

191st WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING

June 21-23, 2022

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

REPORTING PERIOD: FEBRUARY 2022 – APRIL 2022

1. FISHERIES**DEEP-7**

At eight months into the 2021-2022 Deep-7 fishing season, 364 commercial fishers reported 1,737 trips, and caught a total of 156,211 lbs. of mixed Deep-7 species (Figure 1). Catch at the end of April was above that of the past two seasons. The remainder of the 2022 deep-7 fishing season will likely not show significant increases in catch as fishers typically shift to other fisheries in the late spring and summer. Deep-7 fishers will likely not return to targeting these species heavily until the holiday season.

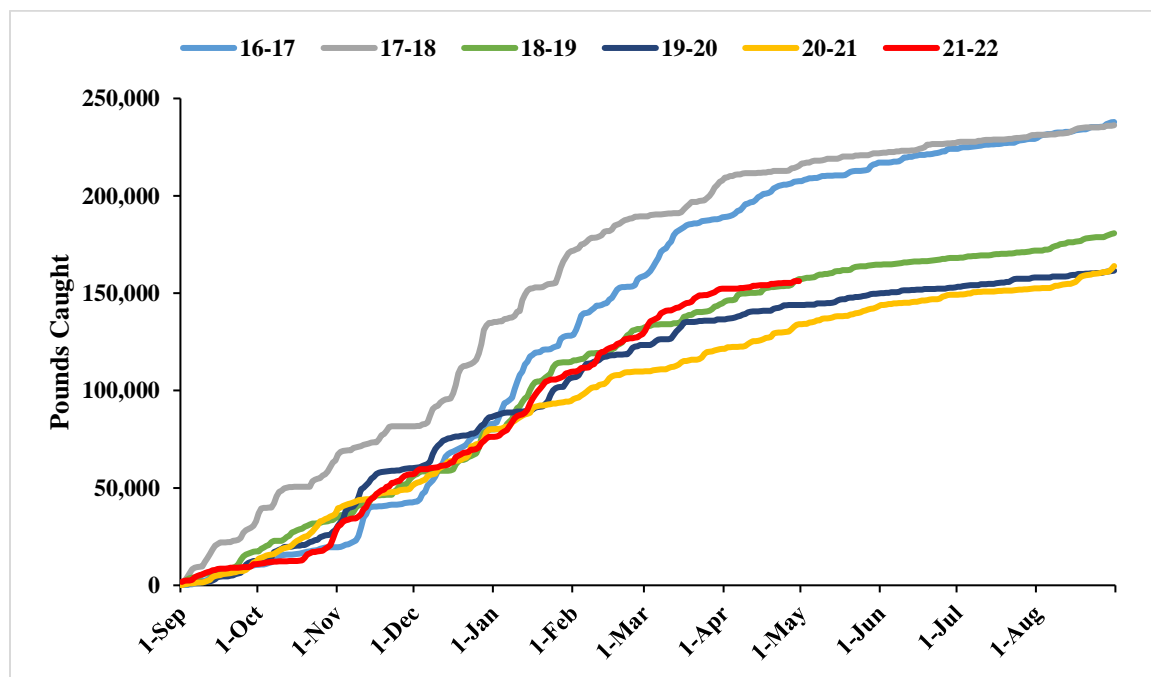


Figure 1. Cumulative Deep-7 catch, 2017-2022 seasons

Whereas ‘ōpakapaka typically make up approximately 50% of all deep-7 landings in the MHI, during the 2020-2021 season they made up just 36% of the total catch (Figure 2). Among the contributing factors, fishers noted difficulty locating normal aggregations of ‘ōpakapaka, persistently high shark depredation, and challenging fishing conditions. As of the end of April, ‘ōpakapaka catch in the current season appears to be more typical of the fishery making up 44% of the catch thus far (Figure 3). This is corroborated by local fishers who have been noting more typical patterns of ‘ōpakapaka distribution. Catch contribution of the other six species is as of the end of the reporting period about average. Catch of gindai, which has been increasing steadily in

recent years, is as of the end of April at about 127% of the 10-year average annual total catch. Though gindai catch appears to be increasing, total contribution to the total catch remains low as the species is not commonly targeted directly.

