

195th WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING

JUNE 26-30, 2023

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

REPORTING PERIOD: FEBRUARY 2023 – APRIL 2023

1. FISHERIES**DEEP-7**

At the end of the reporting period, 346 fishers made 1,739 trips to catch a total of 173,374 lbs. of mixed deep-7 species during the 2023 fishing year (FY; Figure 1). Landings at the end of April 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.).

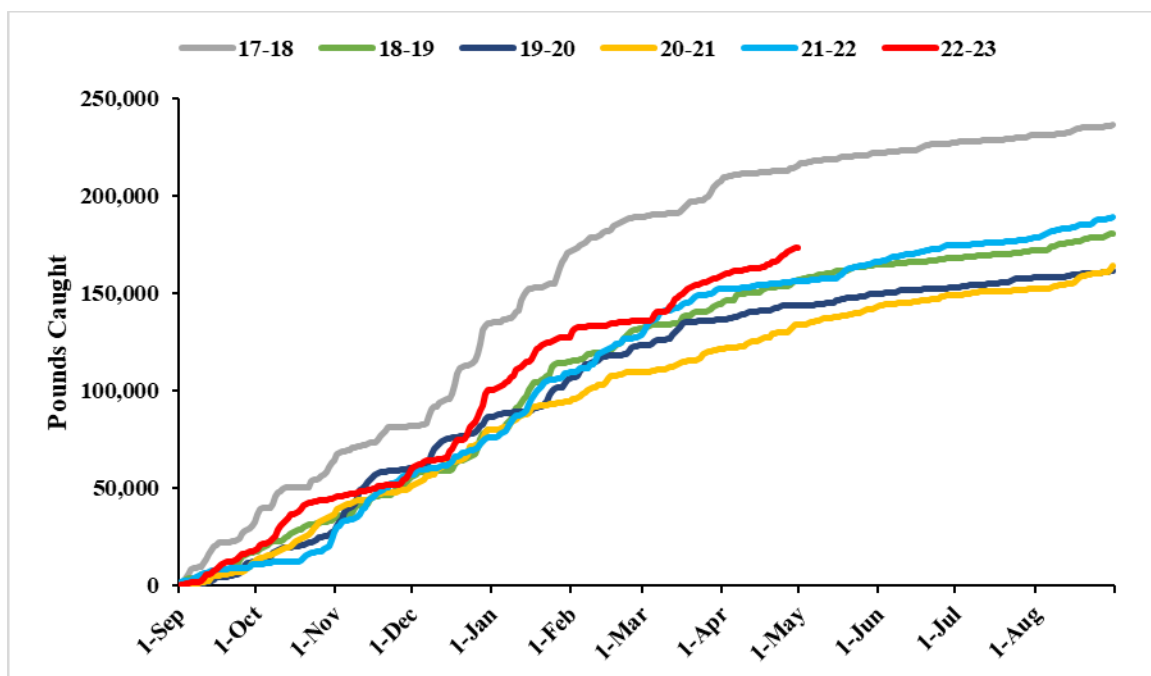


Figure 1. Cumulative Deep-7 catch, Fishing Years 2018-2023.

FY 2023 catch composition by species is relatively similar to 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 FY 2019, 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 seen. With four months remaining in FY2023, gindai catch has already surpassed the 10-year average annual catch.

