

196th WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING**SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2023****STATE OF HAWAII, DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
DIVISION OF AQUATIC RESOURCES****REPORTING PERIOD: MAY 2023 – JULY 2023****1. FISHERIES****DEEP-7**

At the end of the reporting period, 355 fishers made 1,979 trips to catch a total of 191,782 lbs. of mixed deep-7 species during the 2023 fishing year (FY; Figure 1). Landings at the end of July 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.).

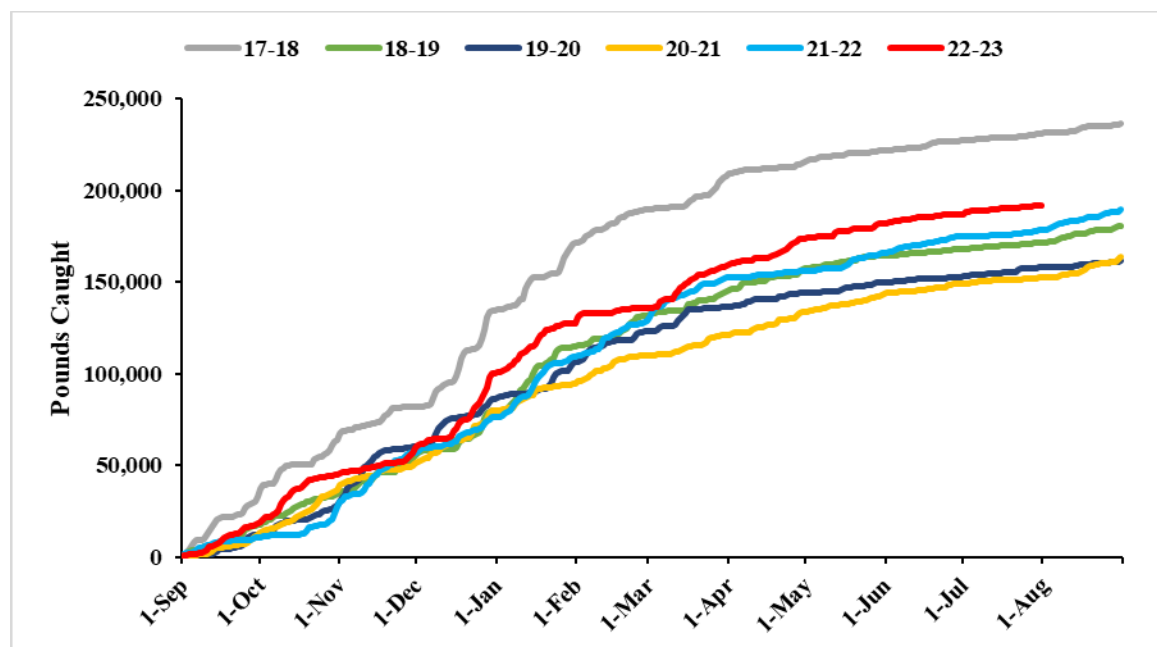


Figure 1. Cumulative Deep-7 catch, Fishing Years 2018-2023.

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.

