

203rd WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING**JUNE 9-11, 2025****STATE OF HAWAII, DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
DIVISION OF AQUATIC RESOURCES****REPORTING PERIOD: FEBRUARY 2025 – APRIL 2025****1. FISHERIES****DEEP-7 (FY 2025)**

At the end of the reporting period, 309 fishers made 1,488 trips to catch a total of 140,075 lbs. of mixed deep-7 species during the 2025 fishing year (FY; Figure 1). Relatively high landings in the month of December (44,134 lbs.) compensated for a very slow start to the season. Reported catch in December 2024 was the highest total monthly landing since December 2017.

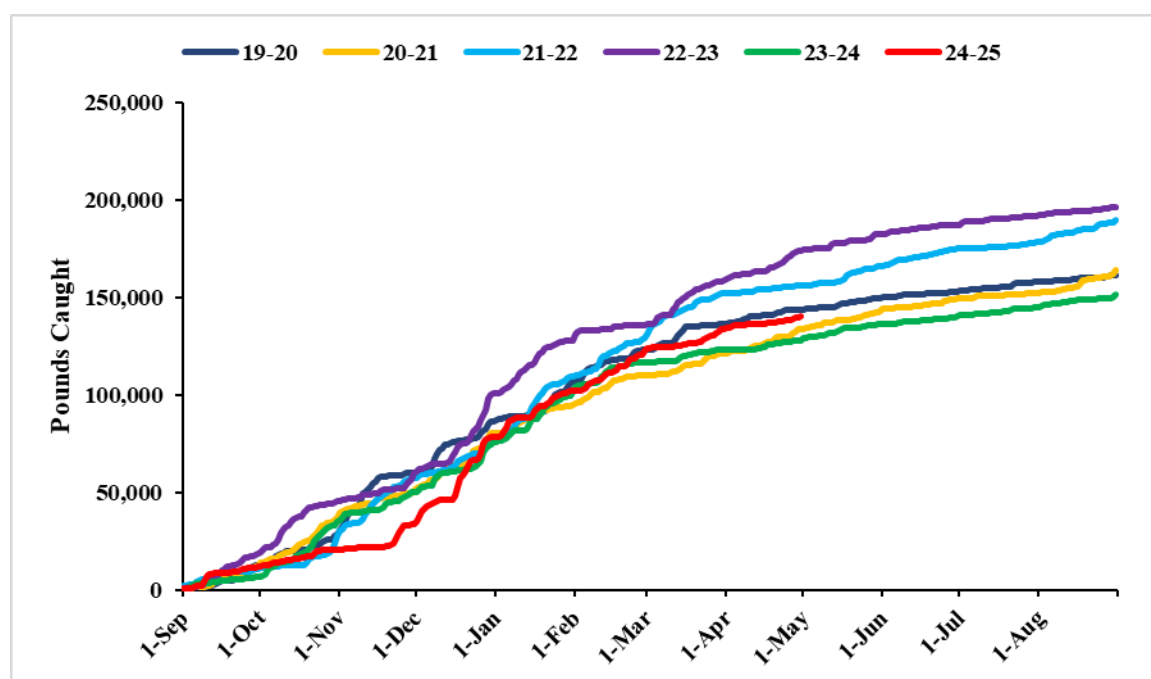


Figure 1. Cumulative Deep-7 catch, Fishing Years 2020-2025.

Catch composition at the end of the reporting period included a high ratio of onaga landings relative to other species including opakapaka (Figures 2 & 3). ‘Opakapaka and onaga landings in FY 2025 track closely at similar rates which though seen in some previous years is considered somewhat atypical for the fishery.

