

Maui Herbivore Scoping Meetings

November 10, 2020, 5:30pm – 7:30pm via Zoom: 20 attendees

November 24, 2020, 5:30pm – 7:30pm via Zoom: 17 attendees

Purpose of Meeting: Statewide meetings were held to listen, learn, and collect input from various stakeholders about how best to manage key herbivorous species throughout Hawai'i. DAR presented concerns for climate change-induced threats to our coral reefs, such as warming ocean temperatures causing catastrophic coral bleaching events, and the key roles that healthy populations of herbivores contribute to reef resilience and recovery.

General Comments:

Current regulations are supported by the majority of participants, but many voiced support for place-based regulations with managed areas, not no-take areas. Participants suggested putting a moratorium on commercial sale of herbivores, establishing fines for commercial sales, and banning commercial sale of reef fish completely. Participants supported banning night diving and scuba spearfishing. Participants suggested using a permit process for fishers and the money raised being used to pay for enforcement and education. Increased DAR presence to train local volunteers, more baseline data and community engagement for stewardship, and more education on the role of herbivores in comparison to other species was voiced to be needed. Opposition to rules stems from people who feel that they are already exhibiting pono harvesting practices and should not have rules made on them. Participants expressed a need for baseline scientific data on how herbivore populations are doing in specific areas and that management areas could be a good way to enforce regulations. There is a concern that resource users don't like to be told what to do, but if you can show the data as it aligns with their observations, they are more likely to comply. Participants felt that aquarium take should be regulated more strongly than subsistence take with separate bag limits for each.

Urchins:

Participants witness some urchin species, such as the collector urchin, being heavily harvested by a particular ethnic group (gathered by the 5-gallon bucket and boiled to be eaten). They feel regulations or bag limits on wana are needed to prevent overharvest from becoming a substantial problem. A majority of participants think populations are in good condition, but could be better managed. It was mentioned that individual bag limits are hard to manage and that fishing licenses for these species could be hard to implement as well.

Nenu:

Nenu is targeted by surround net fishers and harvested in vast quantities within Maui Nui. Throw nets can also wipe out schools very quickly. Participants suggested the mesh size be larger and were willing to sacrifice traditional throw netting to allow the population to recover. It was suggested to eliminate throw netting on nenu for 1-2 years or to close an area for a certain period. Participants shared that education will reach irresponsible recreational fishers, but may not reach large-scale commercial fishers.



Surgeonfish and Uhu:

Participants proposed establishing a bag limit of 20 surgeonfish per person per day instead of by each species. However, participants also felt bag limits should depend on the health of the species. They agreed that Maui's current rules are good, but the rest of the state should also adopt them. They referred to Maui's Kahekili Herbivore FMA as an example. Some felt the ban on blue uhu on Maui were ineffective.

Public 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.