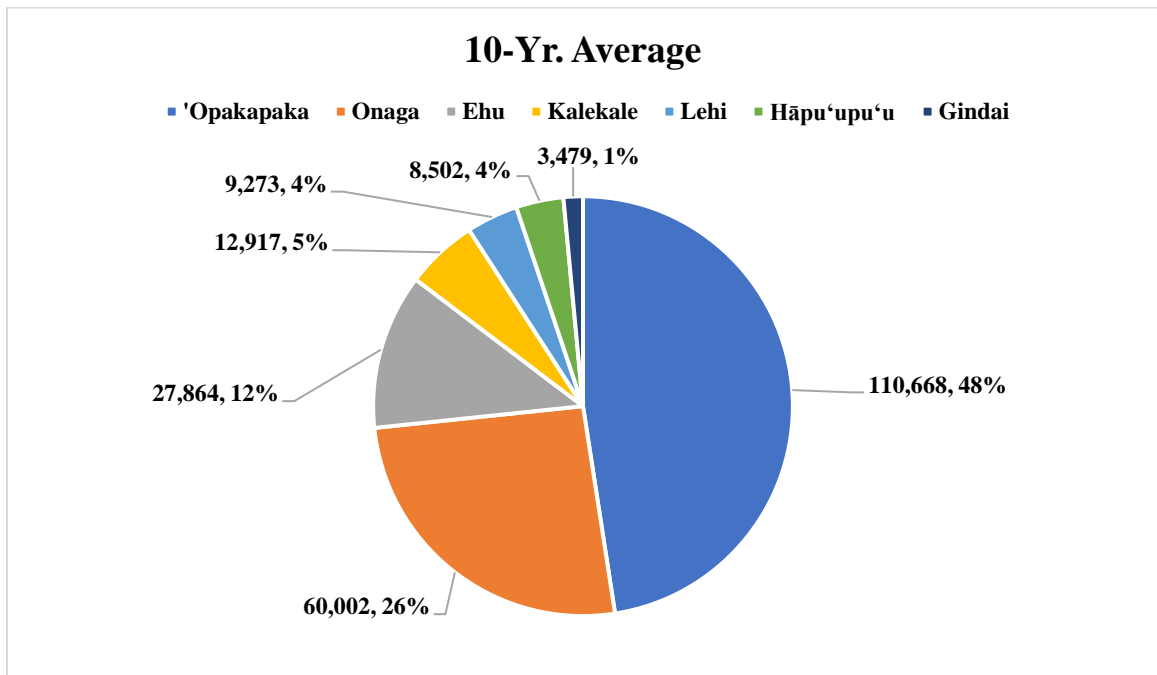


Figure 2. 10-yr. average annual catch and percent species composition for the Deep-7 fishery, 2012–2021 seasons