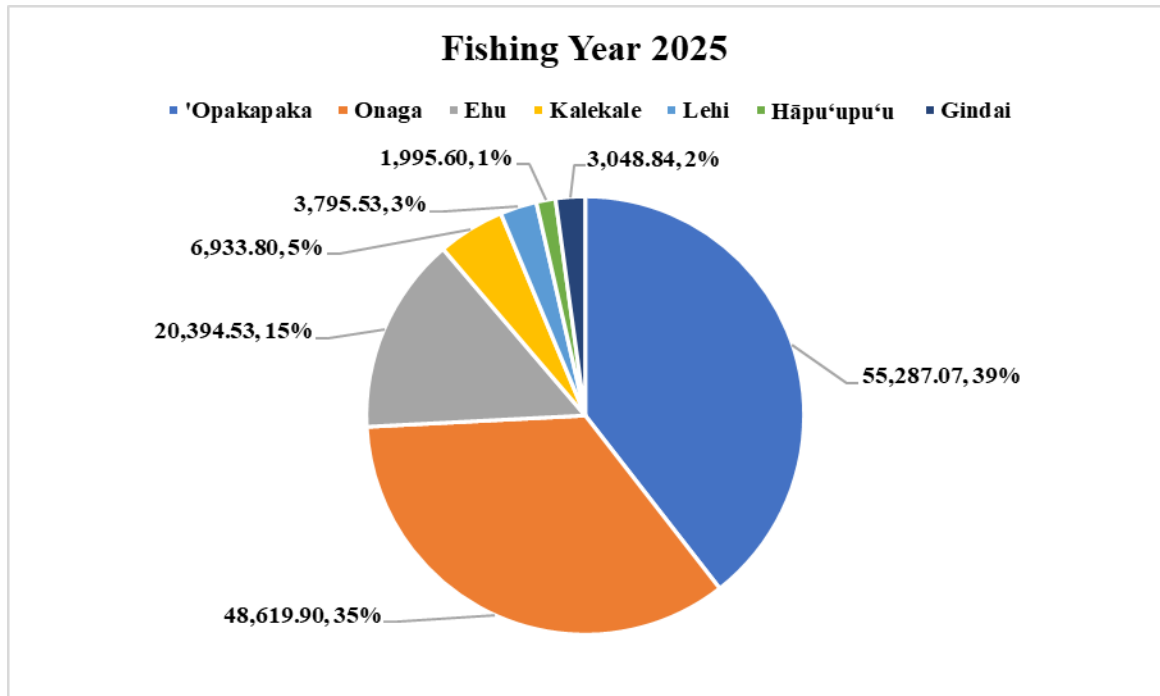


Figure 2. Species composition of Deep-7 catch during Fishing Year 2025, September – April.

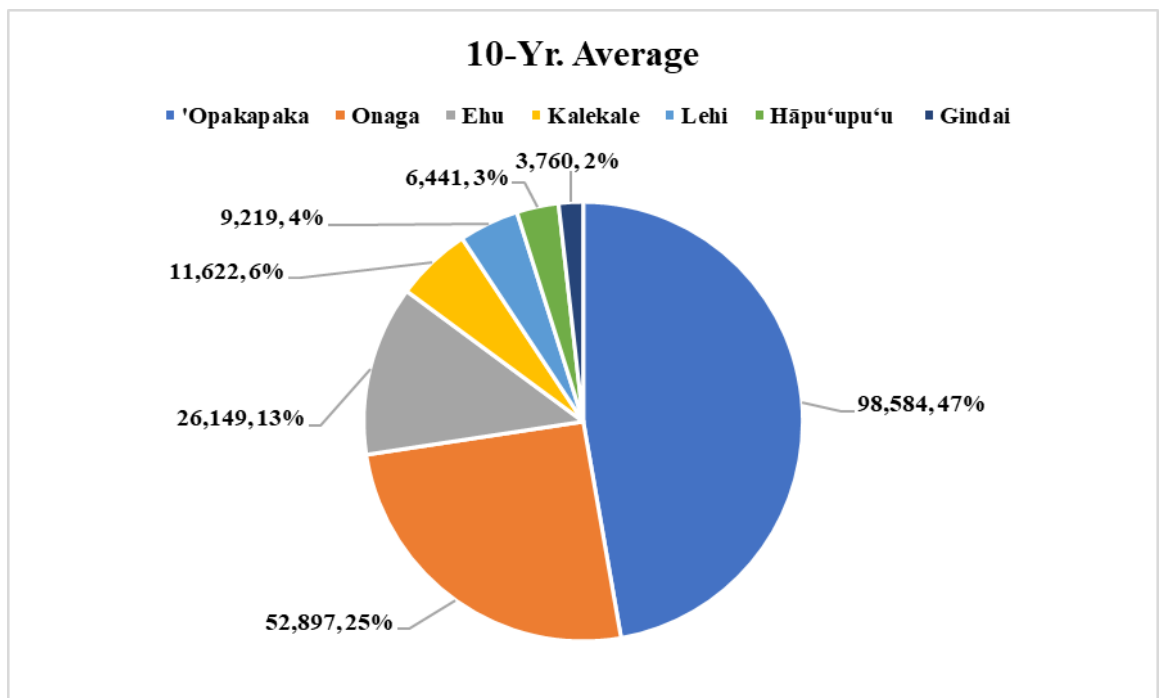


Figure 3. 10-yr. average annual catch and percent species composition for the Deep-7 fishery, Fishing Years 2014—2024.