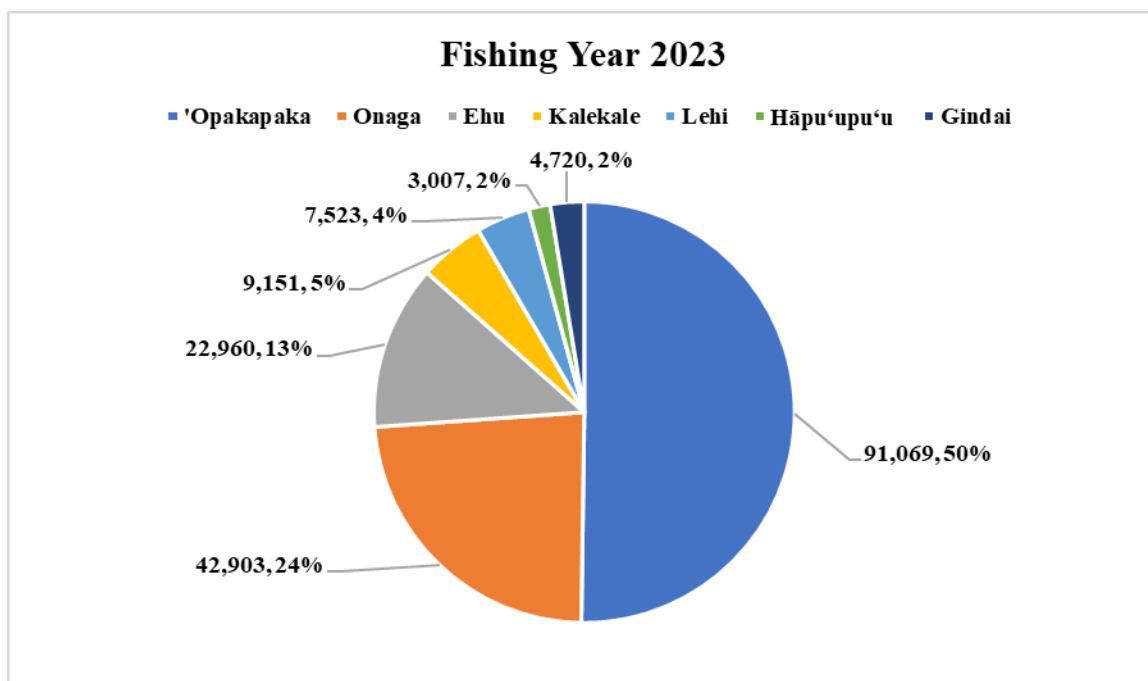


Figure 2. Species composition of Deep-7 catch during Fishing Year 2023, September – April.

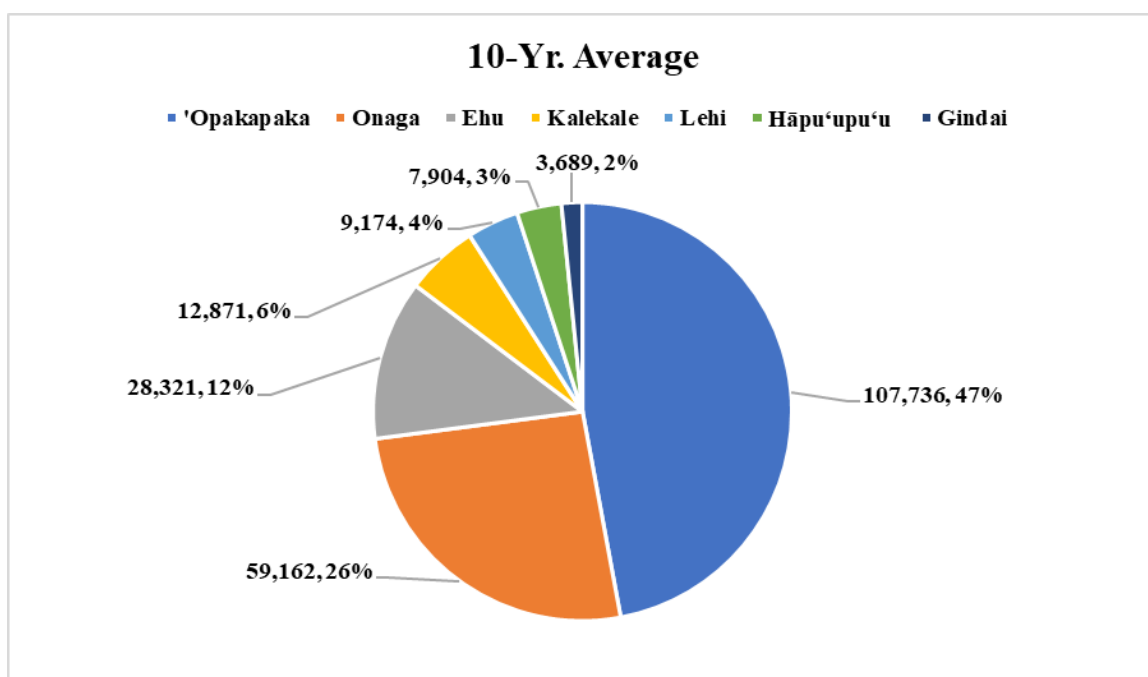


Figure 3. 10-yr. average annual catch and percent species composition for the Deep-7 fishery, Fishing Years 2013—2022.

