



## **187th Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council September 21-23, 2021**

### **Moku Pepa (Island Report)**

#### **McGrew Rice**

This summer has been productive for the charter and non-commercial fleets. The charter fleet was able to participate in all the tournaments this year. Customer wise it was a very good summer. When Governor Ige told tourist not to come I personally lost 11 days in September. The other charter boats had the same issue too. This is normally a slower time for us any way but it became extra slow. We are hoping for it to pick up this winter if the Governor does not put more restrictions on the state, especially since all the sporting events over the last couple of weeks featured full stadiums. We are the most closed down state economically which sucks for us. Fishing-wise it has been a little slower than usual because we are in a La Niña weather pattern this year with cooler waters. The small boat commercial fishers had a good run in Hilo this year Kona was a little slower. The talk story program that DAR has started went over very well, in my opinion, and I hope they continue this program.

#### **Matt Ramsey**

Oama (juvenile goatfish) typically appear in large schools during the summer months but this year they have been largely absent or have only appeared sporadically. Sightings have increased in mid-September and are providing some hope for a late oama season. In contrast, halalu (juvenile akule) are appearing in abundance. Also, the large schools of papio that typically appear in the summer to feed on oama are also in abundance regardless of the oama's absence.

Drone fishing seems to be growing in popularity. Based on social media and personal conversation with boaters, spearfishers, and shoreline fishers, there also seems to be growing concern with gear that is broken off or discarded in the water after the mainline from a drone rig breaks.

Its exciting to see a new generation of "COVID-born" fishers. Likely due to the additional free time caused by the pandemic, there seems to be a large number of new shore and spear fishers in Hawaii. Based on conversations with tackle shops on Oahu, there are still a number of new fishers coming into the stores interested in getting started in fishing. Unfortunately, the supply of tackle and equipment is still not up to pre-COVID levels. A lot of shelves in tackle shops are still empty due to a shortage of supplies.

After the initial drop in tourism due to COVID, visitor numbers are once again growing in Hawaii. While not at the same level as pre-COVID numbers, visitors are returning to Hawaii and are actively participating in ocean-related activities. In many cases throughout the state, these visitors are creating challenges for fishers as they take up all of the parking in harbors, overcrowd beaches, and use any means to get to popular offshore sites such as the sandbar in Kaneohe Bay, Oahu. The visitors and their economic contributions are welcomed but they undoubtedly impact local fishers.

The State of Hawaii, Department of Land and Natural Resource, Division of Aquatic Resources held “Holoholo Fisher Talk Story Sessions” to engage fishers on each of the islands in Hawaii. It was a great step forward in engaging the fishing community and provided a perfect example of how the fishing community varies tremendously between geographies.

**Roger Dang**

Dang will provide a report on the longline fishery and seafood processor sector in Hawaii.