

197th WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING

DECEMBER 12-13, 2023

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

REPORTING PERIOD: AUGUST 2023 – OCTOBER 2023

1. FISHERIES

DEEP-7 (FY 2023)

At the end of fishing year (FY) 2023, 359 fishers made 2,141 trips to catch a total of 196,343 lbs. of mixed deep-7 species (Figure 1). Landings at the end of FY 2023 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.). Reported days fished per year continue to decline over time, tracking together with catch (Figure 2).

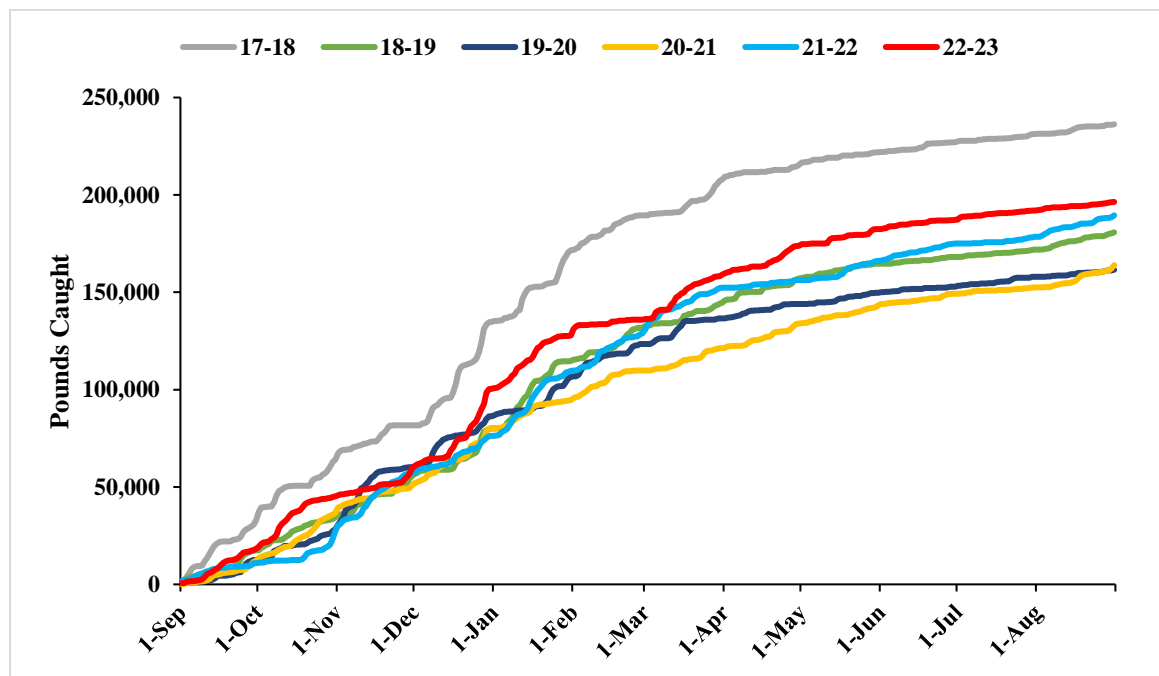


Figure 1. Cumulative Deep-7 catch, Fishing Years 2018-2023.