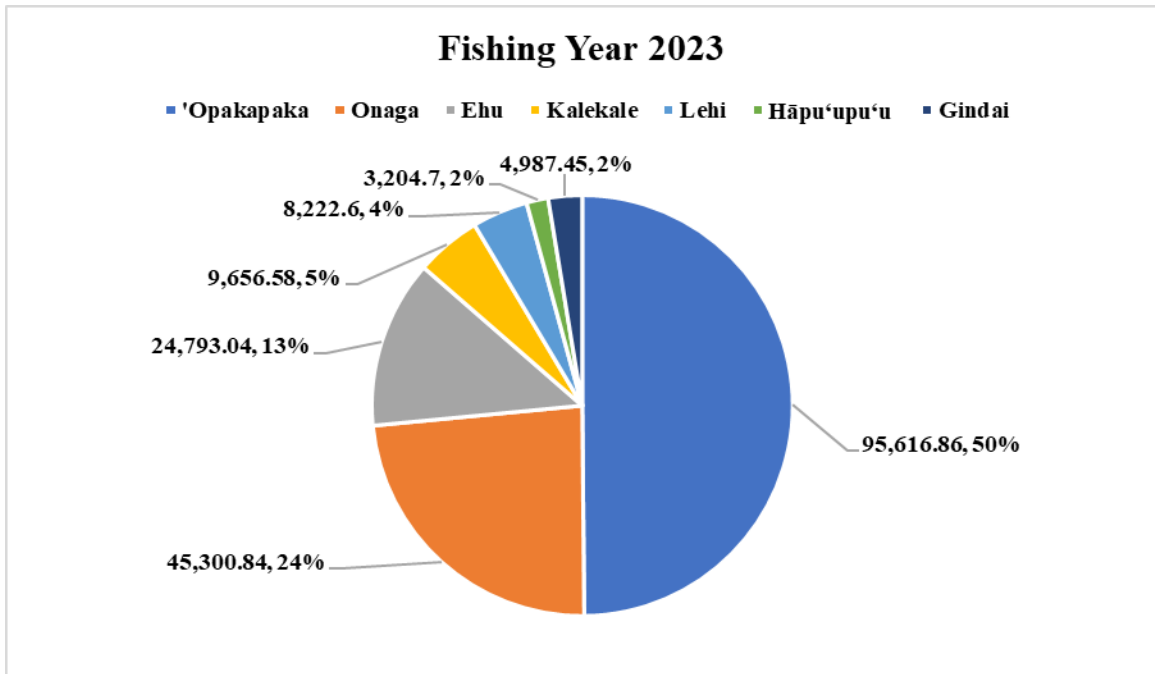


Figure 2. Species composition of Deep-7 catch during Fishing Year 2023, September – July.

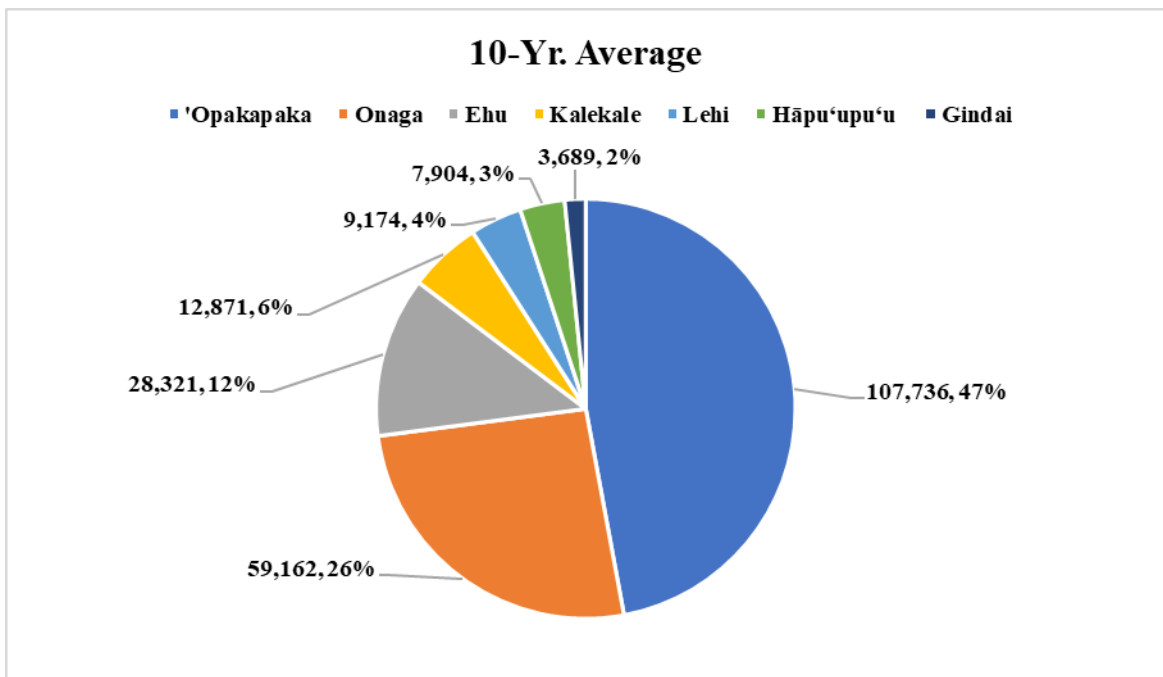


Figure 3. 10-yr. average annual catch and percent species composition for the Deep-7 fishery, Fishing Years 2013—2022.

KONA CRAB

At the end of the reporting period, 14 commercial fishers reported making 42 trips for a total of 3,628 lbs. of Kona crab landed (Figure 4). The Kona crab season closed on May 1, and will remain closed to both commercial and non-commercial catch until September 1.

