



Hawai'i Division of Aquatic Resources

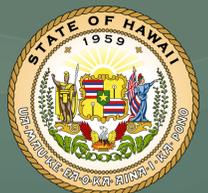
NONRESIDENT RECREATIONAL MARINE FISHING LICENSE



A'u (blue marlin)
Photo credit: Edwin Watamura



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR



Since the Nonresident Recreational Marine Fishing License (NRMFL) requirement went into effect in February 2025, the NRMFL has generated over \$1 million to support effective marine fishery management in the State of Hawai'i.

DAR will leverage these funds to increase fishery management capacity and advance priority projects, including fish aggregation devices, artificial reefs, the Hawai'i Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS), stock enhancement research, and improvements to public fishing access and infrastructure. This new program also provides valuable information on non-resident fishers and creates opportunities to better engage with visitors who fish in Hawai'i.

Brian Neilson

BRIAN NEILSON

DIVISION OF AQUATIC RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR



Mahimahi (dorado)

Photo credit: Edwin Watamura

THE NONRESIDENT RECREATIONAL MARINE FISHING LICENSE

The Nonresident Recreational Marine Fishing License (NRMFL) is a sustainable funding solution led by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) to support management efforts for marine fishery resources by the State of Hawai'i.

Pursuant to Act 48 (2021), DLNR was authorized to administer this new program and adopt rules to collect fees from nonresident noncommercial (subsistence and recreational) fishers ages 15 and older. All active-duty military and their family are exempt from this requirement.

In February 2025, the online licensing system used to purchase a NRMFL became available. As this new online portal has the capacity to support other licenses and permits, such as annual lay net permits, DAR management efforts have already benefitted from the NRMFL program.

This new fishing license requirement fills a revenue generation gap for nonresident user groups. Nonresident recreational fishing licenses are a common practice in other states throughout the U.S. and have an established precedent of success in generating financial resources and informing management actions.



Ono (wahoo) and mahimahi (dorado)
Photo credit: Edwin Watamura

\$20



35,277 daily licenses
\$704,756 generated

46 K



46,196 licenses purchased
by nonresidents during 2025

\$40



8,778 weekly licenses
\$350,814 generated

54



54 countries represented by
nonresident fishers in 2025

\$1.2 M



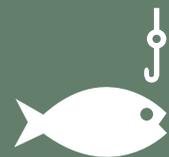
\$1,205,304 generated from
licenses purchased in 2025

