

State of Hawai'i  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
Division of Aquatic Resources  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

August 14, 2020

Board of Land and Natural Resources  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i

INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING ON FINAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR  
THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS HUMPBACK WHALE  
NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY  
*(NON-DECISION-MAKING ITEM)*

The purpose of this submittal is to brief the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) on the final Management Plan for the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (HIHWNMS, or Sanctuary). This new plan will replace the current HIHWNMS management plan, published in 2002. Once the BLNR reviews the new management plan, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) will release it.

The U.S. Congress passed the Hawaiian Islands National Marine Sanctuary Act in 1992, which established the HIHWNMS to protect humpback whales and their habitat, and designated the ONMS as the managing federal agency. The purpose of the HIHWNMS' management plan is to guide HIHWNMS staff to achieve its mission. Specifically, the management plan lists activities to be undertaken over the next five years. These activities are a continuation of existing activities: research, monitoring, education and outreach. There are no boundary or regulatory changes.

The boundaries of the Sanctuary encompass both federal and state waters; hence, when the State of Hawai'i approved the formation of the Sanctuary in 1997, it was required that the Sanctuary be co-managed by both ONMS and the State of Hawai'i. The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) is the managing state agency. The specifics of this co-management relationship are laid out in a 1998 Compact Agreement between the State and NOAA. A 2002 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the State and NOAA established procedures and protocols for co-management of the Sanctuary. Project objectives and funding are outlined in a 2016 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between ONMS and DLNR, updated annually. DLNR's Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) and ONMS co-wrote this plan. Activities in the plan integrate with the 2002 MOU and 2016 MOA regarding co-management of the Sanctuary.

Copies of the Management Plan are being provided to BLNR members, separately. The plan will be publicly available online at: <https://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov/> and <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/>, pending the briefing of this Board. This submittal also includes a set of new maps (Exhibits I - VII).

**BACKGROUND**

**History**

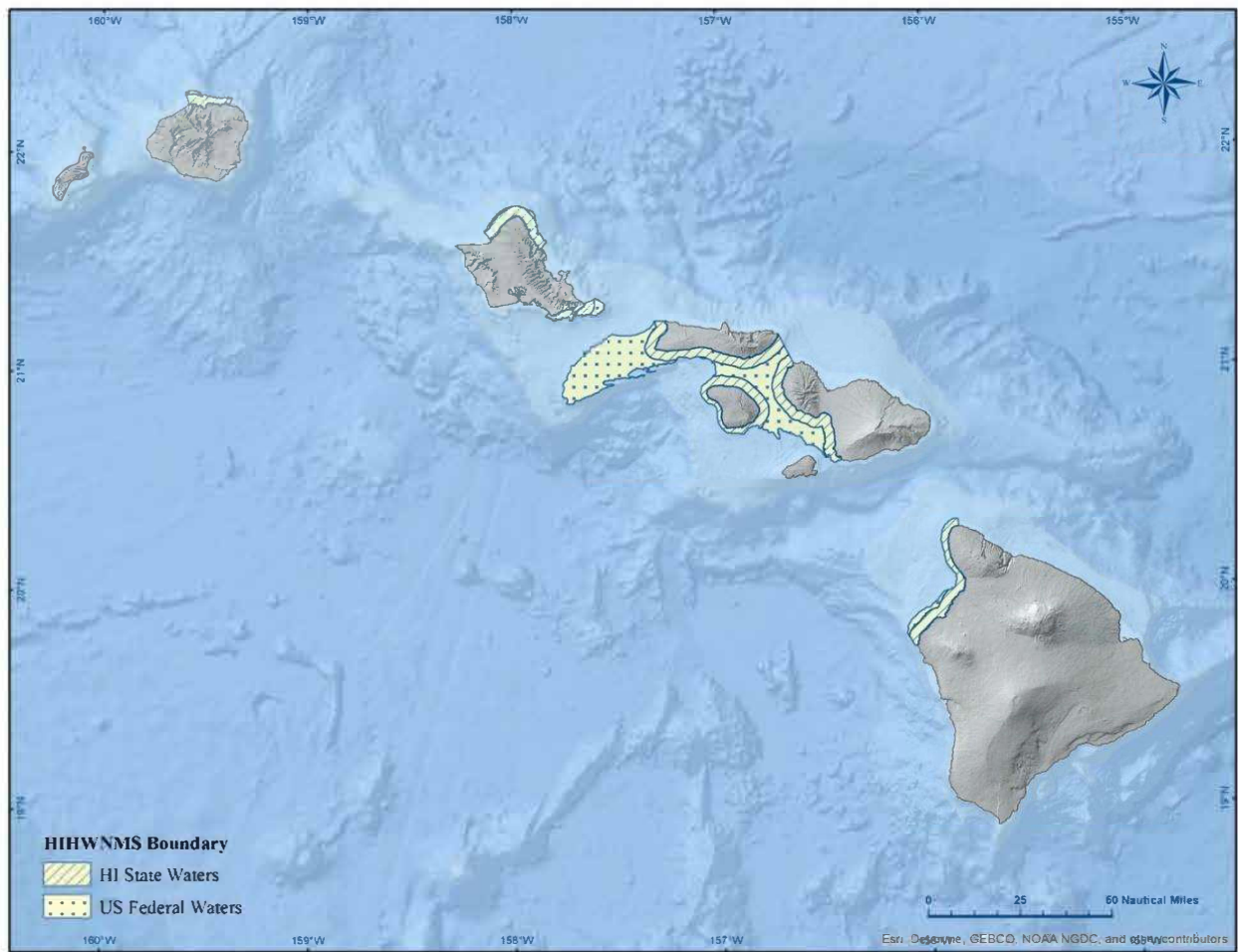
1992: U.S. Congress passed the Hawaiian Islands National Marine Sanctuary Act, which established the HIHWNMS to protect humpback whales and their habitat.

