 10/9)
K – Palaoa, Lanai (deployed on 10/9)
OT – Waikoloa, Hawaii (deployed on 10/10)
C – Loa Pt., Hawaii (deployed on 10/10)
TT – Kanewaa Pt., Hawaii (deployed on 10/10)

4. OTHER

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) MANAGEMENT

State consultation meetings with the EPA and USCG regarding the vessel incidental discharge national standards of performance under the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) of 2018 have concluded. West coast states including the State of Hawai‘i have requested additional engagement with the EPA addressing concerns regarding ballast water treatment and exchange, biofouling and in-water cleaning, and monitoring systems to evaluate the performance of discharge standards. One additional engagement meeting with the EPA has been scheduled for November.

CARES ACT

The application period for Round 2 CARES Act funding closed on September 30. 290 applications were received. The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission is currently in the process of reviewing applications for eligibility. At this time, DAR does not have an estimated time frame for disbursement of funds.