\$70

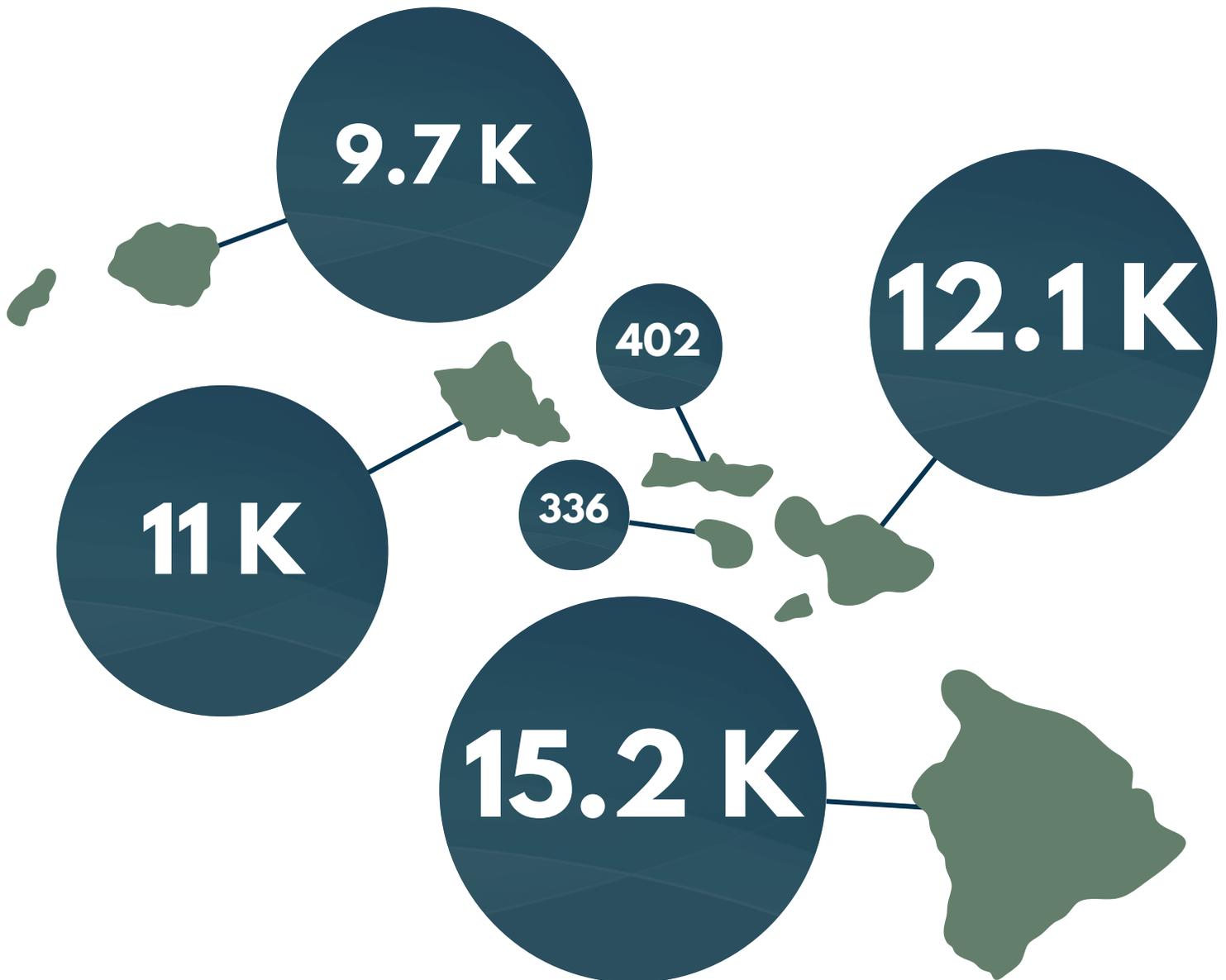


2,141 annual licenses
\$149,734 generated

\$476 K



\$476,497 spent or committed
as of December 2025



FISHING ACROSS HAWAI'I

Data collected from nonresident fishers during the NRMFL application process has created a novel dataset for both marine tourism and fisheries management. New insights include how many nonresident fishers are participating in the noncommercial fisheries of Hawai'i, which islands visitors intend to fish during their travels, charter versus non-charter activities, and more. Explored in the following pages, 1-Day licenses associated with fishing charters are most common on Hawai'i Island, Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui, while 1-Year licenses not associated with fishing charters are most common on Lāna'i and Moloka'i. Insights from this new dataset will be critical for understanding place-based needs for marine stewardship moving forward and will inform future marine management priorities across the State.

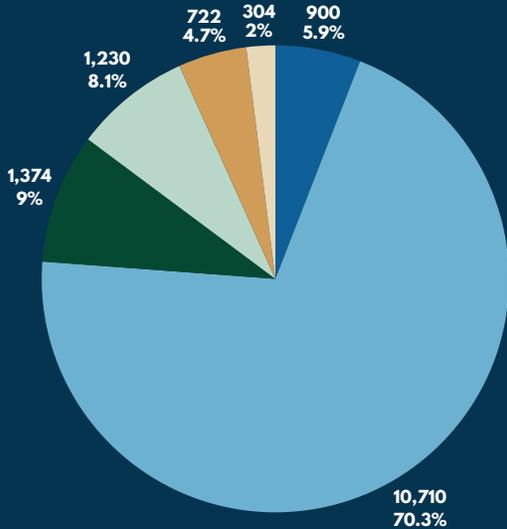
Graphic represents islands across Hawai'i from upper-left to lower-right identified during application process.