KONA CRAB (2025)

By the end of April 2025, 17 commercial fishers reported making 58 trips for a total of 3,557 lbs. of Kona crab landed (Figure 4). Relatively modest yet persistent increases in effort, participation, and landings following the February 2024 repeal of the no-take of females continue to suggest some renewed interest in the fishery given the prospect of higher retention rates and profitability. The lack of immediate expansion of the fishery following the regulatory changes of 2024 suggest that it remains a seasonal, secondary fishery. We likely not see the fishery return to previous levels of landings without the emergence of new fishery-focused highliners.

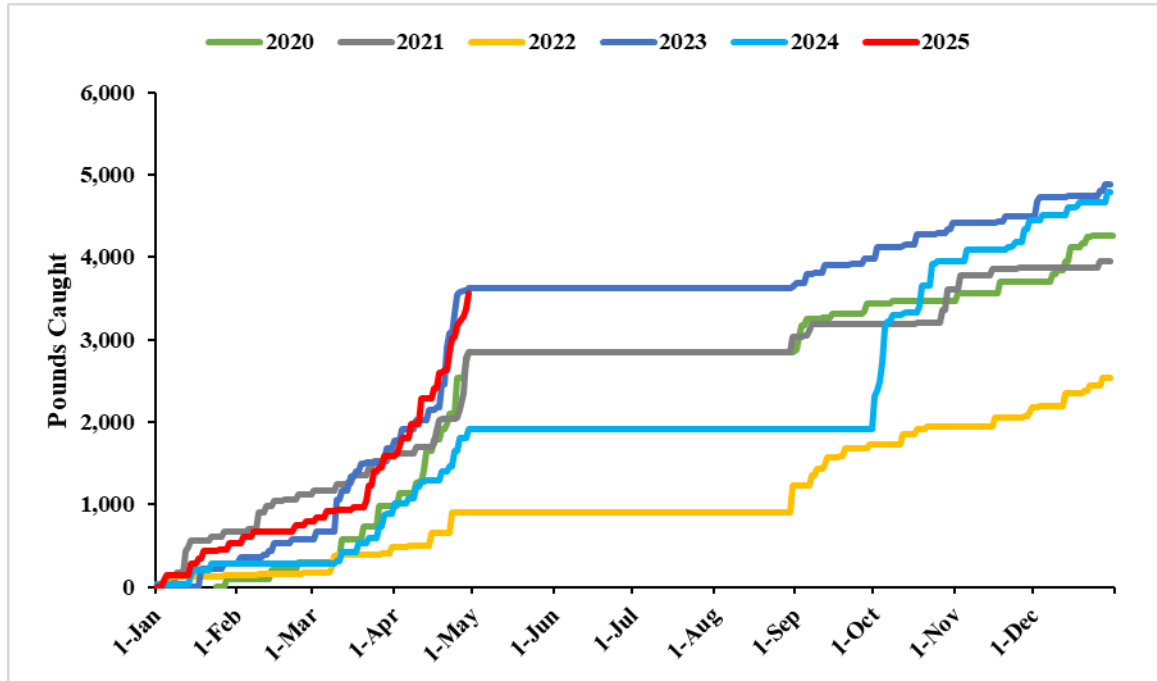


Figure 4. Cumulative MHI Kona crab catch, 2020-2025.

UKU (2025)

At the end of the reporting period, 130 CML holders made 320 trips and reported a total of 22,079 lbs. of uku landings (Figure 5). An upturn in catch occurring in March and April deviated from the persistent trend in low landings seen throughout 2024. Landings in the month of April (7,968 lbs.) were the highest since January 2022. Though this increase is likely not attributable to any one singular driver, improved mean statewide ex-vessel price per pound and potentially improved market capacity are suspected.