Early 1990's: Public meetings held around the state; some public concern. Congress allowed the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the Governor of Hawai'i, to modify the boundaries.

1997: Governor Benjamin Cayetano formally approved of the Sanctuary in state waters, designating the current boundaries at the same time.

**Boundaries**

HIHWNMS covers approximately 1,370 square miles, primarily in the waters between Maui, Moloka'i and Lāna'i, and Penguin Bank. It also includes small areas off the coasts of Kaua'i, Hawai'i Island, and O'ahu. HIHWNMS has two visitor centers, on Maui and Kaua'i. It will be adding an educational staff person on Hawai'i Island. The primary office is on Maui.



**Mission**

The mission of the HIHWNMS is to protect humpback whales and their habitat through a wide range of activities in conservation, research, education, and outreach efforts to enhance public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of humpback whales and the Hawaiian Islands' marine environment.

**Co-management**

Due to the mix of state and federal waters within its boundaries, HIHWNMS is co-managed by the DLNR and ONMS. A 1998 Compact Agreement resolved that (significantly abbreviated and paraphrased):

1. No state or local funding would be required to manage the Sanctuary;
2. The Governor would designate a State employee to work in consultation with the Sanctuary Manager (now Superintendent) as an equal partner in the oversight of Sanctuary operations and management; and
3. The Co-Managers would resolve any management issues regarding policy conflicts.

Annual objectives and funding are outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement signed by the DLNR Chair and ONMS Director.

**Planning**

2002: Last published HIHWNMS management plan.

2010-2014: Development of "ecosystem-based" management plan, which included boundary and regulation changes.

2015: ONMS publishes Draft Management Plan and EIS (one document).

2015: Draft Management Plan has mixed reception from public and State.

2016: ONMS withdraws management plan and subsequent proposed regulatory and boundary changes.

2018: ONMS provides new management plan, based off 2002 management plan, to State for review; State asks for revisions.

2020: DLNR (DAR) and HIHWNMS work together (DLNR/DAR takes the lead) on revising and completing this new plan.

1. The focus of the sanctuary remains "humpback whales and their habitat."
2. There are no boundary or regulatory changes.
3. All DLNR department issues addressed.

**What Whales Mean to Hawai'i: Culture, Economy, Ecology**

Culture: Humpback whales, or koholā, are very important in traditional Hawaiian culture. For example, in the Kumulipo, the ancient creation chant, the koholā and palaloo (sperm whale) are specifically mentioned. The koholā is one of the kinolau (physical manifestations or symbolic associations) of the god Kanaloa. One of the four major akua (gods), Kanaloa is associated with ocean navigation and winds for the traditional Hawaiian sailing canoes. He is the ocean itself, ocean currents, subterranean and oceanic depths. He is also a healer. With the god Kāne, he finds

fresh drinking water and is part of the cycle of life and death. Koholā/Kanaloa are also inextricably tied to the island of Kaho‘olawe, which was traditionally an ocean navigation training center.

Economy: In the winter months, whale-watching has become a significant economic boost to the economy. A 1999 study estimated the value of whale-watching trips alone at roughly \$30 to \$42 million dollars annually in today’s dollars. In a corresponding survey, approximately 75 percent of the Maui dinner cruise and snorkeling tour passengers knew that whales would be present, and over 50 percent said that whales were a factor in their decision to come to Hawai‘i. State-wide, dinner cruises and snorkeling tours add an additional \$120 - \$205 million in today’s dollars, more than the coffee, macadamia nut, and charter fishing sectors combined.