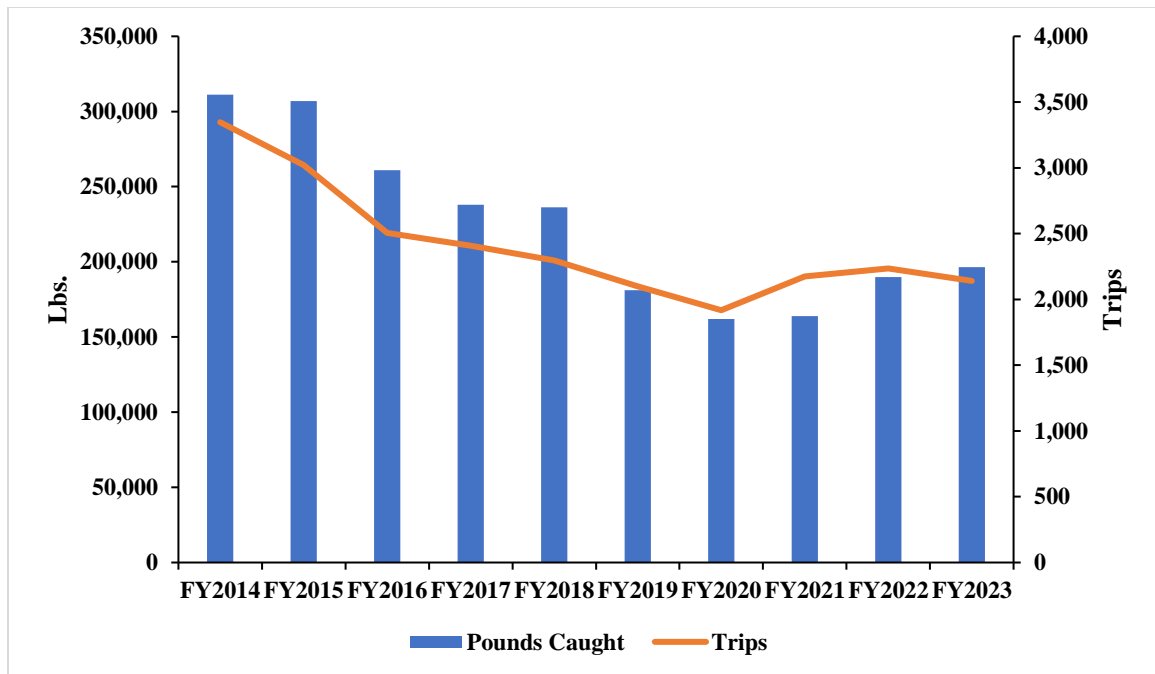


Figure 2. Annual Deep-7 catch and days fished, FY 2014 - FY 2023.

FY 2023 catch composition by species was relatively similar to the 10-year average (Figures 3 & 4). 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 were caught at a higher rate than previously seen.