Kaua'i - 9,702 / O'ahu - 10,991 / Moloka'i - 402 / Lāna'i - 336 / Maui - 12,135 / Hawai'i Island - 15,240

LICENSES BY ISLAND

1 DAY (NON-CHARTER) 1 DAY (CHARTER) 7 DAY (NON-CHARTER) 7 DAY (CHARTER) 1 YEAR (NON-CHARTER) 1 YEAR (CHARTER)

Hawai'i Island



Number of NRMFL with intent to fish on this island identified during application process:
15,240

Most common licensing period during 2025:
1-Day Licenses (76.2%)

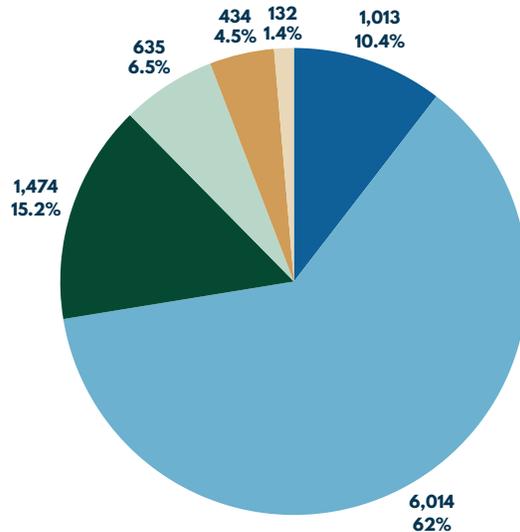
Charter activity on Hawai'i Island (80%) was higher than non-charter activity (20%)

Number of NRMFL with intent to fish on this island identified during application process:
9,702

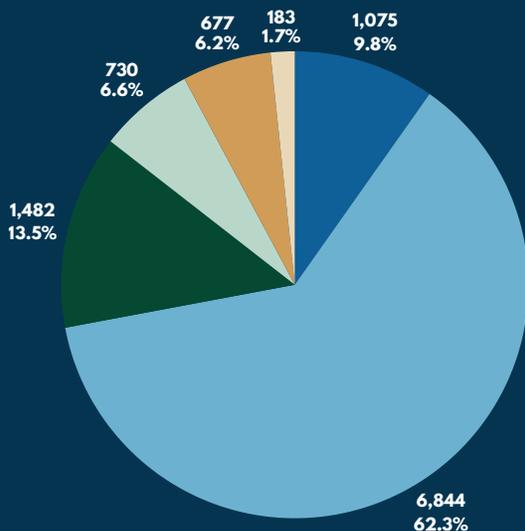
Most common licensing period during 2025:
1-Day Licenses (72.4%)

Charter activity on Kaua'i (70%) was higher than non-charter activity (30%)

Kaua'i



O'ahu



Number of NRMFL with intent to fish on this island identified during application process:
10,991

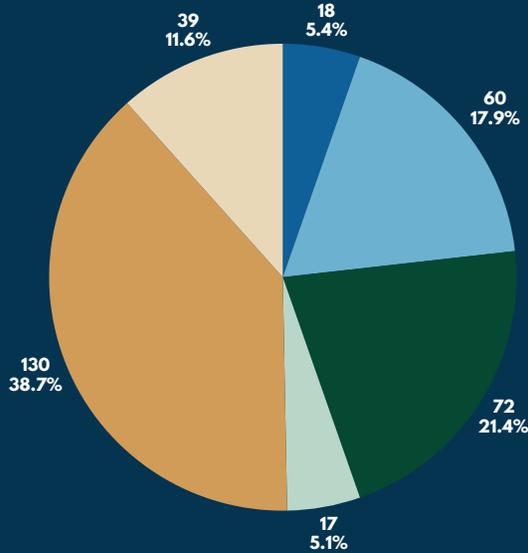
Most common licensing period during 2025:
1-Day Licenses (72.1%)

Charter activity on O'ahu (71%) was higher than non-charter activity (29%)

LICENSES BY ISLAND

1 DAY (NON-CHARTER) 1 DAY (CHARTER) 7 DAY (NON-CHARTER) 7 DAY (CHARTER) 1 YEAR (NON-CHARTER) 1 YEAR (CHARTER)

Lānaʻi



Number of NRMFL with intent to fish on this island identified during application process:
336

Most common licensing period during 2025:
1-Year Licenses (50.3%)