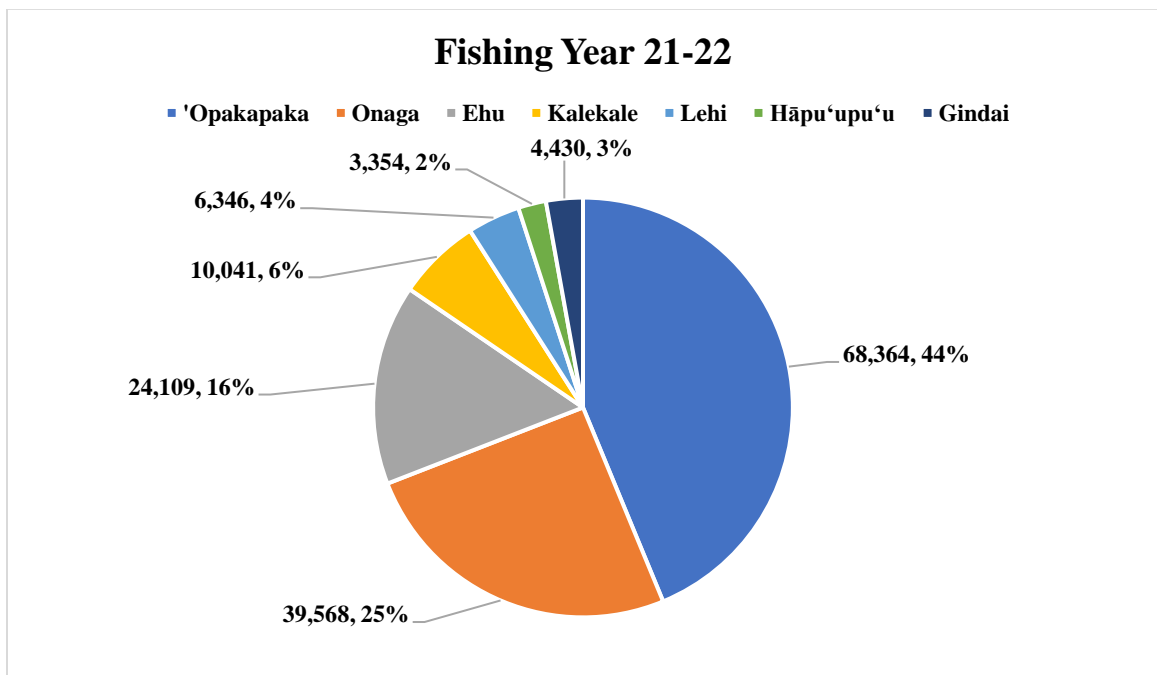


Figure 3. Species composition of Deep-7 catch during the 2021-2022 season, September-April

KONA CRAB

By the end of April 2022, 8 CML holders made 22 trips and caught a total of 670 pounds of Kona crab (Figure 4). This amount of catch is low, even for this already limited fishery. Noticeably absent this year was the typical steep increase in catch occurring just prior to the onset of the closed season. Though there may be multiple contributing factors to this low catch, the underlying reason is the characteristically low retention rate of this fishery caused primarily by the prohibition of female take. The State of Hawaii is moving forward with the removal of this prohibition in hopes that fishing opportunities will be improved.

Take of all Kona crab is currently closed throughout the State of Hawaii. The season will reopen on September 1, 2022.