KONA CRAB

At the end of the reporting period, 13 commercial fishers reported making 38 trips for a total of 3,251 lbs. of Kona crab landed. Reported commercial catch of Kona crab continues to be low caused in large part by low fishery participation and ceased highliner activity. However, total catch for the 2023 season by the end of April was the highest for the period since 2013. We will likely not see a substantial increase in catch until the ban on female take is repealed (currently being sought by DAR) and/or highliner activity increases.

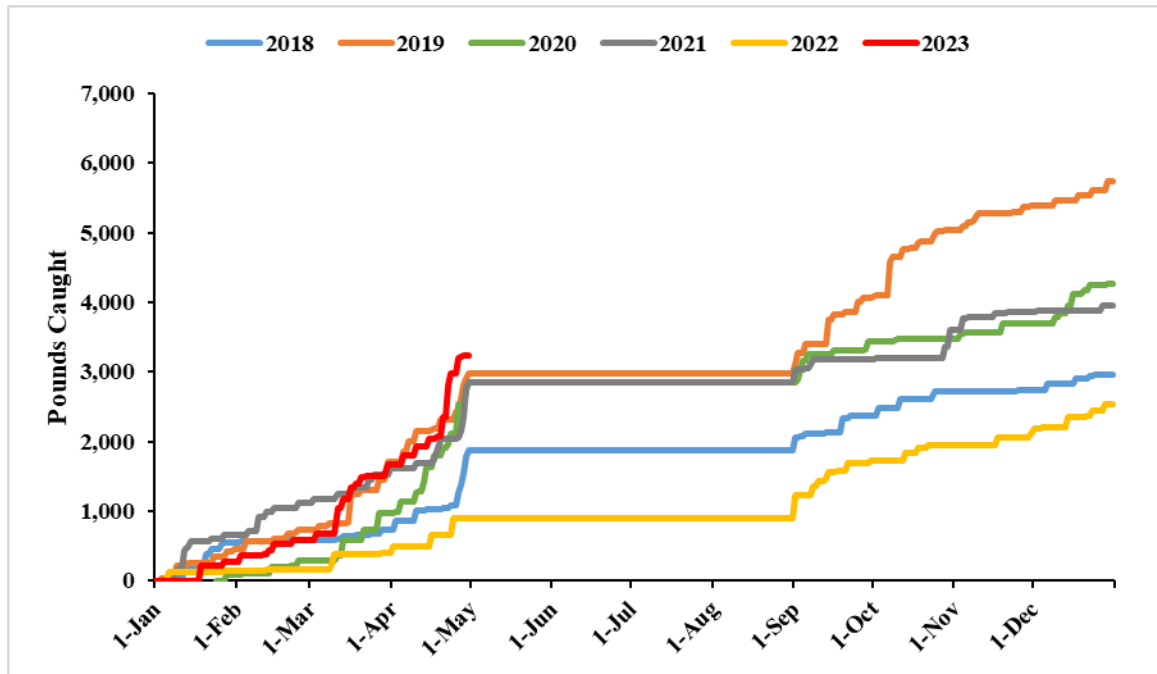


Figure 4. Cumulative MHI Kona crab catch, 2018-2023

UKU

By the end of the reporting period, 130 CML holders made 343 trips and reported a total of 17,580 lbs. of uku landings in 2023. Total uku landings at the end of April were close to that of the past four years, though well-below landings from the same period in 2018.