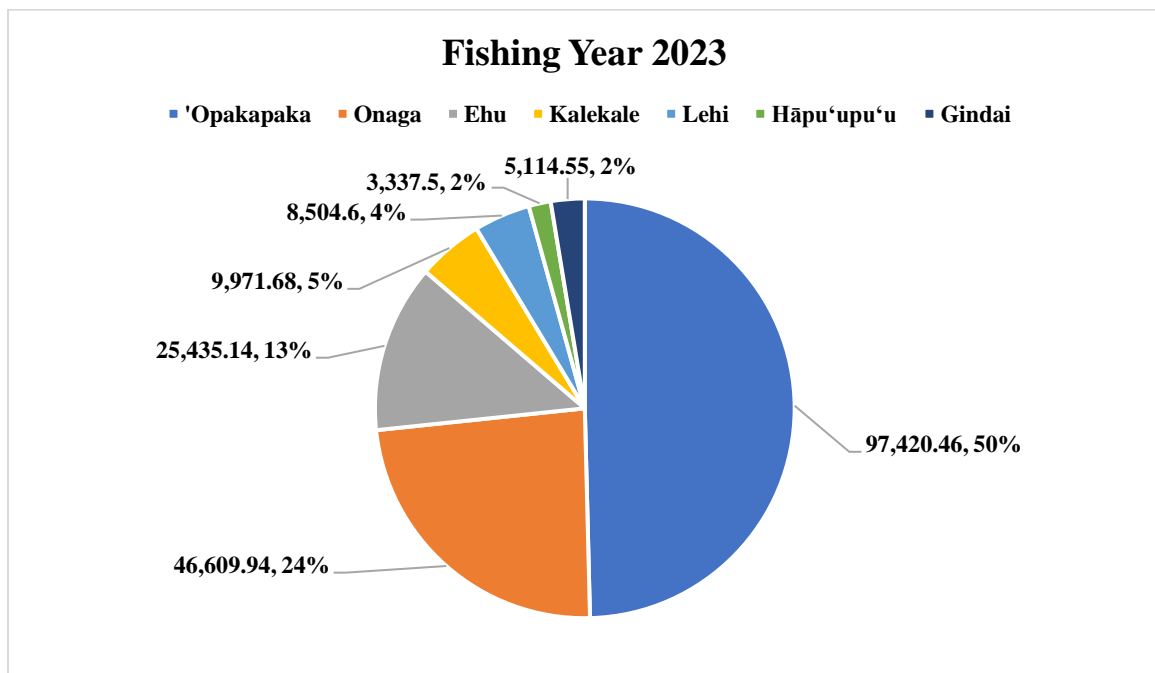


Figure 3. Species composition of Deep-7 catch during Fishing Year 2023.

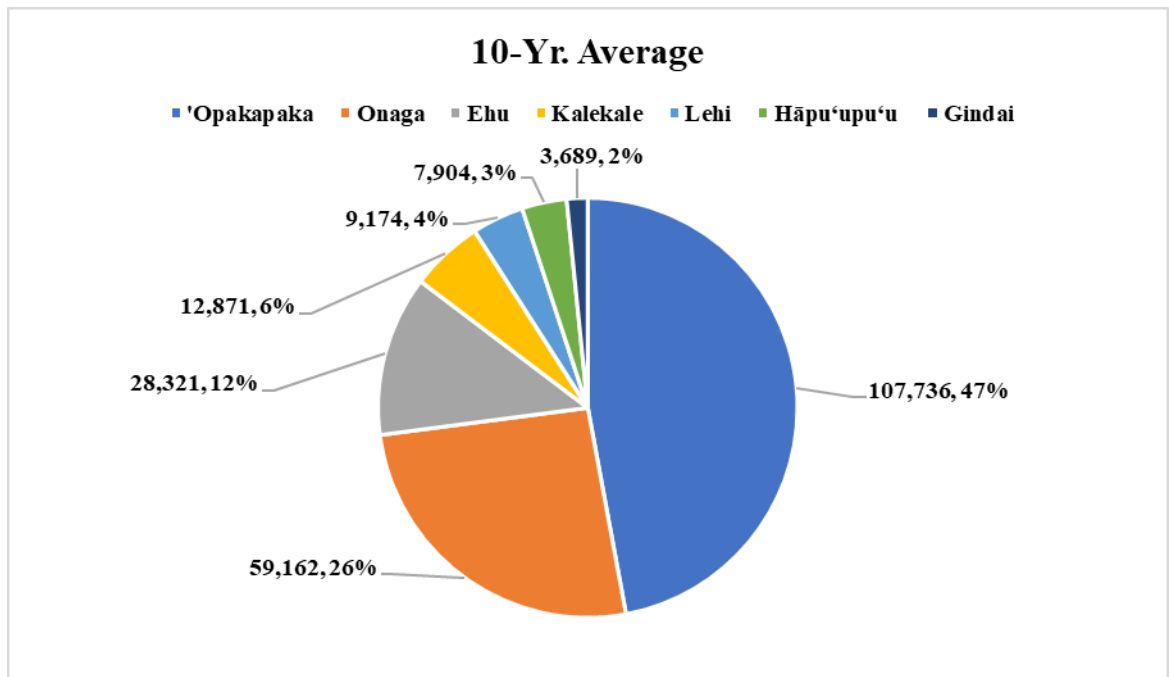


Figure 4. 10-yr. average annual catch and percent species composition for the Deep-7 fishery, Fishing Years 2013—2022.

DEEP-7 (FY 2024)

FY 2024 catch at the end of October is close to the 5-year average despite what appeared to be a relatively slow start in September (Figure 5). Catch in the next few months will largely dictate the rest of the season as peak demand for the fishery occurs around Christmas and the New Year. Of the past five FY, FY 2023 had the highest landings followed by FY 2022. It is unclear if this increasing trend will hold, though a normalizing (post Covid-19 pandemic) tourism economy and favorable market conditions should result in more effort.