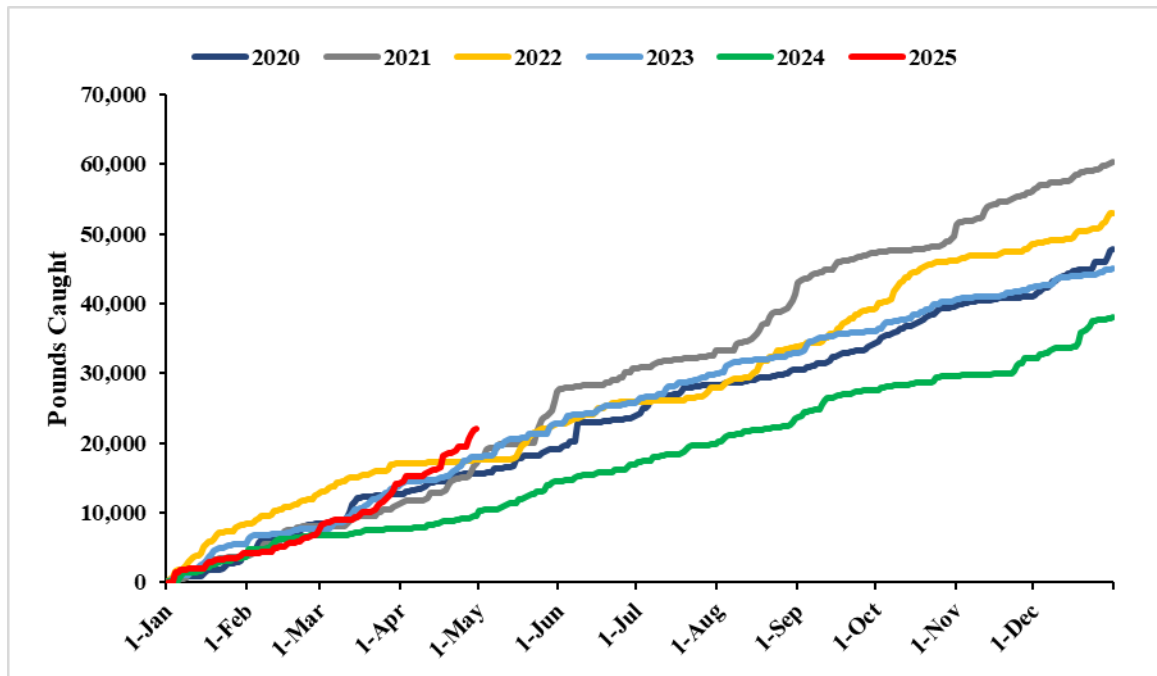


Figure 5. Cumulative MHI uku catch, 2019-2024.

In March, DAR launched a new project to collect information from registered boaters on uku fishing catch and effort. The goal of the project is to come up with a better estimate of total uku catch in the Main Hawaiian Islands. This project sends out monthly surveys to a random subset of registered vessel owners in Hawai‘i. The first set of monthly surveys was mailed in April, and this will continue for at least 12 months.

2. LICENSING

COMMERCIAL MARINE LICENSE (CML)

A total of 968 Commercial Marine Licenses (CMLs) were issued or renewed by the end of April 2025 (Figure 6). Total revenue for these licenses was \$127,550. We continue to see a long-term decrease in non-longline associated CMLs accompanied by a steady increase in longline associated CMLs (Figure 7).