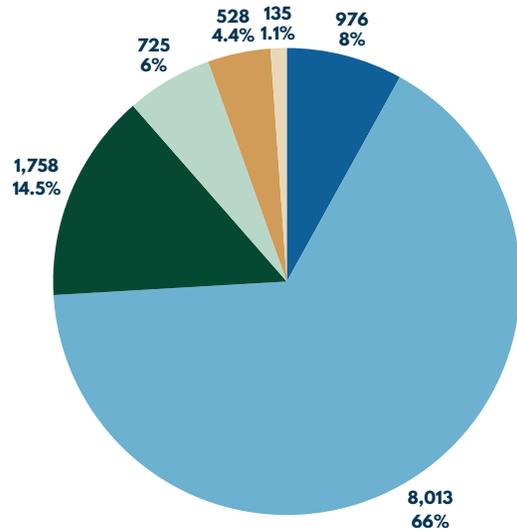
Non-charter activity on Lānaʻi (65%) was higher than charter activity (35%)

Number of NRMFL with intent to fish on this island identified during application process:
12,135

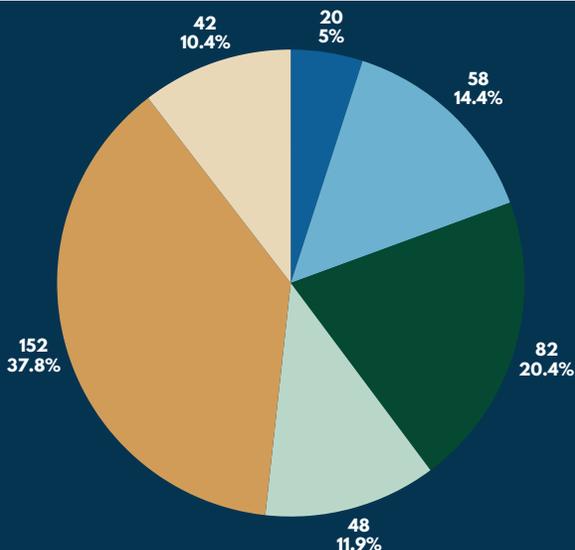
Most common licensing period during 2025:
1-Day Licenses (74%)

Charter activity on Maui (73%) was higher than non-charter activity (27%)

Maui



Molokaʻi



Number of NRMFL with intent to fish on this island identified during application process:
402

Most common licensing period during 2025:
1-Year Licenses (48.2%)

Non-charter activity on Molokaʻi (63%) was higher than charter activity (37%)

LEVERAGING FUNDING SOURCES

Revenue from the NRMFL is deposited into the Sport Fish Special (SFS) Fund. Some of the other revenue sources for the special fund include fees associated with accessing sport fisheries-related facilities and fines or bail forfeitures for sport fishing violations. For a comprehensive list of sources of funding for the SFS, please see [HRS §187A-9.5](#). This special fund is managed by DAR and is used for the management, preservation, propagation, enforcement, and protection of sport fishes in the State and to serve as match for federal fund resources including the Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) funds.

DAR receives between \$3.5 - \$4 million annually from the [USFWS, Sport Fish Restoration \(SFR\) Program](#), authorized under the The Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950 ([16 U.S.C. 777](#)). Eighty-five percent (85%) of these funds are allocated to DAR projects related to sport fishing, sport fish species, and their habitats. This funding source must be “matched” by the State utilizing a 25% non-federal match system. NRMFL revenue spending fulfills this requirement.