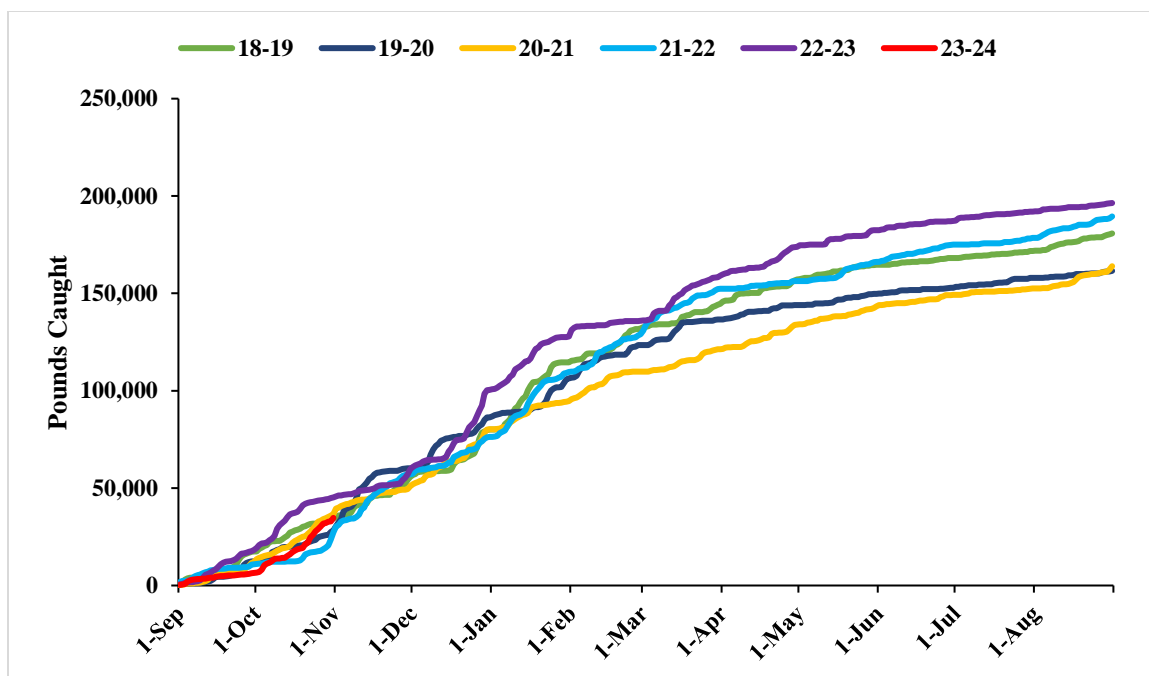


Figure 5. Cumulative Deep-7 catch, Fishing Years 2019-2024.

KONA CRAB

At the end of the reporting period, 19 commercial fishers reported making 60 trips for a total of 4,296 lbs. of Kona crab landed (Figure 6). By October 31, 2023, catch had exceeded four of the past five years though the fishery remains small in comparison to its previous size. Catch for the 2023 season post-seasonal closure has been slow despite relatively good catch pre-seasonal closure.

