

194th WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING

MARCH 27-31, 2023

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

REPORTING PERIOD: NOVEMBER 2022 – JANUARY 2023

1. FISHERIES

DEEP-7

At the end of the reporting period, 311 fishers made 1,285 trips to catch a total of 127,714 lbs. of mixed deep-7 species during the 2023 fishing year (FY; Figure 1). Landings at the end of January exceeded those of the previous four FY, largely due to relatively high landings in December 2022 (40,835 lbs.). December 2022 deep-7 landings were the highest single-month total catch since December 2017 (52,954 lbs.).

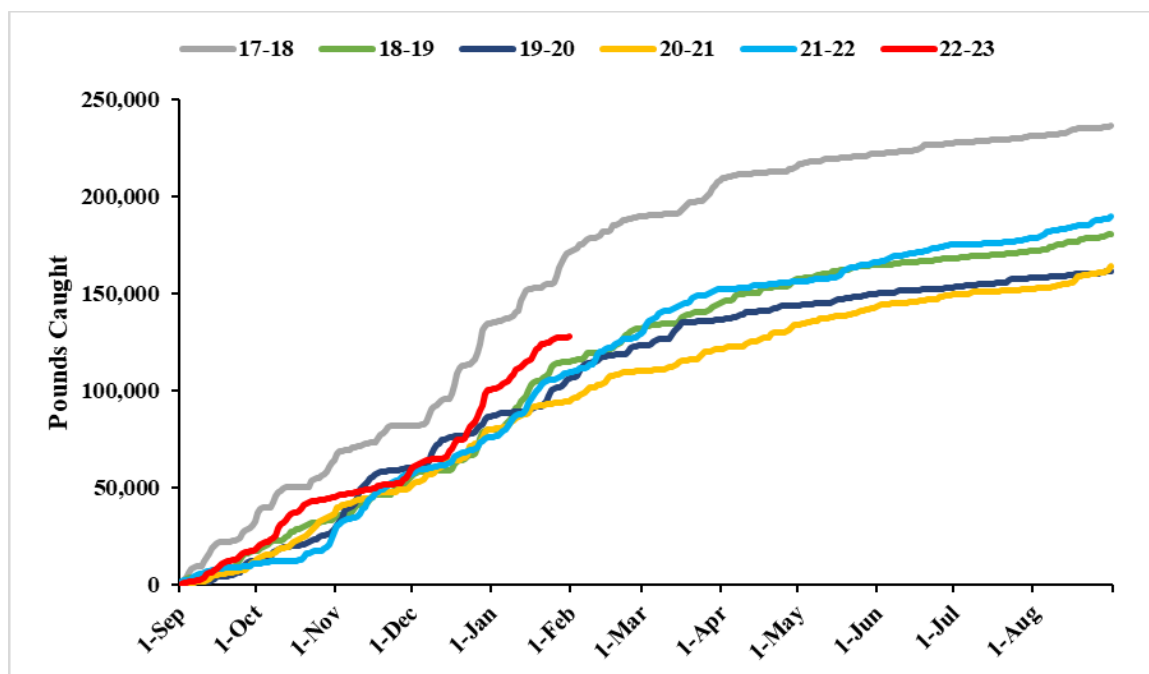


Figure 1. Cumulative Deep-7 catch, Fishing Years 2018-2023.

FY2023 catch composition by species mirrors closely the 10-year average (Figures 2 & 3). The ratio of 'opakapaka in the total catch appears to be increasing over time following a drop in FY2019, before which the species routinely comprised about half the total deep-7 landings per year. Though a minor component of the total deep-7 catch, gindai continue to be caught at a higher rate than previously see. With seven months remaining in FY2023, gindai catch has already surpassed the 10-year average annual catch.