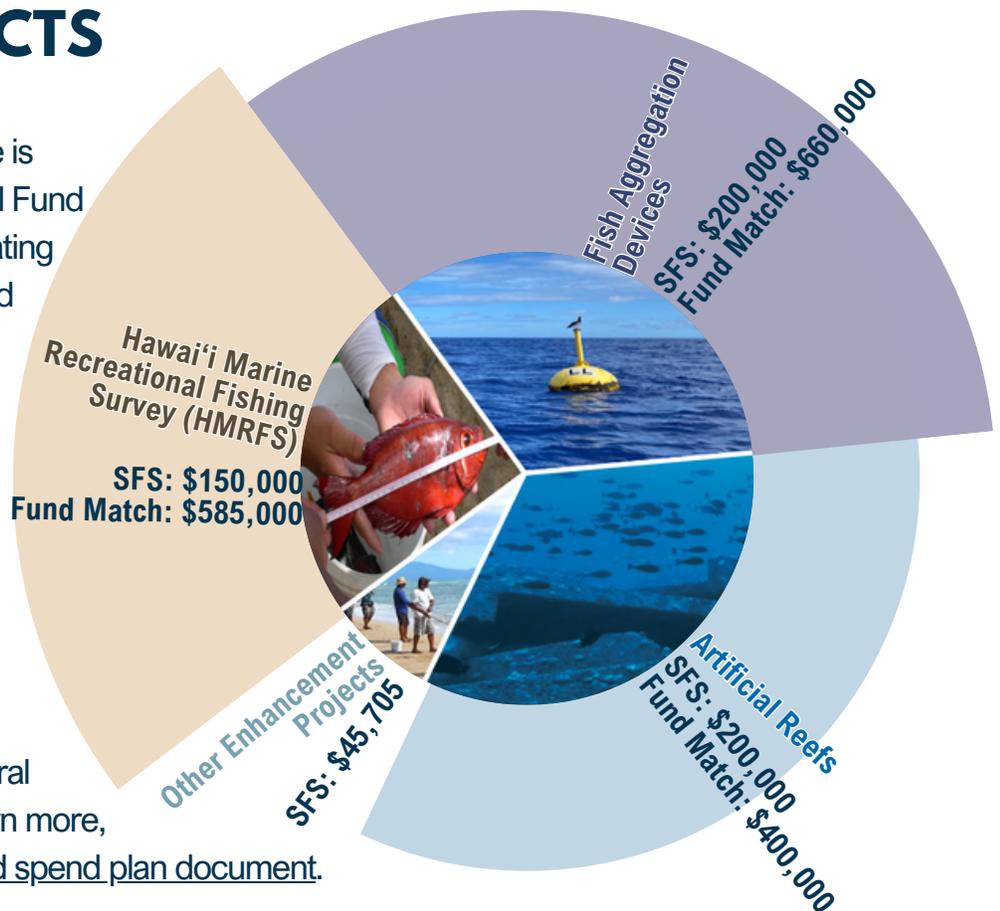
Interviewing a small boat fisher
Photo credit: HMRFS

ANTICIPATED SPENDING

Initial spending goals leverage existing funding sources to complement projects highlighted as a priority to the continued management efforts of marine fisheries in the State. DAR welcomes an open dialogue on priorities for revenues generated from this license and looks forward to working with community partners and user groups to implement projects related to this licensing system.

FISHERIES PROJECTS

Revenue generated from this license is deposited into the Sport Fish Special Fund (SFS). Since revenue started generating this year, early spending was focused on administrative costs such as the online licensing system. As 2026 begins, significant increases in management project spending through the license's second year is expected. Center pie chart shows priority projects to be funded with NRMFL revenue. Outer shaded segments represent fund matches from various sources, including federal Sport Fish Restoration funds. To learn more, please visit the [NRMFL overview and spend plan document](#).



Revenue generated also helps to increase capacity within DAR by funding:

- **Fisheries Personnel**
 - Initial projected annual spending: \$504,295
 - Spent in 2025: \$58,010
- **Online Licensing System**
 - Initial projected annual spending: \$100,000
 - Spent in 2025: \$75,445

ADMINISTRATIVE USES

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

FISH AGGREGATION DEVICES

Fish aggregation devices (FAD) create artificial shelter for sport fish, and are reliable sources for catching a wide variety of sport fish.

The State of Hawaii FAD program is a collaboration between DAR and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB). The program is designed to enable and enhance the offshore "blue water" fishing experience for a wide range of ocean recreational anglers.

