

West Hawai'i Herbivore Scoping Meetings

November 10, 2020, 10:00am – 12:00pm via Zoom : 44 registered (number attended unknown)

December 3, 2020, 5:30pm – 7:30pm via Zoom: 45 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:

Participants supported a ban or regulation on night diving. Many of the participants emphasized education and the importance of public engagement to inform the public about types of regulations made and where they are applied. Participants preferred place-based regulations and increasing the incorporation of indigenous knowledge, referencing the positive results of Maui's uhu regulations. Participants requested to see water quality data along with the presented species rules and studies. In addition, efforts should be monitored and successful existing efforts should be pushed forward, such as the program in Hilo for raising mullets and moi.

Urchins:

The majority would like to see increased public education on urchins and do not believe that closed seasons would benefit populations because the open harvest months would be during their spawning time, when they have eggs. Urchins are a seasonal fishery with no current commercial harvesting. The surveys show that wana populations are doing well with urchins littering the bottom of Kohala. They requested the bag limits to be double and place-based regulations implemented. Due to the number of urchins differing by area, they should be relocated from abundant areas to less abundant places and see how they do. A diver who frequently sees overtake of wana supported more education for the local population and additional regulations. Protections on wana may help increase control on invasive species such as ta'ape and roi.

Nenue:

Regarding nenue, participants shared that most take is due to local and recreational fishers, not commercial harvest. DAR acknowledges the decline of 12% in this species is not as much of a decline as other species, but is noticeable in the Miloli'i area. Place-based regulations and bag limits were supported.

Surgeonfish

Participants expressed seeing declines in westside populations of surgeonfish. They supported a ban on aquarium take, with some suggesting action to stop airlines from transporting live fish. Some suggested a recreational fishing license to provide a source of money for the state and water resource management.



Uhu:

Participants suggested a regulation for bigger uhus, so they can remain the better breeders in the large gene pool. Most participants agreed to a bag limit on uhu. Some wanted to increase regulations for commercial fishing.

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.