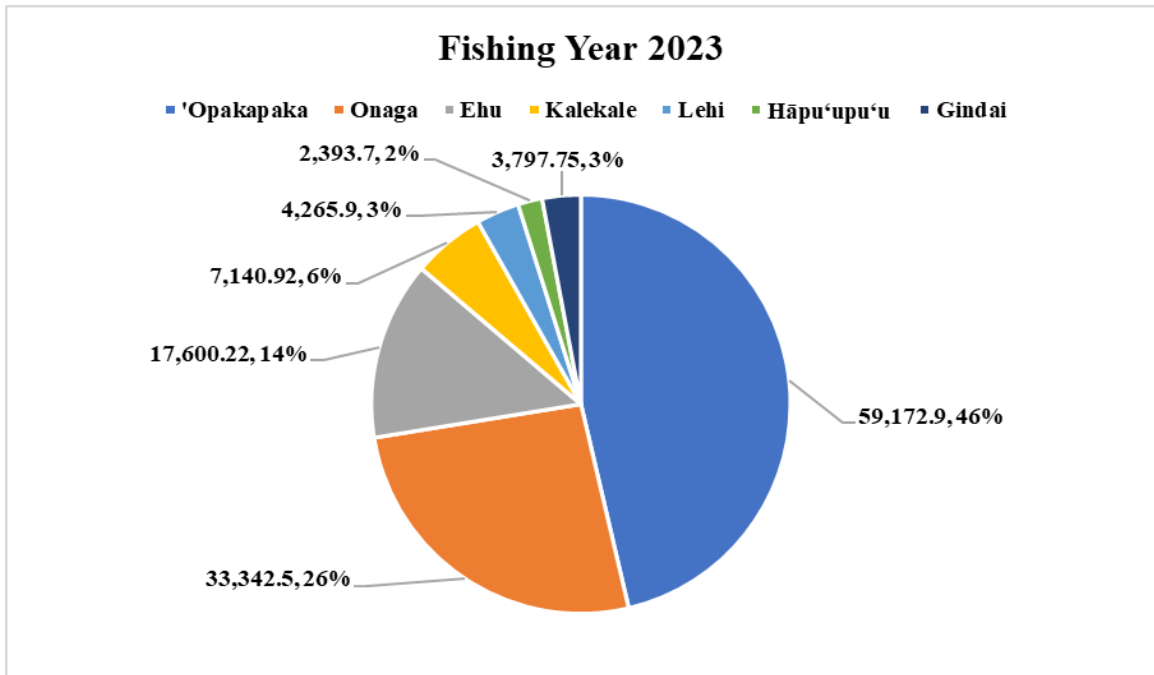


Figure 2. Species composition of Deep-7 catch during Fishing Year 2023, September - January.