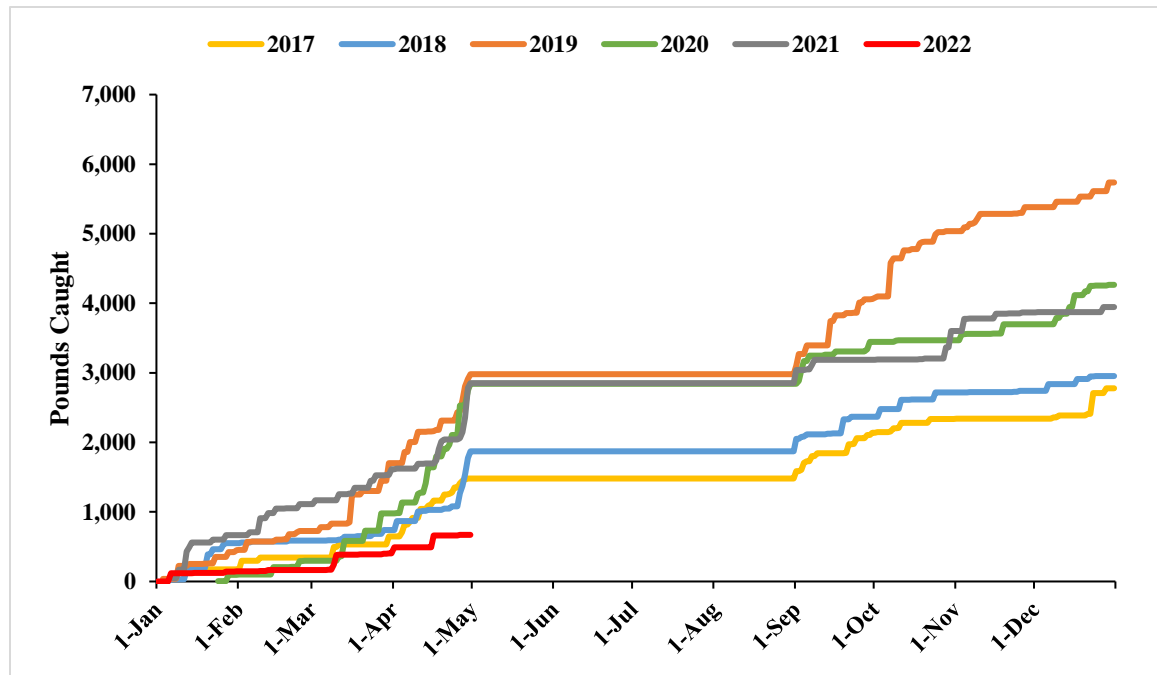


Figure 4. Cumulative MHI Kona crab catch, 2017-2022

UKU

At the end of April 2022, 114 CML holders made 299 trips, and caught a total of 17,540 pounds of uku during the 2022 season (Figure 5). Total commercial landings in the first four months of 2022 were approximately equal to the previous three years. Fishing activity in the next two or three months will likely determine the total performance of the 2022 season as peak catch typically occurs May through June. Though weather conditions, shark depredation, competing fisheries, and a host of other factors will ultimately dictate the relative success of the current season, improved market conditions may result in increased effort.