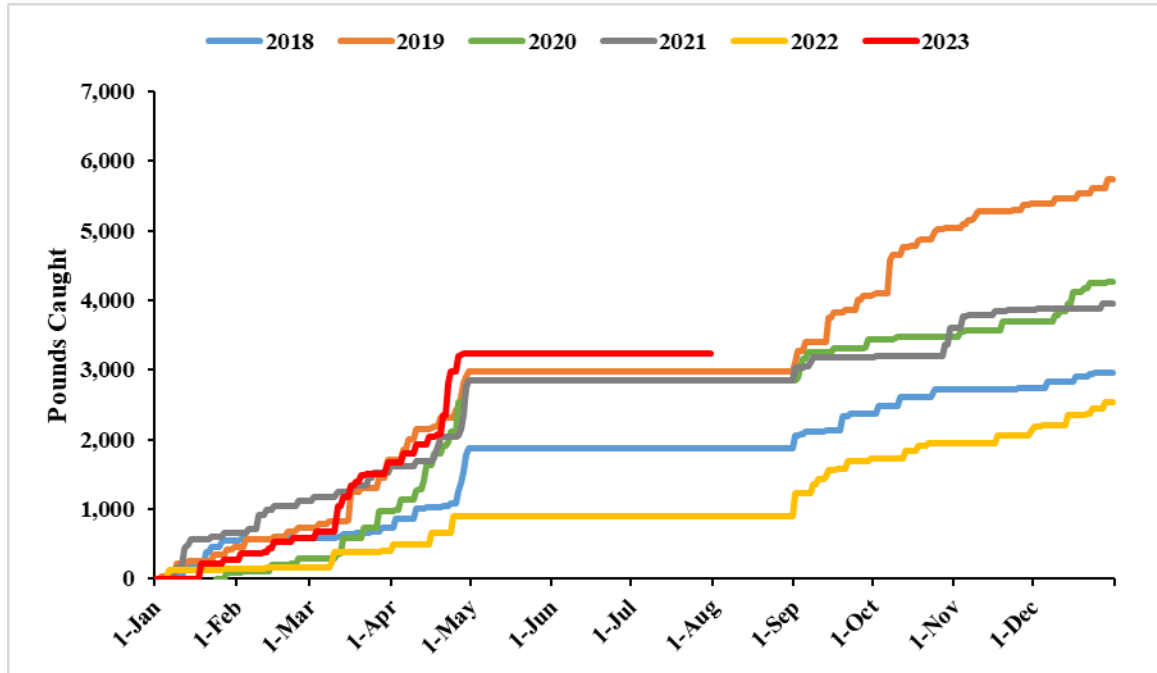


Figure 4. Cumulative MHI Kona crab catch, 2018-2023

UKU

By the end of the reporting period, 161 CML holders made 507 trips and reported a total of 29,862 lbs. of uku landings in 2023 (figure 5). Total uku landings in the first seven months of 2023 have been relatively stable, without summer pulses in catch seen in previous years.