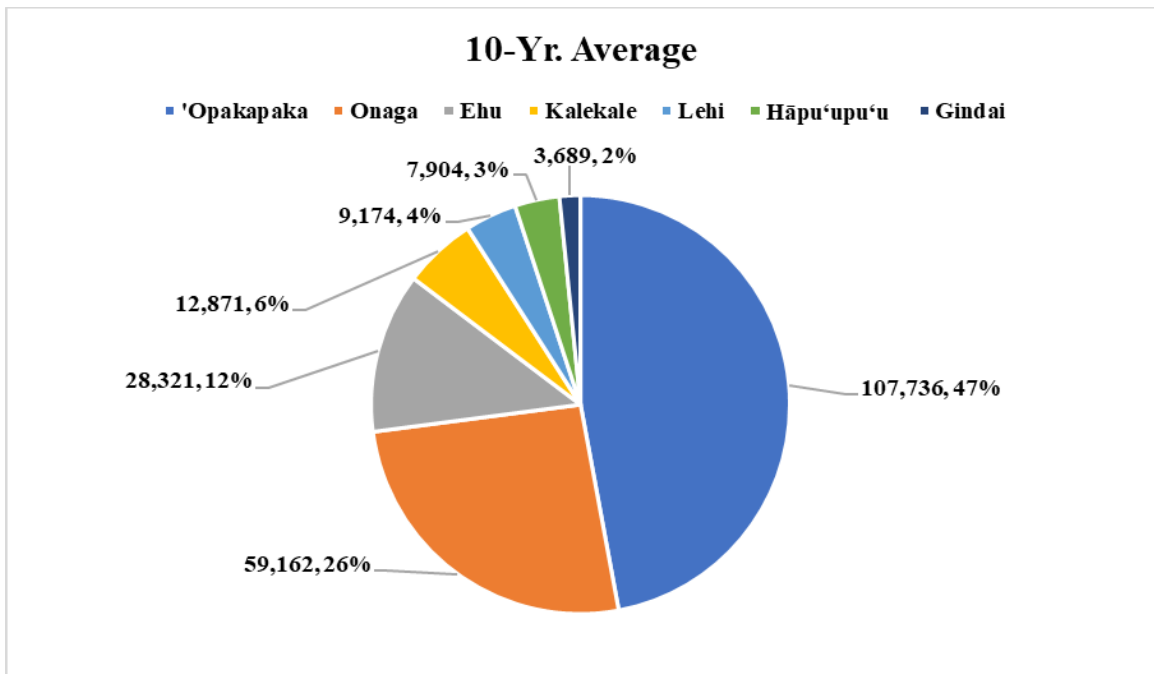


Figure 3. 10-yr. average annual catch and percent species composition for the Deep-7 fishery, Fishing Years 2013—2022.

KONA CRAB

The 2022 Kona crab season concluded with 19 fishers making 53 trips to catch a total of 2,533 pounds of Kona crab (Figure 4). Reported commercial catch of Kona crab continues to be low throughout the state as fishers struggle to make trips profitable considering high discard rates attributed primarily to the ban on female take. We will likely not see a substantial increase in catch until the ban on female take is repealed (currently being sought by DAR).

In the first month of the 2023 season, 279 lbs. of Kona crab were reported caught by commercial fishers.

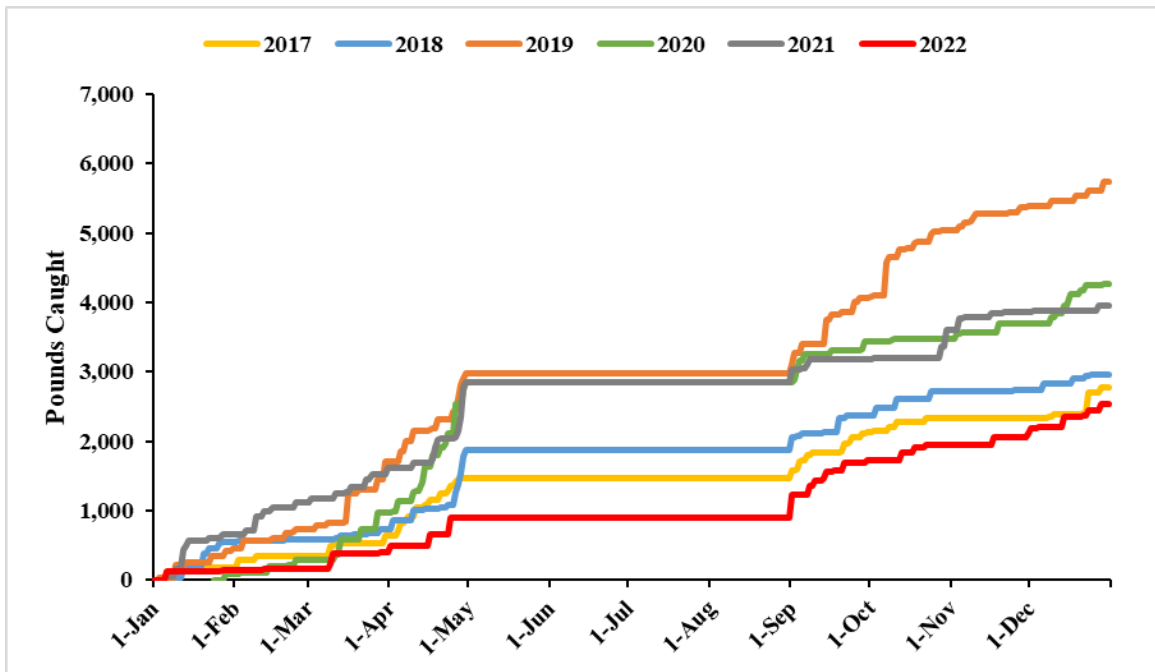


Figure 4. Cumulative MHI Kona crab catch, 2017-2022

UKU

At the conclusion of the 2022 uku season, 234 fishers made 887 trips and landed a total of 52,965 lbs. of uku. Landings in 2022 did not deviate noticeably from the past two seasons, falling between totals from 2021 (60,362 lbs.) and 2020 (48,037 lbs.). Uku continued to bring good prices at market in 2022, with registered dealers paying an average of over \$7/lb.