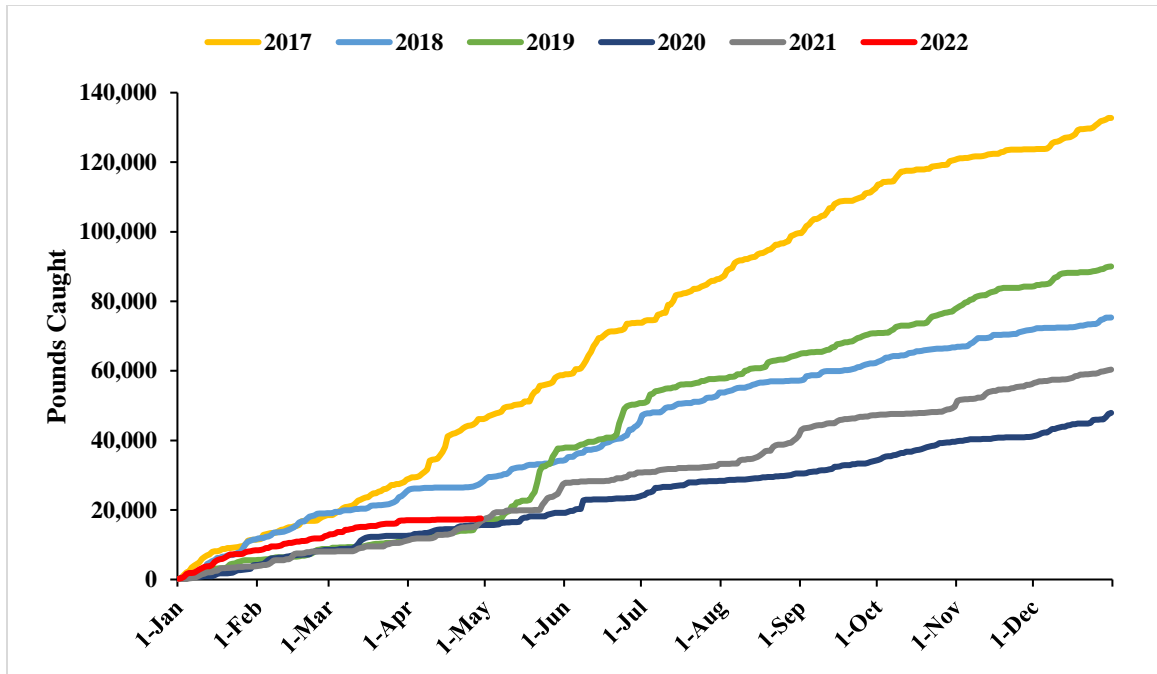


Figure 5. Cumulative MHI uku catch, 2017 - 2022

LICENSE AND REPORTING

By the end of April, a total of 1,113 CMLs were newly issued or renewed (Figure 6). This number CMLs issued is typical for the first four months of a year. Total revenue from these CMLs was \$162,300.

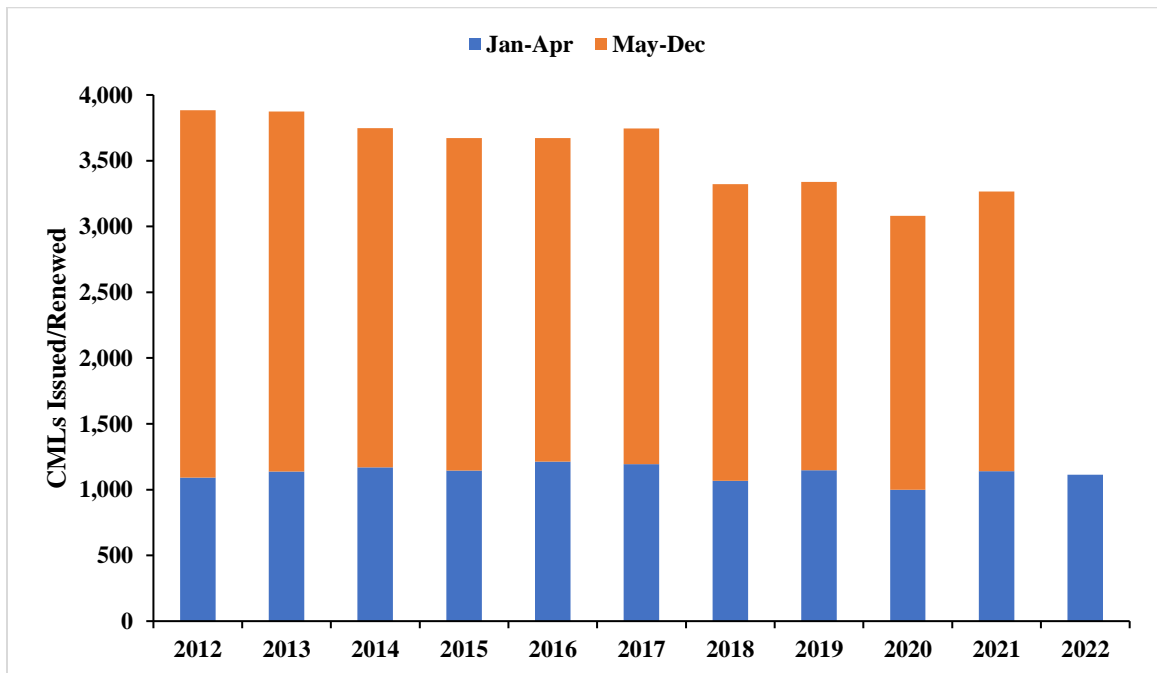


Figure 6. Annual CMLs issued/renewed, January 2012-April 2022.