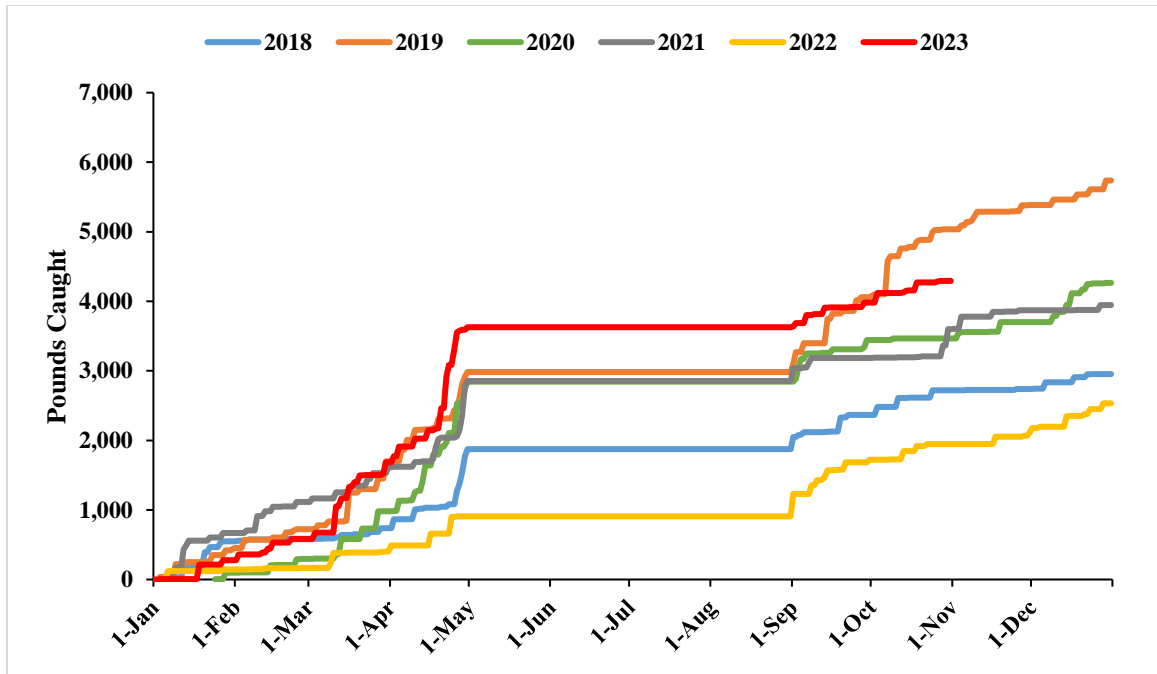


Figure 6. Cumulative MHI Kona crab catch, 2018-2023.

UKU

By the end of the reporting period, 199 CML holders made 737 trips and reported a total of 41,916 lbs. of uku landings in 2023 (figure 7). Uku landings in 2023 continue to increase steadily over time, largely without the seasonal pulses that typify years with higher landings.

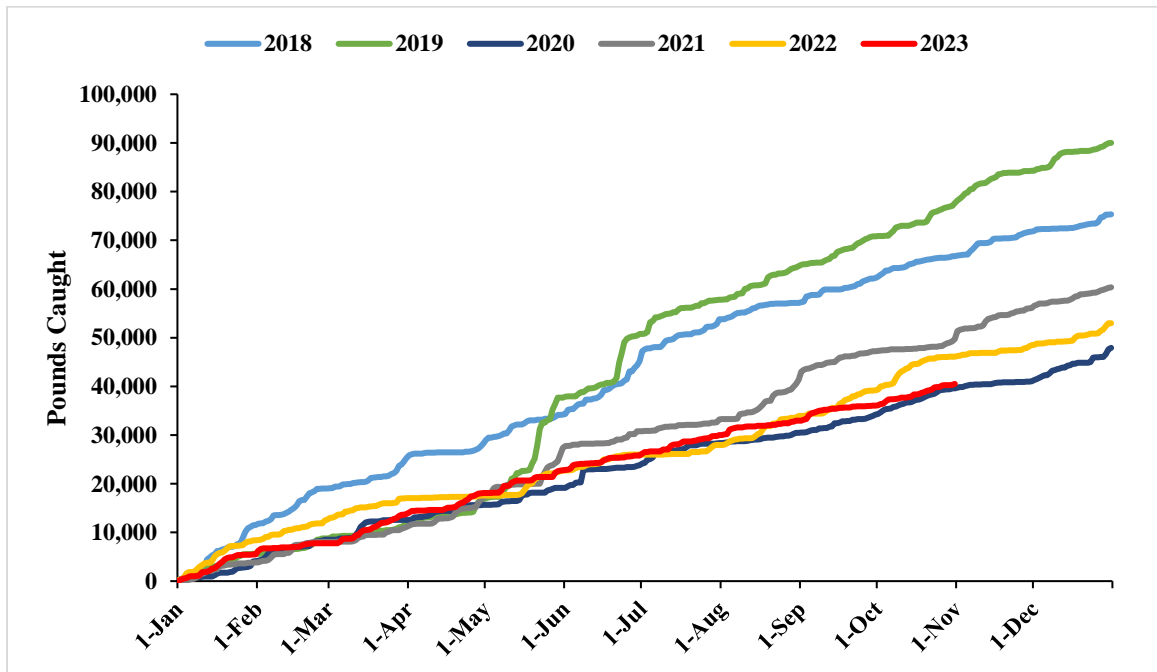


Figure 7. Cumulative MHI uku catch, 2018-2023.