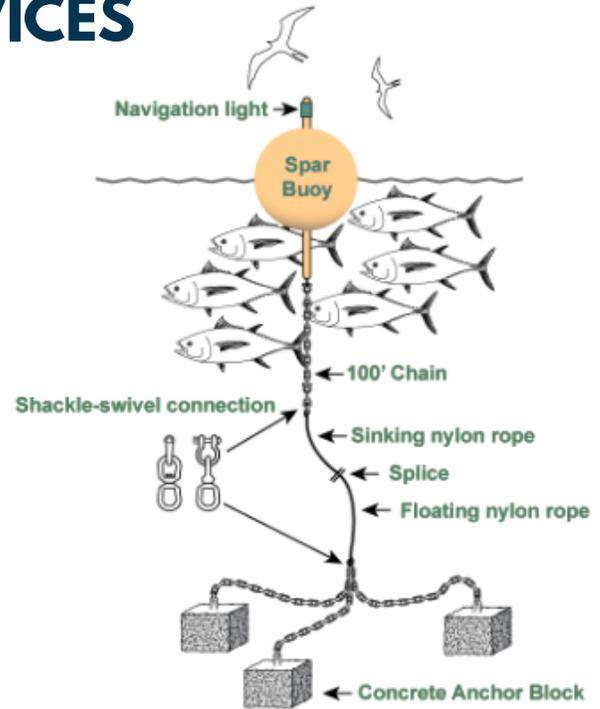
Initial annual spending goal: \$200,000

Encumbered in 2025: \$200,000

Fund matches: \$660,000

Federal (USFWS): \$570,000

UH In-Kind: \$90,000



Schematic of FAD provided by HIMB

HAWAI'I MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHING SURVEY (HMRFS)

The HMRFS program began in 2001 to collect information about noncommercial fishing to support effective fishery management decisions, document fishing activities, and provide fishery statistics that justify an appropriate allocation of fishing quotas to the noncommercial fishing sector.

NRMFL funds support increased staff capacity to distribute surveys and to manage and interpret the associated HMRFS database.

Initial annual spending goal: \$150,000

Spent in 2025: \$11,250

Fund matches: \$585,000

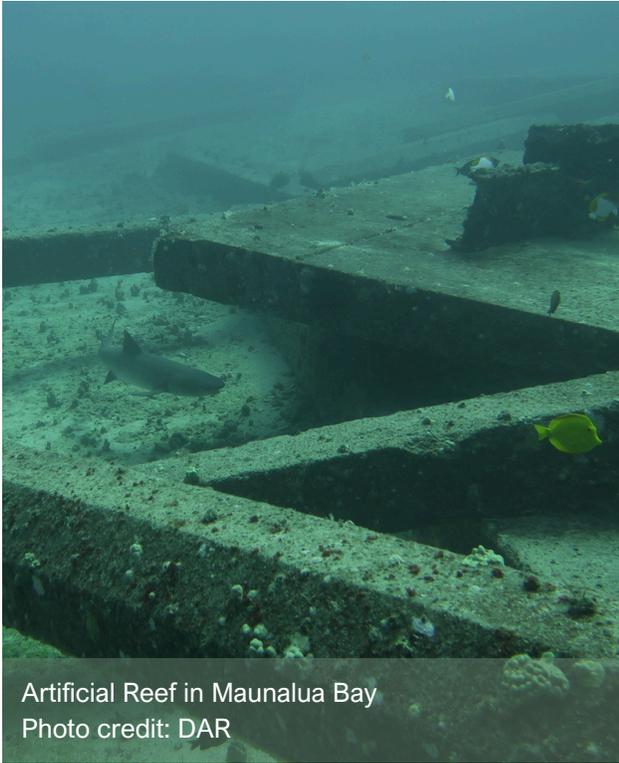
Federal (USFWS): \$300,000

Federal (NOAA): \$285,000



'Ōmilu (bluefin trevally) weighed for survey
Photo credit: HMRFS

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECTS



Artificial Reef in Maunalua Bay
Photo credit: DAR

ARTIFICIAL REEFS

Artificial reefs enhance habitat availability for sport fish by placing large structures (typically concrete) on the ocean floor. This provides shelter for reef fish, similar to the shelter that coral reef structures provide, and a reliable location for fishers to catch reef fish.

Additional funds generated from the NRMFL will support placing and maintaining more artificial reefs throughout Hawai'i. Visit our [Artificial Reefs and FADs page](#) to learn more.

Initial annual spending goal: \$200,000

Fund matches: \$400,000

Federal (USFWS): \$300,000

Donations and Staff Time: \$100,000

SPORT FISH ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS



Keiki Fishing Tournament in Kāne'ohe Bay
Photo credit: DAR

Sport fish enhancement project goals involve [The State of Hawai'i Sport Fish Restoration Strategy](#) priorities such as research on best practices in stock enhancement, especially for critical species such as Moi (Pacific Threadfin) and Kūmū (Goatfish).