2. RESOURCE PROTECTION

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT (PMNM)

Permits Issued:

- One (1) PMNM Conservation and Management permit (final permit issued in April, 2022; permit was presented at 4/8/22 BLNR Meeting);
- One (1) PMNM Research amendment to the permit (final amendment was issued in April, 2022; amendment to permit was presented at 4/8/22 BLNR Meeting)

BLNR submittals:

- One (1) PMNM Research permit was submitted for review for the 4/22/22 BLNR meeting – permit was approved by the BLNR but has not yet been issued (report of this permit issuance will be provided in the next quarterly update: May – July)
- One (1) PMNM Conservation and Management permit was submitted for review for the 5/13/22 BLNR meeting (report of this permit will be provided in the next quarterly update – May – July)

Additionally, the permit coordinators group is reviewing and processing four to six permit requests for the upcoming summer/fall 2022 application period. 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 relatively high number of access permits requested in recent months was likely a result of the favorable weather and sea state/ocean conditions which occur in the spring/summer months, and potentially also a result of the lessening of in COVID-19 restrictions on travel on research vessels and lessening of restrictions on work environments that require researchers, educators or managers to work in close proximity with each other.

The PMNM Permit Working Group (PWG) and Permit Coordinator's Group (PCG), met in February, March and April of 2022 to continue development of PMNM BMP # 020 (Best Management Practices (BMPs) to Minimize the Spread of *Chondria tumulosa*). PMNM BMP # 020 was created 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 2021). Finalization of PMNM BMP #020 occurred in April of 2022. In addition, the PWG and PCG continued to provide final feedback on additional protocols addressing biosecurity issues with other activities not covered under PMNM BMP #020 including the transport of marine debris (both terrestrial and marine – currently conducted by the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project – “PMDP”) which may potentially have *Chondria tumulosa* attached.

3. ECOSYSTEM & HABITAT

FISH AGGREGATION DEVICES (FADs)

During the period of February 2022 to April 2022 activity was moderate for the FAD Program.

During February 2022, two FADs were reported missing, and nine FADs were replaced:

AA – Port Allen, Kauai (missing on 2/1)

FF – Pukaulua, Maui (missing on 2/10)

R – Makaha, Oahu (replaced on 2/14)

V – Makua, Oahu (replaced on 2/14)

II – Haleiwa, Oahu (replaced on 2/14)

BB – Moloaa, Kauai (replaced on 2/15)

DK – Anahola, Kauai (replaced on 2/15)

WK – Wailua, Kauai (replaced on 2/15)

Z – Kipukai, Kauai (replaced on 2/15)

CK – Makahuena Pt., Kauai (replaced on 2/15)

PP – Koloa, Kauai (replaced on 2/15)

No activity in March 2022

During April 2022, one FAD was reported missing:

X – Kahuku, Oahu (missing 4/1)

4. OTHER

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) MANAGEMENT

The AIS Team, in collaboration with numerous other agencies and interested stakeholders, is drafting a Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) Action Plan for the State of Hawai‘i. This action plan will address the steps to take to identify SCTLD if it appears in Hawaiian waters, respond to the disease, manage its spread, contain it, and follow-up with additional monitoring. This plan will be essential to responding quickly and minimizing the damage this devastating coral disease has been known to cause.

LEGISLATION

The Hawaii State Legislature passed 3 fishing-related bills this session:

Senate Bill 2767 provides \$350,000 in funding to DLNR to support the deployment, replacement, and maintenance of FADs.

Senate Bill 2065 prohibits the possession or use of unmanned aerial vehicles on, in, or near state marine waters for purposes of fishing, unless permitted by the Department. The bill clarifies that the use of unmanned aerial vehicles for simple reconnaissance is allowed.

House Bill 1653 strengthens penalties for violations of aquatic resources laws. This bill establishes a tiered administrative fine system for each specimen of aquatic life taken, killed, or injured; establishes a criminal fine structure on a per-specimen basis for violations involving

aquatic life; authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources to recommend community service that benefits the resource damaged when a person is ordered to perform community service in lieu of a fine; and authorizes DLNR to recommend certain probationary terms and conditions to the court.

Governor Ige signed Senate Bill 2767 and House Bill 1653 into law on June 8.

CARES ACT

The 290 Hawaii fishery participants that applied for Round 2 CARES Act funding continue to wait for disbursement of funds. Applicants will be notified when there are updates.