LICENSE AND REPORTING

A total of 2,649 Commercial Marine Licenses (CMLs) were issued or renewed between January and October 2023 for a total revenue of \$363,150 (Figure 6). We continue to see a long-term decrease in non-longline associated CMLs.

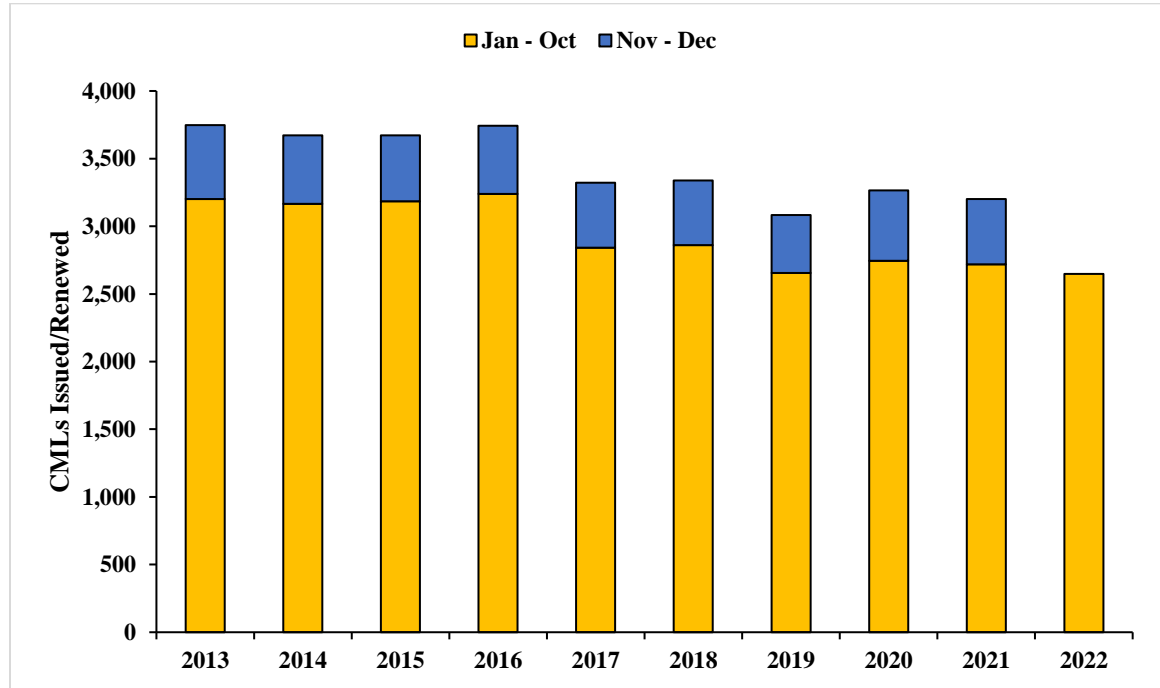


Figure 8. Annual CMLs issued/renewed, January 2013 - October 2023.

2. RESOURCE PROTECTION

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT (PMNM)

Permits Issued/Amended:

- One (1) PMNM Research permit amendment (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)

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>.