The 2023 uku fishing season is off to a relatively slow start with 5,494 lbs. landed at the end of January. Though catch in the first month of the year was low, uku prices at market continue to be high in 2023.

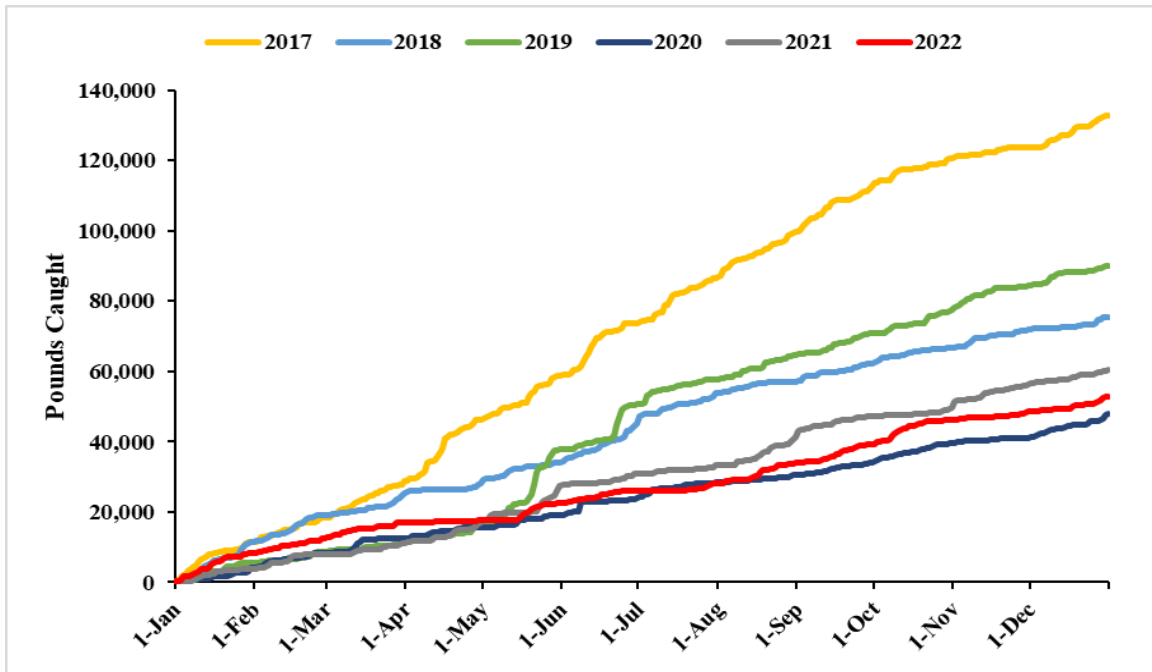


Figure 5. Cumulative MHI uku catch, 2017-2022

LICENSE AND REPORTING

A total of 3,201 Commercial Marine Licenses (CMLs) were issued or renewed in 2022 for a total revenue of \$447,000 (Figure 6). We continue to see a long-term decrease in non-longline associated CMLs while longline associated CMLs conversely show a persistent increase over time.

CMLs issued in the first month of 2023 were about average for a typical January.