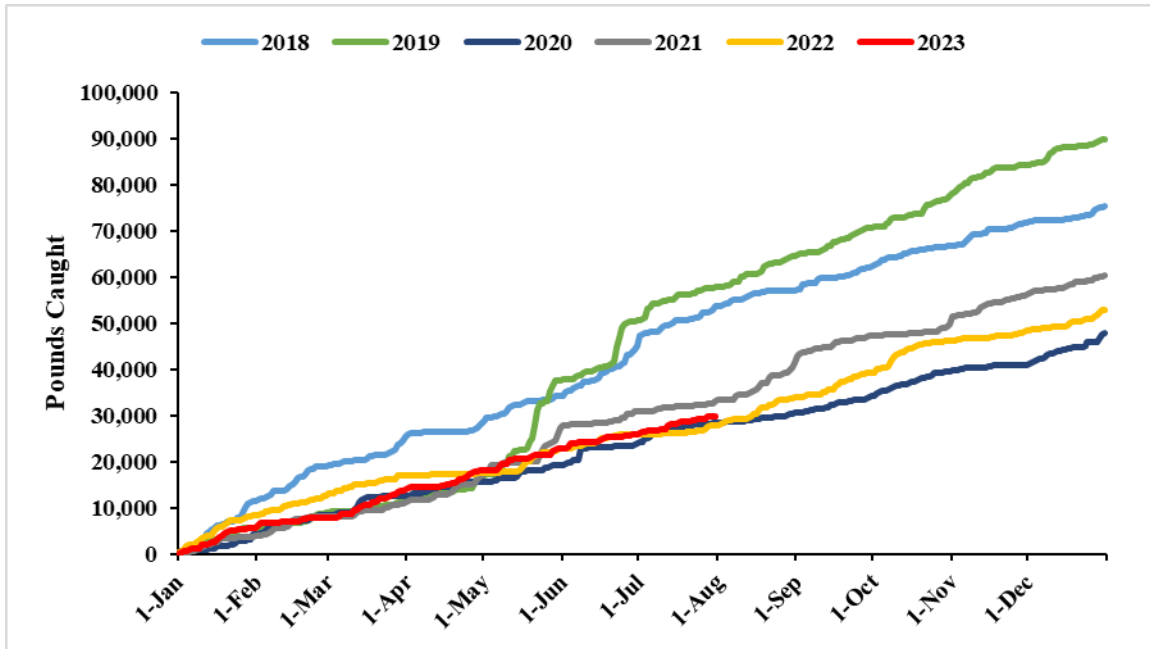


Figure 5. Cumulative MHI uku catch, 2018-2023

LICENSE AND REPORTING

A total of 1,880 Commercial Marine Licenses (CMLs) were issued or renewed between January and July 2023 for a total revenue of \$265,550 (Figure 6). We continue to see a long-term decrease in non-longline associated CMLs.

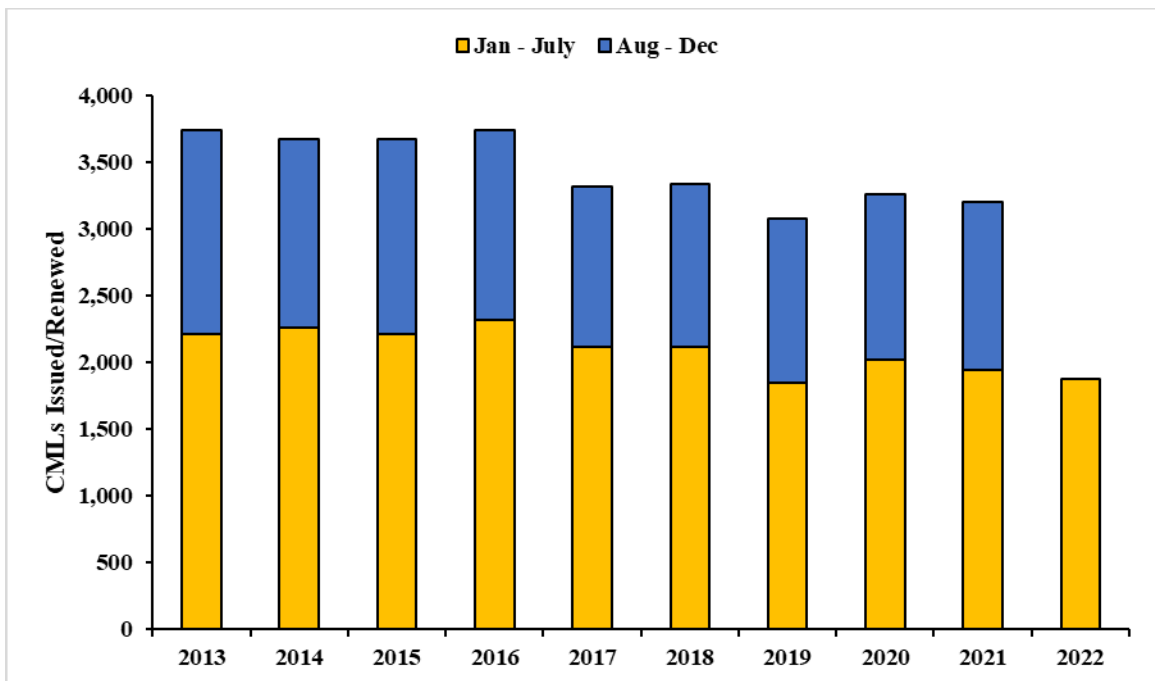


Figure 6. Annual CMLs issued/renewed, January 2013 - July 2023.

2. RESOURCE PROTECTION

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT (PMNM)

Permits Issued: Three (3) new permits were granted during this reporting period:

- One (1) PMNM Conservation and Management permit (final permit issued in July, 2023; permit was presented and approved at June 23rd, 2023 BLNR Meeting);
- One (1) PMNM Research permit (final permit issued in July, 2023; no BLNR review was required for this permit, as all activities are taking place in federal waters [in the PMNM Expansion Area and/or the PMNM original boundaries], which is outside of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine Refuge);
- One (1) PMNM Special Ocean Use permit (final permit issued in July, 2023; no BLNR review was required for this permit, as all activities are taking place on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge [MANWR], which is outside of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine Refuge)

Permit applications currently under review and their corresponding research, conservation, management, educational, cultural or special use objectives or activities can be found 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 at: <https://www.papahanaumokuakea.gov/permit/annualrep.html>.