Ecology: Less understood but perhaps even more important, is humpback whales’ contribution to the marine food web of Hawai‘i. Whales contribute vital nutrients just by swimming in the water: their skin is constantly sloughing. ‘Ōpelu and other small fishes are regularly seen schooling near whales, feeding on the sloughing skin. Whale births and deaths also contribute large pulses of iron-rich nutrients, important in what is typically an iron-poor marine environment. DAR will be working with HIHWNMS staff and other partners to continue to quantify whales’ contribution to the marine food web (with existing resources).

## SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT PLAN

### **Humpback Whale Research and Response Action Plan**

1. Increase understanding and monitor health of humpback whales and their habitat
  - a. Continue research (e.g., acoustics and population density)
  - b. Continue health and risk assessment monitoring (e.g., boat collisions, gear)
  - c. Disseminate research and monitoring results (conferences, talks)
  - d. Collaborations (includes State of Hawai‘i)
  - e. Advisory groups (contribute to/serve on)
  - f. Local Knowledge/Partners (e.g. fishing charter captain reporting network; State)
  - g. Citizen Science (e.g., new app for marine users, annual whale count)
2. Continue to evaluate, monitor, and respond to threats impacting humpback whales.
  - a. Reduce harassment and promote best practices
  - b. Coordinate large whale entanglement response
  - c. Collaborate to identify and address other threats
  - d. Provide expert knowledge (to staff and partners)

### **Education and Outreach Action Plan**

1. Continue current education and outreach programs for educators (workshops/trainings), Ocean Users (workshops/trainings, e.g., avoiding ship strikes), and general public (visitor centers, speaker series, educational videos, signage, public event outreach); continue citizen science and sharing research science.

2. Expand education and outreach programs (esp. Big Island); place-based, hands-on citizen science opportunities, and internship program; seek new partnerships with cultural and science organizations.

### **Living Cultural Traditions Action Plan**

(SAC Executive Committee, Sol Kaho‘ohalahala and Maka‘ala Ka‘aumoana, contributed significantly)

1. Better understand traditional and current Hawaiian cultural perspectives and place-based knowledge through learning opportunities/training for Sanctuary staff, volunteers, and SAC members, on the following: Kumulipo; place-based mo‘olelo, oli, mele, hula, and/or inoa; language; and traditional skills.
2. Incorporate traditional and current Hawaiian cultural perspectives into Sanctuary programs, as appropriate.
  - a. Education and Outreach examples: community lectures, new displays, updating curricula, updating signage
  - b. Research and Monitoring examples: new research internship projects, working with community volunteers, and communicating science to the public

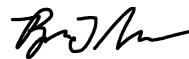
### **Management Effectiveness**

1. Attract, support and retain highly skilled staff and volunteers.
2. Provide ample administrative and budgetary support.
3. Assess, evaluate and maintain facilities.
4. Maintain safe and operational vessels.

### **CONCLUSION**

DAR has prepared this briefing to update the BLNR on the completion of the HIHWNMS management plan. In addition, this submittal is intended to promote transparency and accountability for Sanctuary co-management activities

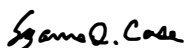
Respectfully submitted,




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BRIAN NEILSON, Administrator  
Division of Aquatic Resources