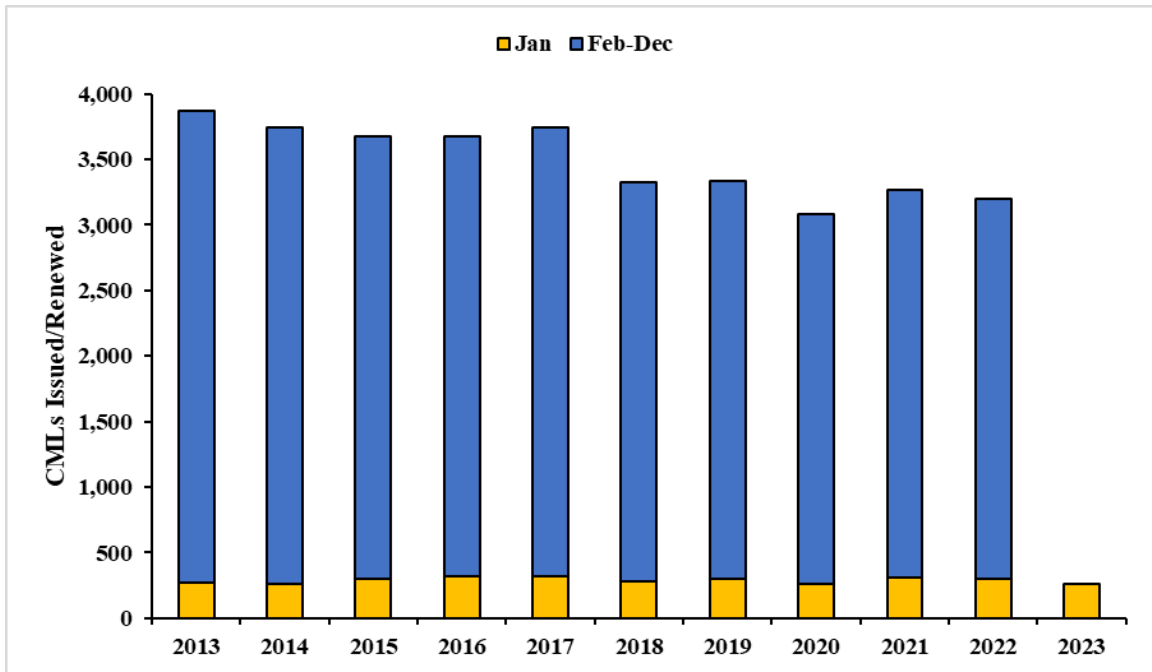


Figure 6. Annual CMLs issued/renewed, January 2013-January 2023

2. RESOURCE PROTECTION

PAPAĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT (PMNM)

Permits Issued: One (1) new permit was granted during this reporting period:

- One (1) PMNM Conservation and Management Permit (final permit issued in December, 2022; permit was presented and approved at 12/9/22 BLNR Meeting)

Permitted activities such as research, educational and conservation and management expeditions have resumed normality in terms of COVID – the late fall/early winter months of November, 2022, to January, 2023, had a lesser amount of permitting requests for upcoming late fall/early winter/spring months. Most expeditions try to take advantage of the more favorable weather and sea state/ocean conditions which occur earlier in the summer (early summer into early fall), which are conducive to the success and safety of the expeditions. The lesser amount of requests may also be potentially due to the academic schedule – more researchers may be available to conduct research in late spring/early summer months, as opposed to late summer/late fall months when classes resume.

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 (2020/2021 is in the process of being updated): <https://www.papahanaumokuakea.gov/permit/annualrep.html>.

Applications: The permit coordinators group reviewed or partially or fully processed a few requests (3 applications at this time: 1 application was denied due to proposed activities/methods that would be in violation of one of the regulations with no possibility to modify the method, 1 application was processed – listed above as approved and one application is still in review) for the next application/operation periods for late winter/spring / early summer of 2023, to conduct research, conservation, management, educational, cultural or special use activities.

The PMNM Permit Working Group (PWG) and the Resource Protection Working Group (RPWG) did not meet between November, 2022 and January, 2023. The Permit Coordinator's Group (PCG), met monthly between November 2022 and January 2023.

3. ECOSYSTEM & HABITAT

FISH AGGREGATION DEVICES (FADs)

During the period of November 2022 to January 2023 activity was light for the FAD Program.