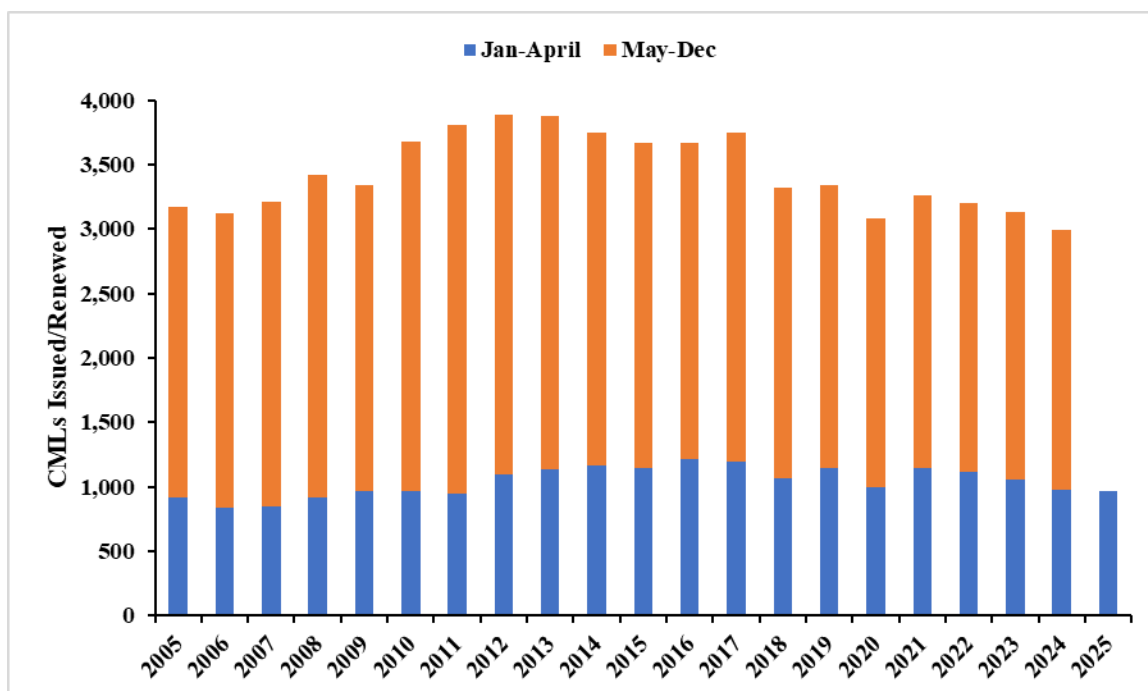


Figure 6. Annual CMLs issued/renewed, 2005 - 2025.

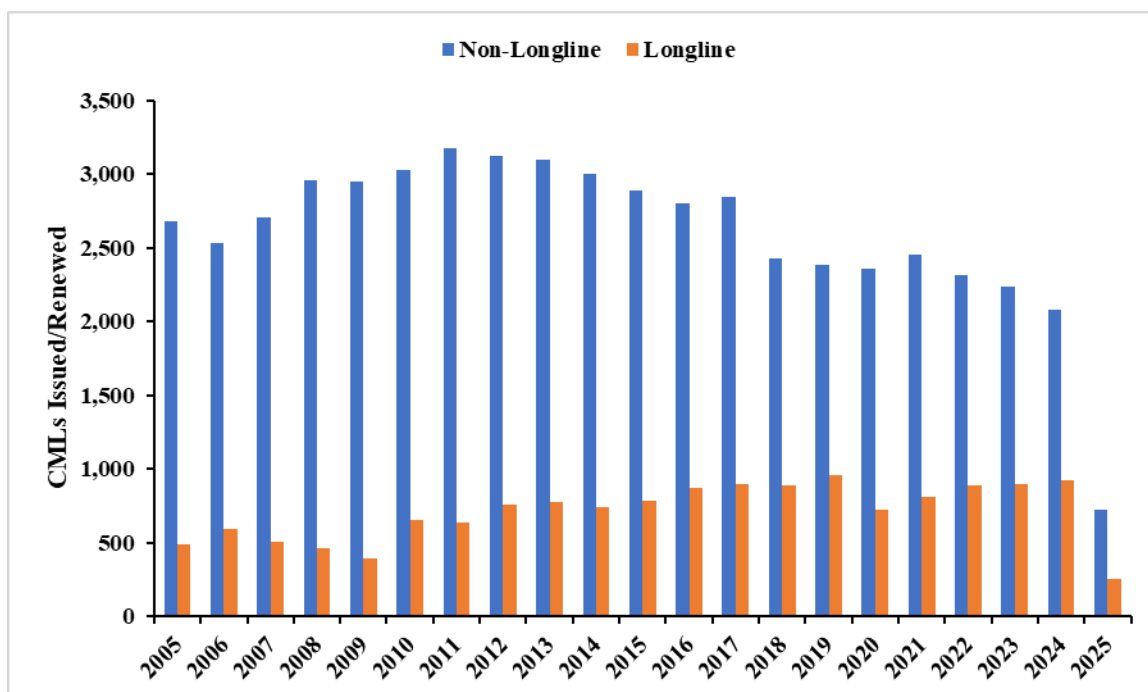


Figure 7. Annual CMLs issued/renewed by gear preference, 2005-2025.

COMMERCIAL MARINE VESSEL LICENSE (CMVL)

The State of Hawai‘i began offering the Commercial Marine Vessel License (CMVL) as an option to CML holders in April of 2025. The CMVL can be attached to a specific vessel, covering the CML requirement for all crew when operating aboard that vessel. In the first month of the CMVL being offered, 22 longline and 7 non-longline licenses were issued. Total revenue from these CMVLs was \$41,100.

