



HFACT Sponsors Meetings Across Hawai‘i to Engage Fishers in the State’s Holomua Marine 30x30 Initiative



The state-wide fishing organization Hawai‘i Fishermen’s Alliance for Conservation and Tradition (HFACT) held information sessions to discuss potential impacts of the Hawai‘i Department of Land and

Natural Resources, Division of Aquatic Resources’ (DAR) Holomua Marine 30x30 Initiative. The effort has its origins in Governor David Ige’s commitment announced at the 2016 World Conservation Congress held in Honolulu to target “30% of Hawai‘i’s nearshore waters to be effectively managed by 2030.”

As the “Eyes and Ears of Fishermen,” HFACT has monitored the initiative’s development as DAR turned it into a working program first by sitting on the Hawai‘i 30x30 steering committee, and later providing comments on the process at regular meetings with the Division’s management. DAR chose Maui as the first island to begin the process of identifying specific areas and determining rules to implement, but has not identified which island will follow.

HFACT’s public meetings, held on Kaua‘i, Maui and O‘ahu between Oct. 4 and 17, 2022, at six different venues, were a great success, with overall attendance exceeding 500 shore- and boat-based fishers. Two additional in-person meetings are planned for December 6 in Kona and December 8 in Hilo.

HFACT decided to hold these meetings as the organization had concerns that fishers are unprepared for the implications of the State’s initiative. Holomua Marine 30x30 documents can be complex and overwhelming to the average fisher, but HFACT feels strongly they need to be informed. At the recent meetings, the organization explained the range of possible impacts to fishers, including possible area closures to fishing, bag limits, bans on the take of certain species, gear restrictions and other fisheries management rules.

“Our concern is the non-holistic approach to this management plan,” said HFACT representative and past Council member Ed Watamura. “DAR seems to only be concerned with fishing regulations and not addressing the environmental effects of land based abuses. Regulating only fishing will not solve anything.”

Fisher reactions at the meetings were swift as they expressed their anxiousness about the selection and designation process of identifying areas that may become marine managed areas. Many fishers felt that a large portion of fishing areas is already highly protected. Some areas are naturally protected because the terrain makes it impossible to fish from shore or it is difficult to access. Other areas are owned by large land owners who limit access or are closed to fishing due to restrictions by the military.

Some fishers worried that fishing rules will differ from one managed area to another, causing tremendous confusion. Another major concern is that as designated areas get restricted, fishers will move to non-restricted areas and crowd those areas, creating user conflicts. Additionally, the increased pressure in certain locations may harm fisheries and result in unintended consequences.

In general, fishers were very concerned about increasing managed areas throughout the state, especially with a plan to designate 30% of all state nearshore waters as managed areas in such a short period of time. Considering that it took decades for the state to designate the current 6% of its waters as managed areas, adding 24% more in seven to eight years seems unrealistic. Prior designations of managed areas are seen as flawed and have not sufficiently included fishermen in the decision-making process. Thus, fishers are skeptical that the state can do a good job between now and 2030. Some fishers questioned the effectiveness of the existing managed areas in improving fishing, thus adding even more areas would not have the intended outcomes.

HFACT is a not-for-profit, IRS 501c(5) organization, that advocates for small boat and nearshore commercial, non-commercial and recreational fishermen throughout Hawai‘i. HFACT board members sit on a number of federal fisheries management and endangered species advisory committees, as well as state marine and coastal zone advisory committees. HFACT is thoroughly familiar with, and participates in, ocean and marine resource management in Hawai‘i and the central Pacific. 🐟