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL



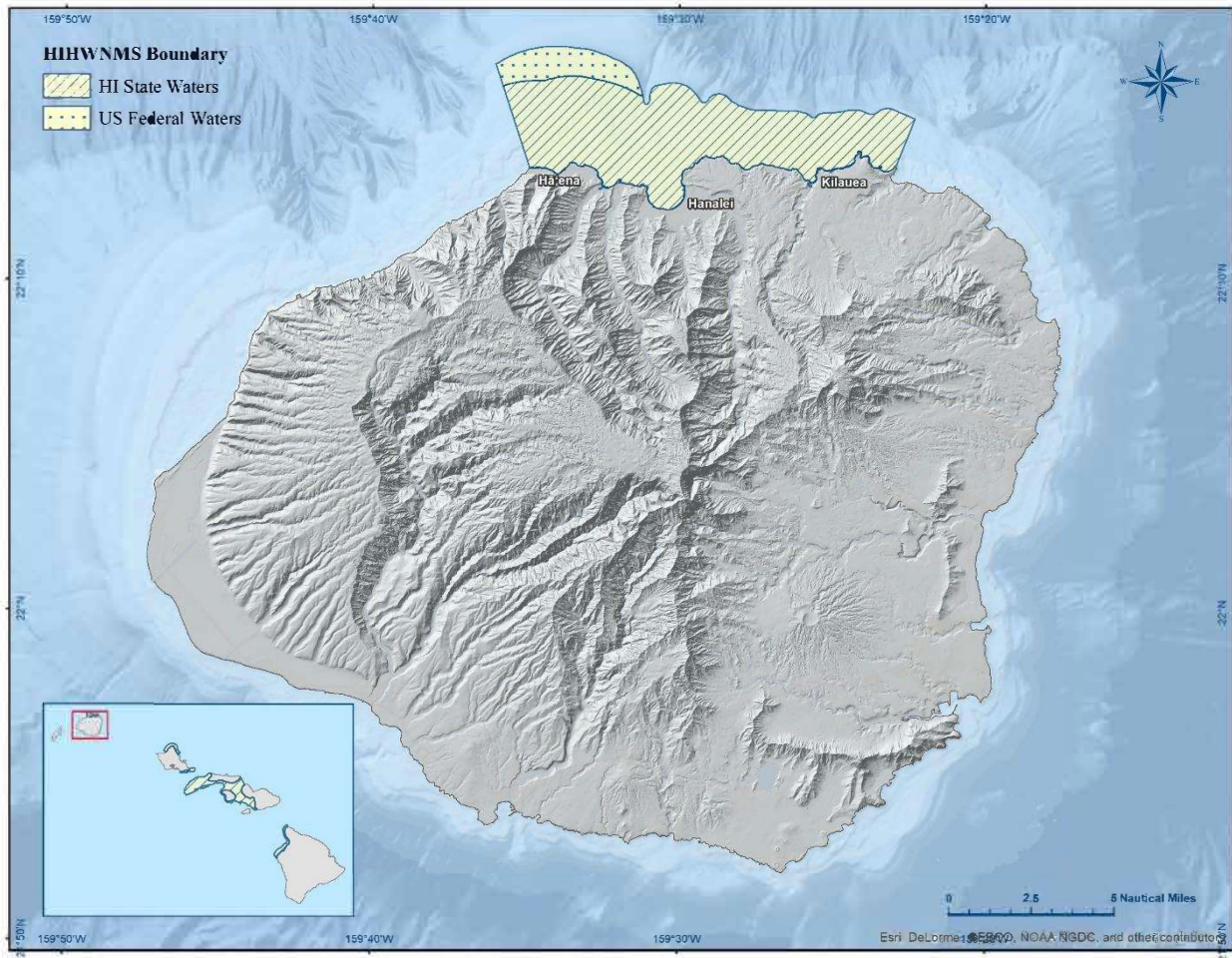

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SUZANNE D. CASE, Chairperson  
Board of Land and Natural Resources

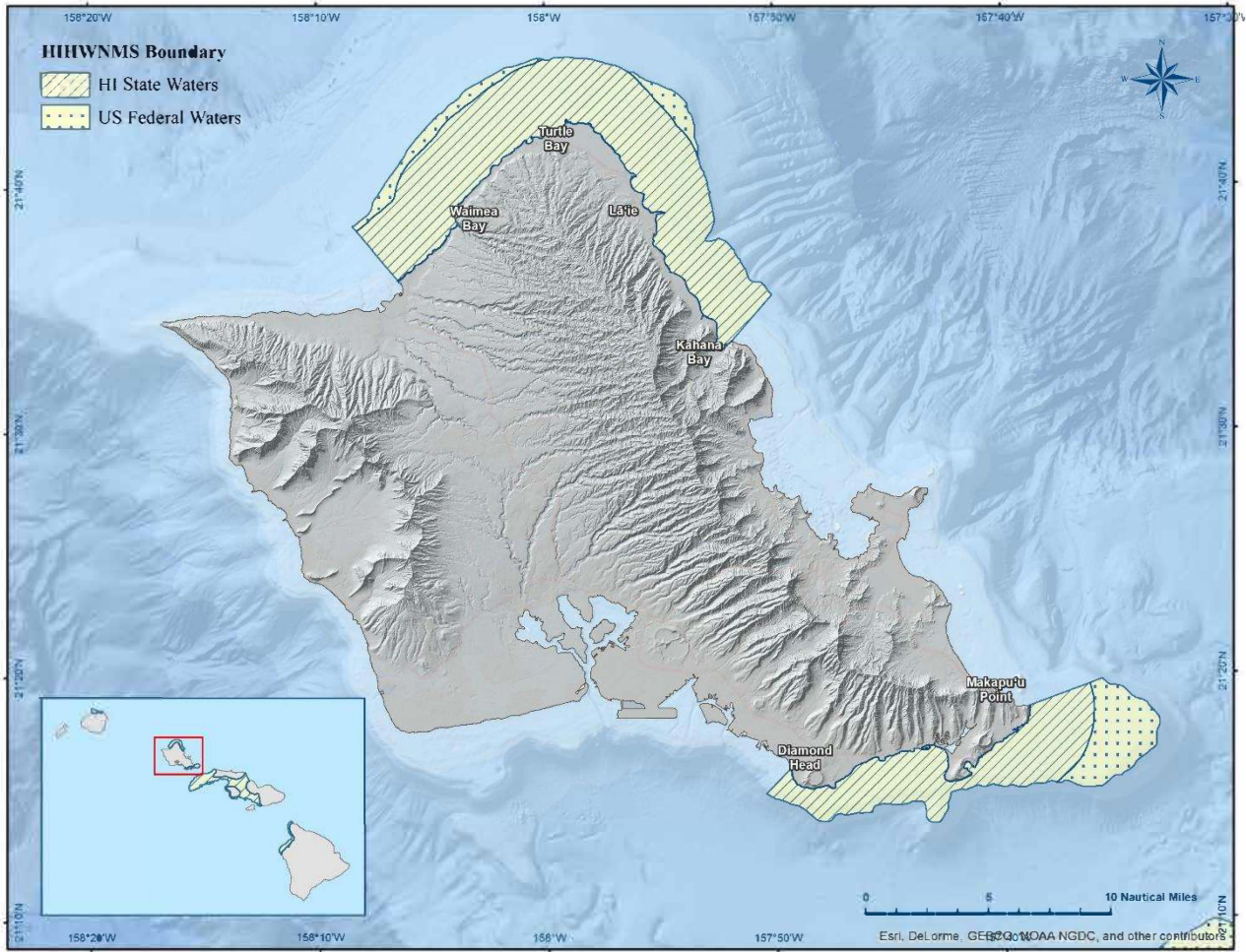
ATTACHMENTS:

- Exhibit I – HIIHWNMS boundaries, showing state and federal waters, Kaua‘i only.
- Exhibit II – HIIHWNMS boundaries, showing state and federal waters, O‘ahu only.
- Exhibit III – HIIHWNMS boundaries, showing state and federal waters, Maui Nui only  
(Moloka‘i, Maui, and Lāna‘i).
- Exhibit IV – HIIHWNMS boundaries, showing state and federal waters, Hawai‘i Island only.
- Exhibit V – HIIHWNMS boundaries near harbors adjacent to HIIHWNMS waters, Moloka‘i and  
Lāna‘i only.
- Exhibit VI – HIIHWNMS boundaries near harbors adjacent to HIIHWNMS waters, Maui only.
- Exhibit VII – HIIHWNMS boundaries near harbors adjacent to HIIHWNMS waters, Hawai‘i  
Island only.

ITEM F – 3 Exhibit I – HIHWNMS boundaries, showing state and federal waters, Kaua‘i only.

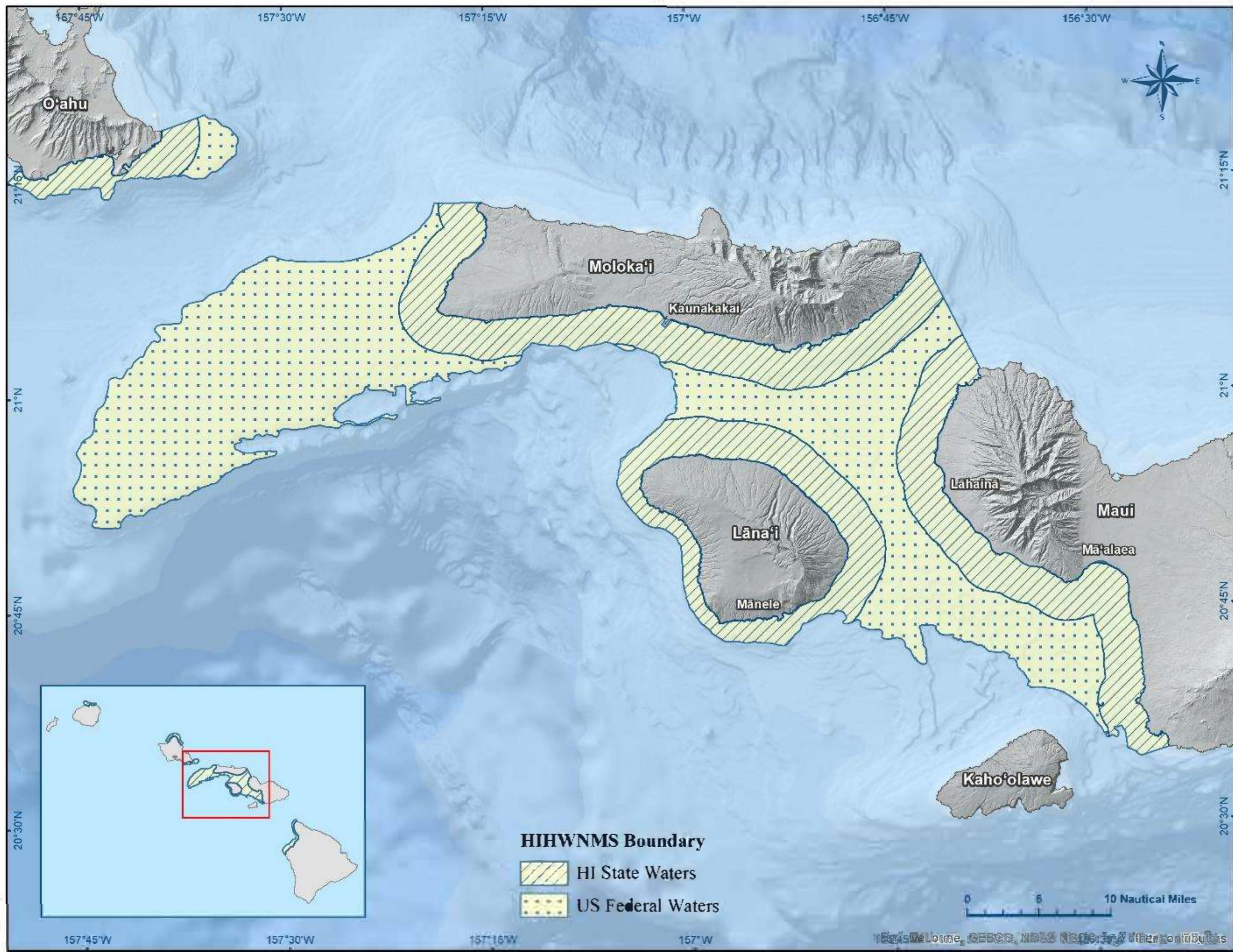


ITEM F –3 Exhibit II – HIIWNMS boundaries, showing state and federal waters, O‘ahu only.