During November 2022, one FAD went missing and one FAD was recovered as detailed below:

ZZ – Mahukona, Hawai'i (missing on 11/14)

ZZ – Mahukona, Hawai'i (recovered off Ma'alaea, Maui on 11/29)

During December 2022, four FADs went missing and one FAD was recovered as detailed below:

CC – Ka'ena Pt., Lana'i (missing on 12/2)

P – Penguin Bank, O'ahu (missing on 12/5)

HH – Pearl Harbor, O'ahu (missing on 12/5)

LL – Hau'ula, O'ahu (missing on 12/5)

MM – Mokapu Pt., O'ahu (recovered off Hau'ula, O'ahu on 12/3)

During January 2023, one FAD went missing as detailed below:

HO – Ho'olawa Pt., Maui (missing on 1/9)

4. OTHER

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) MANAGEMENT

Companion bills SB468 and HB755 were introduced in January that would potentially grant DLNR the authority to regulate vessel incidental discharges other than ballast water or hull fouling (including discharges such as bilge water, anchor chain locker effluent or runoff from decks). Two separate important issues are covered by the language of these bills. The first is the need to immediately adopt administrative rules that will prevent the introduction of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) into our currently unaffected state waters. SCTLD, currently present in and spreading throughout the Caribbean, has been shown to be transported through incidental discharges. Since 2014, there have been at least 84 arrivals of commercial vessels from SCTLD-affected locations. The second reason is for state enforcement to protect state waters after

the final federal regulations take effect under the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act of 2018 (VIDA). The federal VIDA regulations are currently projected to take effect in 2025. Once adopted, they will preempt the State of Hawai‘i from adopting or enforcing any state law or regulation with respect to any discharge incidental to the normal operation of a vessel that is subject to regulation under VIDA *unless* the state requirement is identical to, or less protective than, the federal VIDA regulations. These bills would allow the State of Hawai‘i to mirror federal regulations to co-enforce VIDA.

The AIS Team, in collaboration with the Urchin Hatchery, reached the milestone of one million Hawaiian collector urchins (*Tripneustes gratilla*) out-planted to reefs in Kāne‘ohe Bay and the Waikiki MLCD as biocontrol for invasive algae since the beginning of the program. The team assisted NOAA scientists in re-surveying the M/V Voge Trader grounding site ten years after the initial grounding to determine long term recovery of the coral reef that was impacted. Permanent pins were installed by the AIS Team at the Honolulu Harbor entrance to facilitate long term surveying via Structure from Motion (SfM) modelling.

LEGISLATION

The Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) did not introduce any Administrative Bills this session. However, a number of aquatic resource-related bills were introduced, which DAR is tracking and providing testimony on. A couple of bills that may be of interest to Council members include:

House Bill 755, which would enhance DAR’s ability to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic nuisance species such as Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTL) through incidental discharges from vessels.

Senate Bill 432, which would designate Hawaii coral reefs as critical natural infrastructure, increasing Hawaii’s likelihood of receiving FEMA funding for coral reef protection and restoration.

RULEMAKING

DAR will be holding scoping meetings in April to gather input on draft rules for Commercial Marine Dealer Licenses, Commercial Marine Vessel Licenses, and Nonresident Recreational Marine Fishing Licenses. Following these initial stakeholder scoping meetings, DAR will initiate the formal public rulemaking process to gather broader public feedback on the proposed rules.

CARES ACT

In January 2023, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission disbursed \$3.6 million in Round 2 CARES Act funding to eligible Hawaii fishery participants. Of the 290 applicants, 240 were deemed eligible based on criteria established in the Hawaii Round 2 Spend Plan.

Sector/Funding Category	Allocation of Total Funding		Approved Claims of Absolute Loss			
	USD	% of Total	Count	Total Claims by Sector (USD)	% of Total	Avg % Claim Received
Longline Fishery	\$2,180,833	60.5%	119	\$8,751,873.85	29.9%	24.9%
Commercial Non-Longline (CML holders)	\$387,095	10.7%	71	\$1,736,219.63	5.9%	22.3%
Charter Fishery	\$429,538	11.9%	45	\$1,686,399.92	5.8%	25.5%
Seafood Processors & Dealers	\$596,071	16.5%	5	\$17,147,572.33	58.5%	3.5%
Aquaculture	\$0	0.0%	0	\$0.00	0.0%	0.0%
Subsistence/Other	\$0	0.0%	0	\$0.00	0.0%	0.0%
State Admin	\$10,000	0.3%	-	-	-	-
Total	\$3,603,537	100.0%	240	\$29,322,065.73		