

O'ahu Herbivore Scoping Meetings

November 17, 2020, 5:30pm – 7:30pm via Zoom: 38 attendees

December 2, 2020, 5:30pm – 7:30pm via Zoom: 33 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:

While there are concerns for statewide regulations from fishermen, the majority of participants are in favor of banning night diving and increased funding for enforcement. It was suggested that Hawaii follow mainland management practices and step up enforcement, inspections, and fishing licenses. In addition to strengthened enforcement, participants voiced a need to increase education efforts.. Generally, fishers did not see much of a problem in shortage of fish and expressed frustration with being singled out. There was mention of focusing regulations on gear restrictions, managing aquarium take, and applying Maui rules statewide. They also felt that managers should look at the impacts of global warming and the Hawaiian monk seals to be responsible for fish depletion.

Urchins:

Urchin harvesting is mostly non-commercial subsistence take. Participants see healthy populations of urchins, but mention that runoff issues in Maunalua Bay, Kāne'ōhe bay, and Waimea Bay could be detrimental. Participants felt that place-based regulations may help in certain areas during certain times of the year and would be in favor of a permit with a quick and easy process for urchin take. Some suggested that since wana are only collected for special occasions and not on a regular basis, perhaps a process to extend the bag limit for special occasions would be a possible option. Some stated concerns about statewide rules in general and suggested urchin species be separated out for management.

Nenu:

Regarding nenu, participants wanted to see more monitoring data from DAR and more studies and research about proper harvesting practices. They supported place-based regulations as the best option to manage the fish. Some expressed the need for better enforcement on regulations and rules for harvesting nenu and suggested gear restrictions as a potential tool. An alternative bag limit of 10 was suggested.

Surgeonfish:

Across all surgeonfish, participants requested more education about what is causing declines. They suggested implementing rules per species and not across all surgeonfish. It was also suggested that management of herbivores be split between recreational, commercial, and aquarium use. Due to kole being used for large gatherings, bag limits were too restrictive. Participants said slot limits would not be

effective for spears or net throws, so bag limits, seasonal restrictions, or place-based regulations are the most reasonable tools.

Uhu:

Participants unanimously agreed that uhu are overfished. There was wide support for a ban on night diving for uhu, in addition to Maui's rule on no take of blues. Some suggested they be regulated through place-based management and protected in areas with heavy algal growth. A few participants did express support for a slot limit on uhu. Participants supported a restriction of 2 uhu per day, even for commercial harvesting.

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.