



Ka Moku'aina 'O Hawai'i Aha Moku O Pae'Aina

State of Hawai'i Aha Moku

P. O. Box 621

Honolulu, Hawaii 96809

Testimony of the Hawaii State Aha Moku

Board of Land and Natural Resources

Friday, September 27, 2024

9:00 a.m.

DLNR Boardroom, Kalanimoku Bldg.

SUPPORT – Agenda Item F-1

Agenda Item F-1: Request for Approval to hold public hearings on amendments to and compilation of Hawaii Administrative Rules Title 13, Chapter 60.4 “West Hawaii Regional Fishery Management Area, Hawai'i”, to: Establish a Moratorium on the taking of Paku'iku'i through 2026; Establish a Paku'iku'i Fisher Registration Requirement with Registration Terms and Conditions for any take of Paku'iku'i, including mandatory Paku'iku'i Catch Reporting, through 2036; Establish a Bag Limit of Four Paku'iku'i per person per day through 2036; and make other non-substantive amendments for clarity and consistency with other chapters.

Aloha Chair Chang and Members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR),

On behalf of the generational and lineal descendants of the Kona Moku of Moku O Keawe and the generational families that are connected to this Moku, we offer our testimony.

The Hawaii State Aha Moku (Aha Moku) supports agenda item F-1 as it pertains holding public hearings on West Hawaii Regional Fishery Management Area Draft Rules.

The purpose of this submittal is to hold public meetings in the Kona area to address the Paku'iku'i general decline within the Kona coast. Not enough information is known about the marine life of this species. The intent of this submittal is to help identify viable options for current protection and long-term management of Paku'iku'i.

While the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has continued to gather input from the West Hawaii community to further document their knowledge of this species, more lawaia, local fishermen need to give input. For example, generational *lawaiia* from Kealakekua to Puapua'a (Kona Ahupua'a) fish for Paku'iku'i through *upena* (throw net) or hook (*kaka*) line¹. Paku'iku'i is a favored fish for generational families in South Kona.

This submittal supports and mentions the Miloli'i Community-Based Fishing Area (CBSFA) as part of their base-line knowledge. Aha Moku supports Miloli'i in every way! However, public hearings are needed so that the other ahupua'a of Kona can give input. There are 45 ahupua'a in the Kona (West Hawai'i) Moku.

¹ Kaka line – traditional line where up to 10 hooks are used. For Paku'iku'i, the *okole* is used as bait which is only found in the impact zones of the reef.

Pae'Aina: Moku O Keawe, Moku O Piilani, Moku O Kanaloa, Nana'i Kaula, Moloka'i Pule O'o, Moku O Kakuhihewa, Manokalanipo, Ka'Aina O Kawelonakala

BLNR, 9/27/24

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For the reasons stated above, the Hawaii State Aha Moku supports agenda item F-1 as it pertains to holding public meetings on Paku'iku'i in Kona (West Hawaii). However, it must be noted that Paku'iku'i is also a favored eating fish for the other seven islands in the Pae'Aina. West Hawaii seems to be the focus because of the importance of this fish to the West Hawaii aquarium fishery (see page two of submittal). Other island Po'o are asking if this will begin a precedence?

Respectfully yours,

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Suzanne D. Case
Honolulu, Hawai'i
September 27, 2027
BLNR Agenda Item F-1 (Pāku'iku'i rule)
Testimony in Opposition; Recommendation

Aloha Board Members,

I submit testimony on the proposed pāku'iku'i rule in my personal capacity. I have known pāku'iku'i since childhood, have been concerned about their drastically declining numbers for decades, and am closely tracking current rules discussions and research.

I urge you not to support a catch limit of four pāku'iku'i per day at this time. There is **no scientific basis** yet to support this catch limit, and while there does need to be some catch limit, a limit of four per day **risks extirpation** of pāku'iku'i locally and regionally in Kona.

- Yes, there needs to be some catch limit in the rule, otherwise there is no catch limit, and it's open season on pāku'iku'i.
- I appreciate DAR's work with the UH-USGS Fishery Cooperative Unit and with the Miloli'i community and others to begin to understand some of the basic ecology of this fish, including life cycle, age at first reproduction, and life span (to nearly 40 years).
- **There is no data yet on the fundamental question that must inform a bag limit: what rate of pāku'iku'i extraction will be equal to or less than the replacement rate of the population!** No monitoring of the impact of the moratorium over the past two years, no information on extraction levels, no studies indicating what a healthy recovered population would look like.
- DAR's own surveys show **further declines in abundance, size and even presence of pāku'iku'i.**
 - o *"The average observed abundance of pāku'iku'i in DAR's shallow water surveys declined from 2008-2018 when the surveys were conducted...."*
 - o *"Pāku'iku'i presence on DAR surveys declined from 73% in 2008 to 38% in 2018...."*
 - o *"The trends observed in this data exploration were sufficient to **raise our level of concern** for the status of pāku'iku'i in West Hawai'i."*

(Staff Submittal F-1, 9/13/24)

- Pāku'iku'i are already very low in numbers in most places. They are very easy to spear, as they just hang out in the wash of the waves around shallow boulders and coral heads. They swim slowly, even stationary. They pair up, so taking even one likely takes out a reproductive pair.

- Even the aquarium trade recognized the dire situation for pāku'iku'i, and so proposed a change to no take of pāku'iku'i in their permit request.

** The proposed rule to go out to public hearing should be very conservative. Should testimony bring forth information justifying a more liberal rule, it can be amended when it comes back to the Board without having to go out for another round of public testimony, but not vice versa.

I recommend:

- Moratorium (zero take) continuing through 2027, not 2026, to match the Miloli'i moratorium.
- Abundance and presence/absence surveys at representational reference sites in 2027.
- A take level of one per day beginning in 2028, with the proposed fisher registration requirement, for five years.
- A second set of abundance and presence/absence surveys in 2032. Should the surveys indicate abundance and presence/absence of pāku'iku'i statistically the same as in 2027 or greater, the take level would be automatically raised to two per day, on a continuing basis, without the need to amend the rule. Should the abundance and presence/absence surveys indicate a decline of 10% or more, a five-year moratorium would be put in place again.
- This cycle can be established in the rule continue indefinitely, with take levels changing based on those metrics at five-year cycles.

This approach effectively puts adaptive management capabilities for DAR and BLNR into the rule itself. It requires active monitoring and surveys, but that is what it will take to ensure recovery of the pāku'iku'i and a sustainable fishery for the community.