Applications in Review:

- One (1) Conservation and Management permit
- One (1) Special Ocean Use permit (modification to existing permit)
- One (1) Research permit (modification to existing permit)
- One (1) Research permit

The Permit Working Group (PWG) for the PMNM (group that works on BMPs, policy suggestions, etc.) did not meet between August, September and October of 2023 and the Permit Coordinator's Group (PCG), met each month in August, September and October of 2023 to discuss the regular issues/questions with applications and permits listed above). A sub-group of the Resource Protection Working Group (group that works on AIS prevention or nuisance species eradication or similar type objectives) met in October of 2023. Meeting was to discuss potential alternatives to using the currently approved disinfection protocol for marine debris (approved for the 2023 PMDP Biosecurity Plan) which included soaking the debris in water-tight containers in 10% concentration bleach solution for a certain period of time. PMDP communicated the learned experience of implementing this disinfection protocol in the summer of 2023 which included the hazard of exposure to bleach during disinfection protocols and the hazard of the container potentially shifting or breaking free on the ship (due to weight shifts occurring from water movement inside the container). The results of this subgroup meeting was an agreement to form a sub group to design some trials that would help determine the most effect alternative to bleaching – proposed methods to test are applied heat treatment on a container full on nets (similar to a bed-bug treatment that currently exist for shipping containers) and desiccation through exposure to the sun and dry temperatures. Also discussed was potentially using less caustic methods for the interim (like using lesser concentrations of bleach throughout using the original method) before the group receives the results of the desiccation/heat treatment methods in 2024 – no interim treatment has yet been determined.

3. ECOSYSTEM & HABITAT

FISH AGGREGATION DEVICES (FADs)

During the period of August 2023 to October 2023 activity was moderate for the FAD Program.

During August 2023, 8 FADs were replaced as detailed below:

X – Kahuku, Oahu (replaced on 8/19)
 CO – Kaena Pt., Oahu (replaced on 8/27)
 S – Pokai Bay, Oahu (replaced on 8/27)
 EK – Hanalei., Kauai (replaced on 8/26)
 Z – Kipukai, Kauai (replaced on 8/26)
 CK – Makahuena Pt., Kauai (replaced on 8/26)
 AA – Port Allen, Kauai (replaced on 8/26)
 KK – Waimea, Kauai (replaced on 8/26)

September 2023, 2 FAD were missing as detailed below:

N – Cape Halawa, Molokai (missing on 9/8)
 WK – Wailua, Kauai (missing on 9/11)

During October 2023, 1 FAD was missing and 1 FAD was recovered as detailed below:

XX – Puako, Hawaii (missing on 10/30)

PP – Koloa, Kauai (recovered off Waimea, Kauai 10/12)

4. OTHER

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) MANAGEMENT

The EPA released a Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to VIDA on October 18th. The notice presents additional regulatory options for the final VIDA rule, as well as data on ballast water management system type-approval. States were given a 60-day comment period, and the State of Hawai‘i is working with other Pacific states and territories to develop comments to respond to the Supplemental Notice by December 18th.

The AIS Field Team is working with the nonprofit Mālama Maunalua to conduct urchin caging studies within Maunalua Bay to study invasive algae grazing. The team completed surveys of manatee mudflower (*Micranthemum glomeratum*) in Nu‘uanu stream to delineate the spread of the non-native species. A large piece of marine debris washed ashore by Kualoa Ranch, and the team collected fouling specimens for analysis of potential introduced species by the Bishop Museum. The team continues to provide consultation on the introduction and spread of non-native aquarium species in Pearl Harbor, where the species count has increased to six.

LEGISLATION

The State of Hawaii is seeking to become a member of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. Becoming a member state will enhance Hawaii’s ability to manage state and regional marine fisheries resources through increased collaboration with other Pacific states. DLNR plans to introduce state legislation in the 2024 session to support joining the PSMFC.

RULEMAKING

On December 8, the Board of Land and Natural Resources considered final rule amendments to allow the take of female Kona crab and to extend the closed season by one month to May through September. (DAR will provide update based on the outcome of the BLNR meeting)

DAR held statewide hybrid public hearings on proposed rules for Commercial Marine Dealer Licenses, Commercial Marine Vessel Licenses, and Nonresident Recreational Marine Fishing Licenses in August and September. DAR plans to present the proposed rules to the BLNR for final rulemaking on January 12, 2024.

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/>.