Continued maintenance and establishment of current and future fishing areas is also a priority for DAR. Included in this effort to maintain and establish fishing areas, DAR would like to implement fish cleaning stations at public fishing areas.

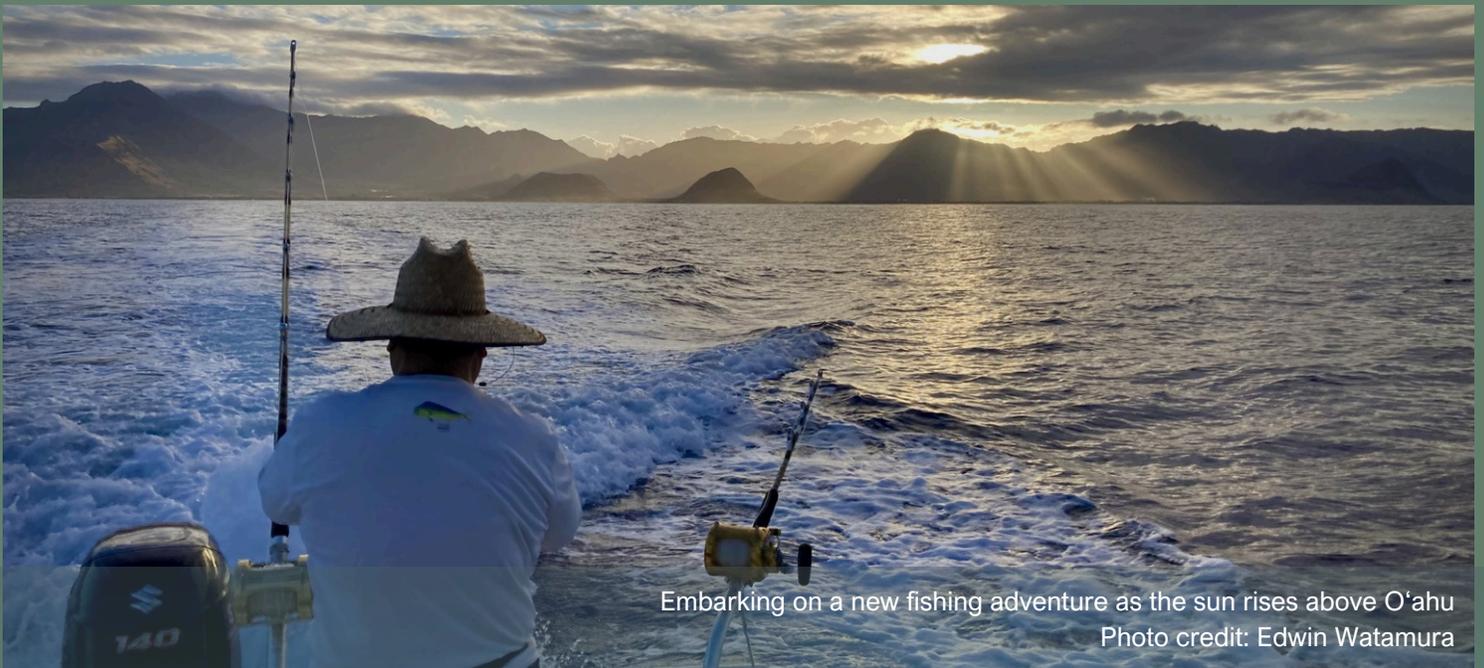
Initial annual spending goal: \$45,705

LOOKING FORWARD

This year, initial spending focused on building and improving the online licensing system and supporting the Fish Aggregation Device Program and the Hawai'i Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS).

In the next five years, DAR will focus on continued modifications to the online licensing portal to improve user experience and leveraging the revenue from this new Nonresident Recreational Marine Fishing License (NRMFL) to support marine fishery management and enhancement projects in Hawai'i.

In addition to generating funding for projects that support fisheries, this license has enabled DAR to collect information about fishing by island which will inform the locations where projects will be implemented.



Embarking on a new fishing adventure as the sun rises above O'ahu
Photo credit: Edwin Watamura