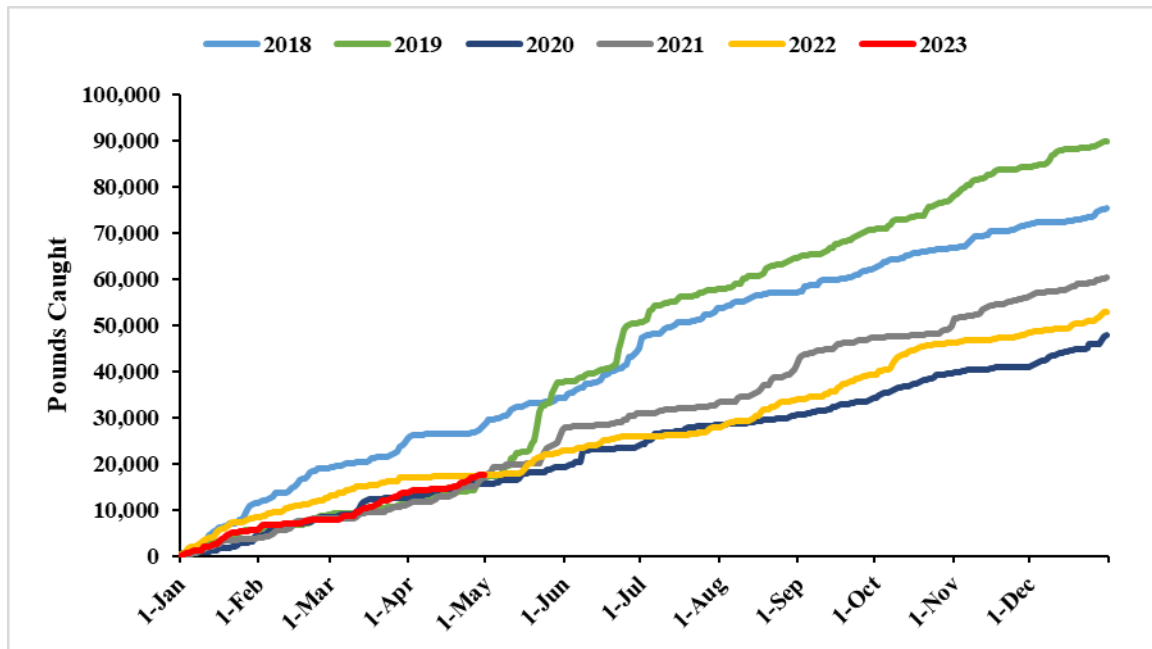


Figure 5. Cumulative MHI uku catch, 2018-2023

LICENSE AND REPORTING

A total of 1,056 Commercial Marine Licenses (CMLs) were issued or renewed between January and April 2023 for a total revenue of \$148,500 (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.

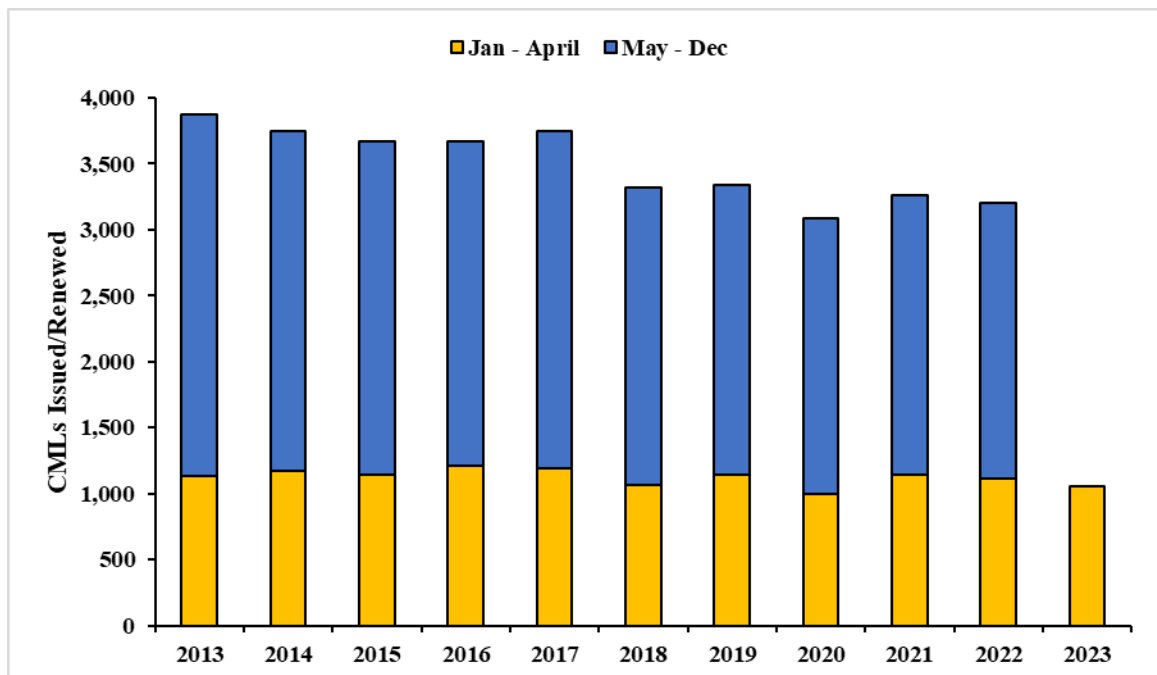


Figure 6. Annual CMLs issued/renewed, January 2013 - April 2023

2. RESOURCE PROTECTION

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT (PMNM)

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

- One (1) PMNM Native Hawaiian Practices permit issued in March, 2023. Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) approval was granted at the March 10th BLNR Meeting.