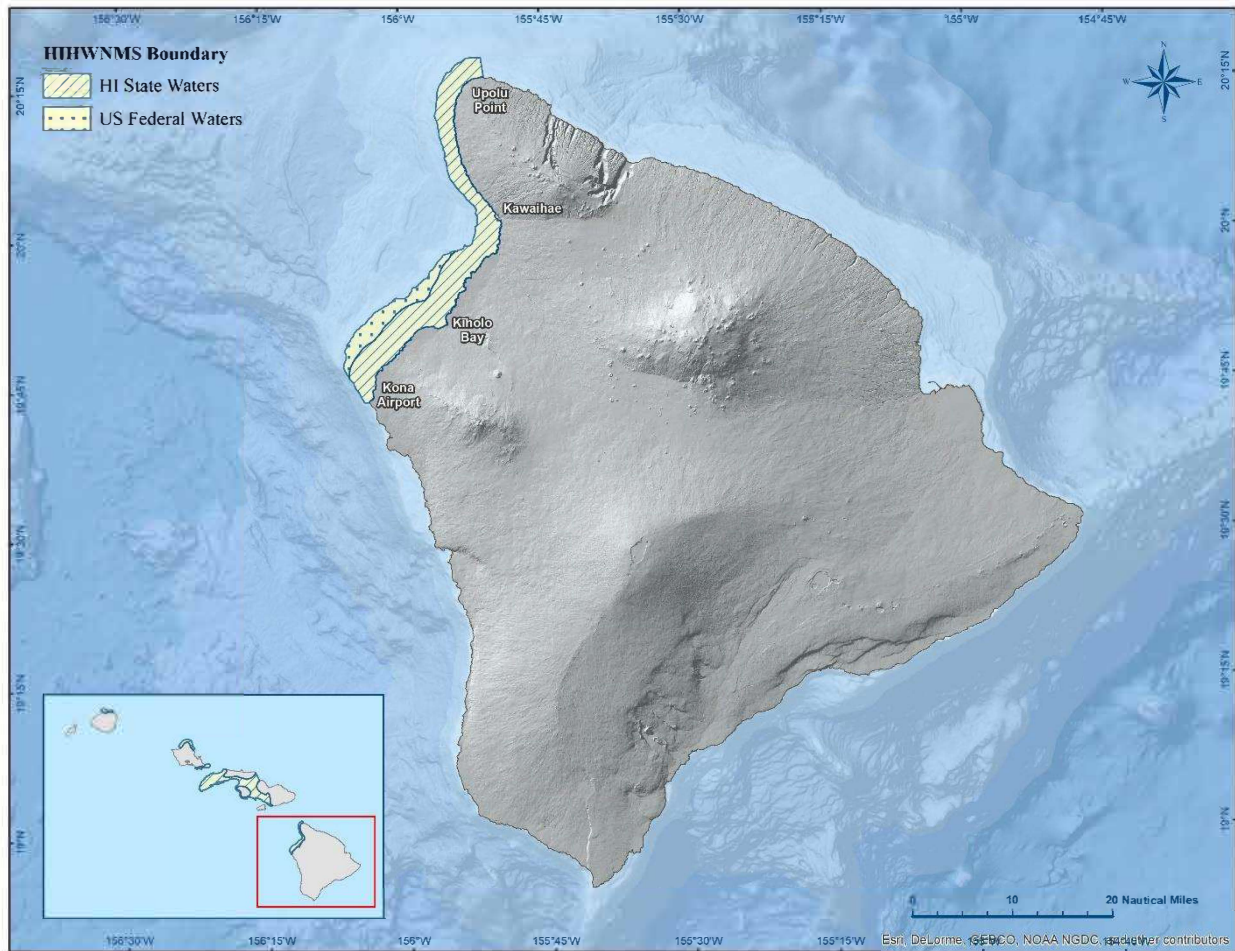




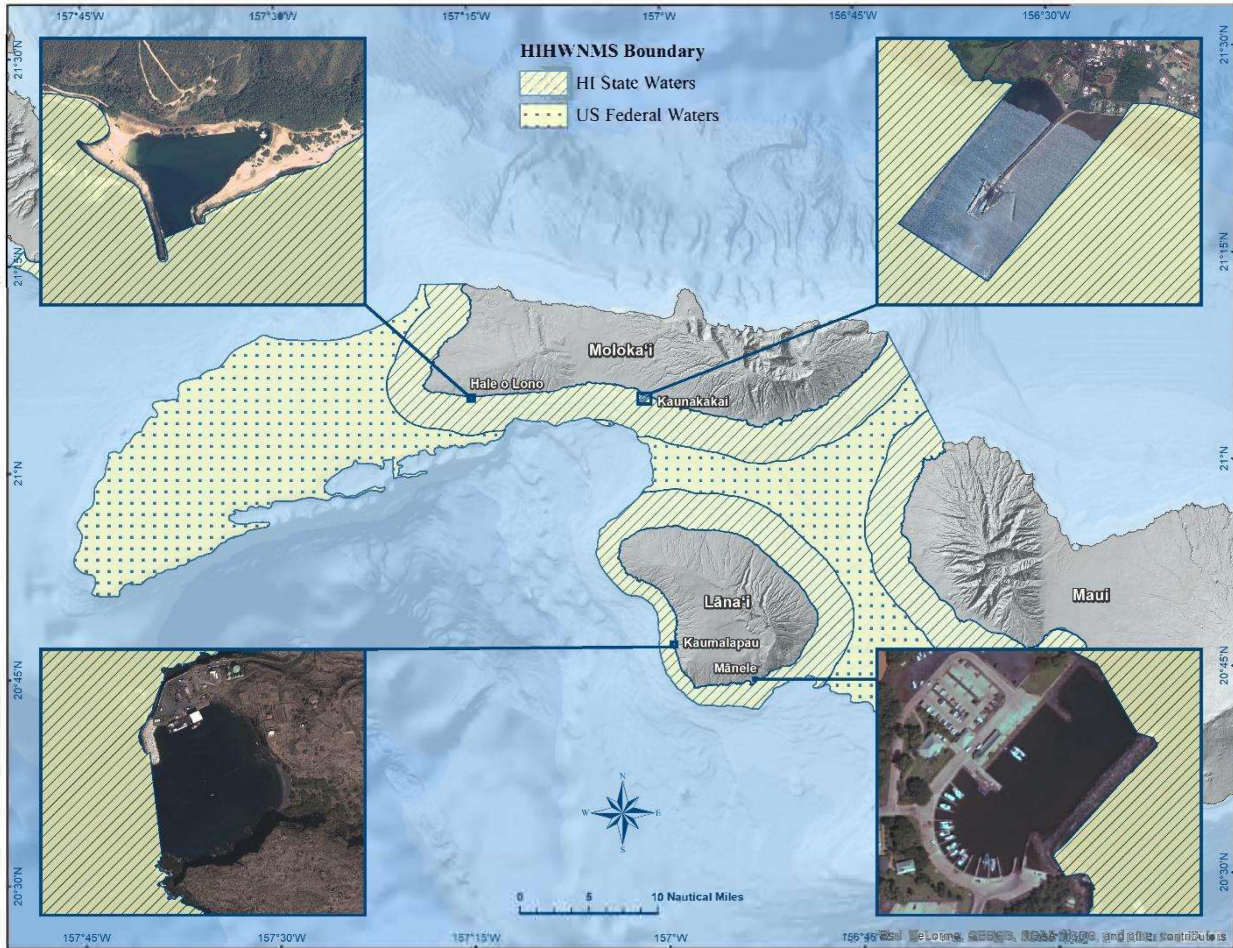
ITEM F-3 Exhibit III – HIIWNMS boundaries, showing state and federal waters, Maui Nui only (Moloka'i, Maui, and Lāna'i).