3. RESOURCE PROTECTION

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT (PMNM)

Permits Issued:

1. Research permit to UH researcher to deploy small Uncrewed Marine Systems (sUMS) and Camera/Hydrophone to study *Chondria tumulosa* (nuisance alga) issued 4/28/25
2. Research permit to a UH researcher for black footed albatross research issued 2/4/25
3. Native Hawaiian practices permit renewal to cultural practitioner for collections of bird parts for traditional Hawaiian cultural practices issued 2/18/25
4. Native Hawaiian practices permit renewal to cultural practitioner for intertidal monitoring and huli‘ia issued 5/10/25
5. Conservation and management permit to marine debris removal non-profit organization to conduct large-scale marine debris removal operations issued 4/1/25
6. Special ocean use permit to marine debris removal non-profit organization to do photography as part of a fundraising effort to support its large-scale marine debris removal operations issued 4/1/25

Applications in Review / Processing:

1. Special ocean use permit for a film production to take place on and about Kuaihelani (Midway Atoll)

3. ECOSYSTEM & HABITAT

FISH AGGREGATION DEVICES (FADs)

During the period of February 2025 to April 2025 activity was light for the FAD Program.

During February 2024, No activity

During March 2025, 1 FAD buoy reported a tie up as detailed below:

II – Haleiwa, Oahu had F/V Ping Tang tied up (3/12)

During April 2024, no activity

4. OTHER

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) MANAGEMENT

The DAR Aquatic Invasive Species Team response to the non-native anemone, *Anemonia manjano*, introduction in Kāneʻohe Bay is ongoing. *A. manjano* samples were collected to test various eradication methods, including smothering via epoxy and tarping combined with chlorine. The trials revealed that only tarping and chlorine treatment successfully eradicated the anemones within 24 hours and that epoxy was ineffective. The team communicated with partners, stakeholders, and the community about *A. manjano* by distributing pamphlets and fliers and through presentations and Q&As with local boards and community groups. DAR is currently pursuing permitting for intervention options with more information to come.

PACIFIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION (PSMFC)

Governor Green has made two interim appointments to represent Hawaiʻi on the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC). Phil Fernandez and Gil Kualiʻi will serve as Hawaiʻi Commissioners, along with a BLNR Chair Dawn Chang or her designated representative. Both interim commissioners will have to be confirmed by the Senate during the next Legislative Session

FISHING LICENSE UPDATES

On April 14, 2025, DAR began issuing Commercial Marine Vessel Licenses (CMVL) through our online commercial marine license web portal. This optional license allows commercial fishing vessel operators to purchase a single license to satisfy the individual CML requirement for all crew aboard the vessel. An individual must first have a Commercial Marine License in order to purchase a CMVL. The fee is \$100 for a non-longline vessel less than 22 feet in length, \$200 for a non-longline vessel 22 feet or greater in length, and \$1,500 for a longline vessel. As of April 30, 2025, DAR has issued 22 longline and 7 non-longline CMVLs.

DAR is also finalizing the development of a Commercial Marine Dealer License, which should be implemented within the next month or so.

More information about these and other licenses can be found on the DAR website at <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dar/licenses-permits/>.

FISHING VIOLATIONS IN THE NEWS

On May 7, DOCARE officers seized a fishing vessel and issued a citation to a fisherman for fishing approximately 7 miles offshore with longline gear. State and federal laws prohibit the use of longline fishing gear within approximately 75 miles from shore of the Main Hawaiian Islands and without a Hawai'i Longline Limited Entry permit. This case is ongoing.

CMLS AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE HAWAI'I ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (HEPA)

As a result of a series of lawsuits involving commercial aquarium fishing, there is potential that all commercial fishing pursuant to CMLs could be temporarily shut down if found to be subject to HEPA environmental review requirements. During the 2025 Legislative session, a number of different bills were introduced to try to preempt a shutdown of commercial fishing in the event of an unfavorable court ruling.

- House Bill 123 and Senate Bill 22 proposed to exempt actions involving the operation and management of fisheries in the State from environmental review requirements.
- House Bill 661 and Senate Bill 1074 proposed to allow previously authorized activities to continue during the environmental review process if HEPA is found to apply.
- None of these bills passed.

The State is currently reviewing its HEPA exemption lists to determine whether commercial fishing activity could be declared exempt from the preparation of an EA or EIS if it is determined that HEPA applies to CMLs.