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>).

During the reporting period, the Permit Coordinator's Group (PCG) reviewed five applications for PMNM access permits for the late spring to early summer 2023. One of the five applications was granted (noted above) while the other four are still pending review and subsequent BLNR approval. DAR permitting staff noted that requests for permits have been below average in 2023 thus far.

The Permit Working Group (PWG) for the PMNM (group that works on BMPs, policy suggestions, etc.) did not meet between February, March, and April. The PCG, convened in February, March and April to review and discuss permit applications as scheduled. The Resource Protection Working Group (RPWG; group that works on AIS prevention, nuisance species eradication, etc.) met in February to discuss the following items:

- Detection/Conservation Dogs subgroup (DOFAW/USFWS)
 - Ongoing review of the feasibility and options for developing a canine inspection operation to assist with terrestrial alien species concerns for vessels entering PMNM.
- Algae Sub-group (NOAA/ONMS):
 - BMP #20 edits and management actions needed for *A. spicifera* (for both within Midway and all of PMNM)
 - Exploration of BMPs and management actions needed for *A. spicifera* (for both within Midway and all of PMNM)
 - Solicitation of Subject Matter Experts inclusion/feedback to guide management decisions
 - Ongoing development of broad guidelines for marine debris management
- Need for increase hull inspection capacity
 - Create SOP for risk assessments and reporting to ensure consistency
- Development of broad guidelines for UAS usage by non-agency permittees

- Creation of standardized SOP for Marine debris management
 - Update on PMDP's plans to fabricate bleaching containers to contain nets during bleaching treatments after removal in *Chondria/Acanthophora* (Nuisance Algae) Mitigation Zones

3. ECOSYSTEM & HABITAT

FISH AGGREGATION DEVICES (FADs)

During the period of February 2023 to April 2023 activity was light for the FAD Program.

February 2023 had no activity

During March 2023, 2 FADs went missing as detailed below:

G – Pepe'ekeo, Hawaii (missing on 3/6)
CO – Ka'ena Pt., Oahu (missing on 3/7)

During April 2023, 1 FAD went missing, 2 FADs were replaced, and 2 FADs were recovered as detailed below:

S – Poka'i Bay, Oahu (missing on 4/28)
MM – Mokapu Pt., Oahu (replaced on 4/29)
LL – Hau'ula, Oahu (replaced on 4/29)
HO – Ho'olawa Pt., Maui (recovered on 4/29)
CC – Ka'ena pt., Lanai (recovered on 4/29)

4. OTHER

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) MANAGEMENT

In April, the USCG began a series of state consultation meetings for development of enforcement regulations for the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act of 2018 (VIDA). The regulatory language of VIDA is expected to be finalized by the EPA at the end of 2024, which will then grant the USCG two years to create enforcement language. Companion bills SB468 and HB755, introduced this legislative season to grant additional regulatory authority over incidental discharges to the DLNR, did not pass. Dawn N.S. Chang, Chairperson of DLNR, signed a multistate letter in support of H.R. 1452, a bill that would enable states to access data on the biological performance of USCG-approved ballast water management systems.

Lizzy Monaghan represented DAR as a co-manager of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument at the International Workshop on Biofouling Management in MPAs and PSSAs hosted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in the Galapagos. The workshop brought together scientists, managers, and industry representatives to consult on a document the IMO will be releasing regarding standards for biofouling prevention in marine protected areas.

The AIS Team completed annual SNAP surveys of invasive algae distribution in Kāneʻohe Bay. A higher than usual volume of invasive algae was found on two patch reefs, and the AIS Team will be exploring further management options including using the “Supersucker” again.

LEGISLATION

The 2023 Hawaii State Legislature adopted House Concurrent Resolution 80 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 41, designating Hawaii’s coral reefs as critical natural infrastructure and strongly supporting nature-based solutions such as coral reef restoration for risk reduction. These resolutions greatly increase Hawaii’s likelihood of receiving FEMA funding for coral reef protection and restoration.

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

RULEMAKING

DAR held stakeholder scoping meetings in April and May to gather input on draft rules for Commercial Marine Dealer Licenses, Commercial Marine Vessel Licenses, and Nonresident Recreational Marine Fishing Licenses. On May 26, 2023, the Board of Land and Natural Resources approved the proposed rules for statewide public hearing. DAR plans to hold these public rulemaking hearings in August. More information on these and other proposed rules can be found on the DAR website at <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dar/rules-and-public-notice/>.