ITEM F- 3 Exhibit IV – HIHWNMS boundaries, showing state and federal waters, Hawai'i Island only.

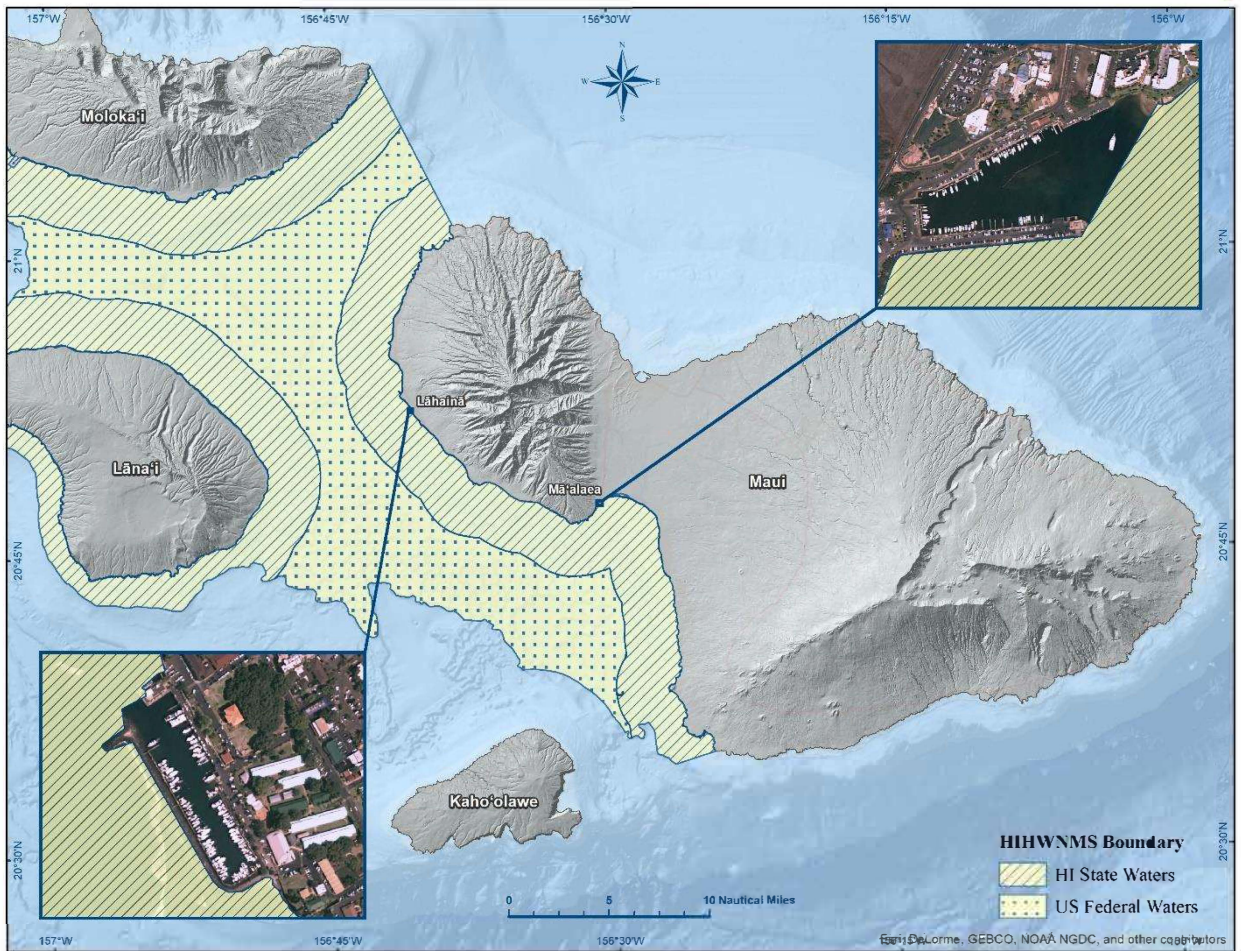


ITEM F- 3 Exhibit V – HIHWNMS boundaries near harbors adjacent to HIHWNMS waters, Moloka‘i and Lāna‘i only.



Esri, DeLorme, GeoEye, NAAS, and other contributors

ITEM F-3 Exhibit VI – HIHWNMS boundaries near harbors adjacent to HIHWNMS waters, Maui only.



ITEM F-3 Exhibit VII: HIHWNMS boundaries near harbors adjacent to HIHWNMS waters, Hawai'i Island only.