The Permit Working Group (PWG) for the PMNM did not meet during this reporting period. The Permit Coordinator's Group (PCG) met monthly to discuss the regular issues/questions with applications and permits listed above. The PCG is reviewing three applications at this time. All three applications have been deferred until next year (spring/summer/fall of 2024) due to complications with vessel access or rescheduling. The Resource Protection Working Group (RPWG) met in June of 2023 to discuss the following items:

- RPWG member list, database summary, UAS policy update, detection dog update
- Biosecurity protocols to address ants on vessels-update on HRG cruises
 - Specifically for PMDP missions off the Imua which plan to have shore activities
- PMDP's removal of nets from areas known to have *Chondria tumulosa*
 - Current SOP is to leave nets intact if there is evidence of any nuisance algae present. This practice could create more vectors for spread while also causing entanglement hazards
- BMP011 Disinfection Protocol: Should quaternary ammonium compounds (QACs or quats) be removed from the suggested options for human health reasons
 - QAC article
- Other Business/Updates

Action Items Resulting from the RPWG meeting:

- Ants: Pesticide suggestions will be sent out to group
- Ants: Form a Sub-group for interim SOP for July cruises: Volunteers requested for this subgroup. Goal: To determine quick treatments that can be enacted in the interim before July such as surveys and bait stations on the vessels and around the shipyard prior to departure and to clarify protocols during the cruise. Biosecurity protocols shared that could be extrapolated to current cruises: PSD PMNM Biosecurity Protocol 2023. Kahana II (ONMS) departs July 3rd, Imua (PMDP) departs July 5th.

- Ants: Ant mitigation SOP for July cruise for K2 will be drafted/reviewed
- Algae: Ask UH to assist with testing viability of red algae upon return from PMDP cruise-discuss sampling protocols with PMDP to allow DAR/UH to sample nets with attached algal fragments to test for viability after disinfection treatment. Sample methods with phycologist will be discussed on K2 cruise.
- Ants/Algae: Full/approved PMDP biosecurity plan will be shared with the RPWG

3. ECOSYSTEM & HABITAT

FISH AGGREGATION DEVICES (FADs)

During the period of May 2023 to July 2023 activity was moderate for the FAD Program.

During May 2023, 11 FADs were replaced, 2 FADs had light maintenance performed and 1 FAD went missing as detailed below:

MC – Palaoa, Lanai (replaced on 5/2)
 SO – Kealaikahiki, Kahoolawe (replaced on 5/2)
 JJ – Kamohio, Kahoolawe (replaced on 5/2)
 HS – Halona Pt., Kahoolawe (replaced on 5/2)
 XX – Puako, Hawaii (replaced on 5/2)
 ZZ – Waima Pt., Hawaii (replaced on 5/2)
 F – Kailua-Kona, Hawaii (replaced on 5/2)
 KH – Kehena, Hawaii (replaced on 5/3)
 D – Kumukahi, Hawaii (replaced on 5/3)
 E – Lelewi, Hawaii (replaced on 5/3)
 M – Hana Bay, Maui (replaced on 5/4)

VV – Kahaluu, Hawaii (light replaced on 5/2)
 UU – Auau Pt., Hawaii (light replaced on 5/2)

B – Milolii, Hawaii (missing on 5/1)

June 2023, no activity.

During July 2023, 1 FAD was recovered as detailed below:

B – Milolii, Hawaii (recovered off Barking Sands, Kauai 7/17)

4. OTHER

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) MANAGEMENT

The DAR Ballast Water and Biofouling Program began assisting NOAA with AIS hull inspections for vessels that apply for permits to enter the PMNM as a way to increase capacity for these inspections.

Dawn N.S. Chang, Chairperson of DLNR, signed onto a multistate letter addressed to the USCG Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) State Engagement Lead, Captain Jerry D. Butwid, regarding expectations for future USCG VIDA State Engagement meetings. This letter addressed issues that were experienced during the EPA engagement process, including having appropriate information ahead of meetings, adequate time to make comments, and meaningful exchanges of information.

The DAR AIS Team has been working with multiple partner agencies to plan a response to an invasive octocoral (*Unomia stolonifera*) of high concern in Pearl Harbor. A workshop was held in June to create a framework for the response.

RULEMAKING

In early August, DAR held statewide hybrid (virtual and in-person) public rulemaking hearings on amendments to allow the take of female Kona crab and to extend the closed season by one month to May through September. DAR is currently reviewing and analyzing testimony received.

On August 16 and 17, DAR held hybrid public rulemaking hearings on draft rules for Commercial Marine Dealer Licenses, Commercial Marine Vessel Licenses, and Nonresident Recreational Marine Fishing Licenses. A third hybrid public hearing will be held on September 27 with in-person host sites on Maui, Molokai, and Lanai.

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/>.