

Hawai'i Island Fishers Herbivore Scoping Event

March 2, 2021, 5:30pm – 7:30pm via Zoom: 18 attendees

Purpose of Meeting: Targeted meetings were held with key fishers and their close networks to receive feedback about the presentation materials representing herbivore species data, scientific justification for management, and potential rule options. The feedback received at this meeting is intended to help DAR improve messaging, better communicate the herbivore management effort, and facilitate effective discussions at the next round of scoping to a wider range of stakeholders.

General Comments:

Participants requested a greater emphasis be placed on mauka to makai approaches, with other impacts to the nearshore, besides fishing, being highlighted. They suggested DAR be involved in land management and planning meetings to actively address land-use changes.

Some participants felt the science did not represent what they observe as fishers; for example, how the map graphics showed Hamakua to have more fish than Kona, which some believed to be false. They requested more local, seasonal, and life history studies on fish populations be done by DAR instead of relying on literature sources from other areas. They pointed to incomplete data sets due to non-commercial catch not being fully reported and incomprehensive data collection methods.

Participants shared that rules and regulations should align with place-based kuleana of local resource users and their cultural practices. They voiced that many fish are needed for cultural gatherings, and that their native Hawaiian gathering rights should not be hindered in these circumstances. It was suggested that cultural accommodations be made for herbivores that are occasionally harvested in larger quantities, such as manini, kole, and wana. Support for a ban on commercial sale of fish to prioritize home consumption and subsistence was mentioned.

A few participants stated support for a ban on night scuba spearfishing and night diving due to a lack of cultural ethics in the practice. They made supportive comments regarding ease of enforceability for night diving regulations. However, concerns about targeting a specific type of fishery potentially dividing the overall community were also expressed. They felt more fishing should not be taken away following the strict regulation on aquarium trade recently implemented. In addition, some felt that rules in existence are not enforced and do not feel more rules are needed.

Participants voiced support for place-based management and specific to West Hawai'i, suggested that the established FRA zones are integrated in upcoming plans pertaining to Holomua: Marine 30x30. Some expressed opposition to the initiative due to a lack of trust. One participant felt that Ka'ūpulehu should be opened back up and that a closed area for 10 years was too long. They all generally agreed that all islands are different and should be managed in different ways.

Participants generally opposed most of the rules presented at this meeting. The main reason for opposition to bag limits was the data and science used to justify regulations. Participants felt there was a lack of fishers in the last round of meetings and suggested DAR conduct more outreach to spearfishing communities moving forward.

Urchins:

Participants opposed bag limits for urchins due to the species being a prominent food item for kupuna who are unable to gather for themselves and rely on others to collect for them. As a prized cultural food item, participants felt that a bag limit would violate their gathering rights.

Nenu:

A participant suggested that DAR propose a slot limit for nenu.

Surgeonfish:

It was mentioned that multiple individual's bag limits will be needed to cover cultural events that attract large gatherings. Typically, manini, kole, and pāku'iku'i are served in large quantities at these types of events and participants suggested a bag limit exemption process for these circumstances. Participants felt a bag limit of 20 for surgeonfish, kole in particular, was too small. They opposed a bag limit of 2 for black kole, pāku'iku'i, and umaumalei for various reasons. They noted that black kole are less abundant in other areas so a bag limit of 2 may work elsewhere, but that it should be raised to 10 or 15 among this fishing community. Because pāku'iku'i travel in schools, participants believed it would be difficult to catch only 2. They felt the bag limit of umaumalei was too small and noted that communities typically like to eat the smaller sized individuals. The only comment regarding kala was that they can be observed in schools along the shorelines of Maka'eō.

Uhu:

Participants acknowledged that uhu have a key role on our reefs and are important for corals. However, they opposed a bag limit of 2 for the large-bodied species and proposed the small-bodied uhu minimum size be lowered to 8 inches instead of the presented 10 inches.

Targeted stakeholder feedback above was compiled and summarized by DLNR Division of Aquatic Resources. DAR will be considering the input from these meetings in the next steps of our process.