

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Division of Aquatic Resources
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

May 22, 2026

Board of Land and Natural Resources
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii

SUBJECT: Request Approval to Enter into a Project Agreement between the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and the Research Corporation of the University of Hawaii (RCUH) for the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) Research Project Entitled "Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Approval is requested to enter into a new Project Agreement between DLNR-DAR and RCUH. The Project Agreement, entitled "Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey," is schedule to run from October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027. The Project Agreement provides \$766,000.00 in Federal funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sport Fish Restoration Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). An additional \$243,000.00 from the Sport Fish Special Fund will be used as match for the federal grants. The Project Agreement allows DAR to secure assistance from RCUH to meet project goals and objectives efficiently and in a timely manner.

Project Objectives

1. Collect baseline data on marine recreational catch and effort to assist fishery resource management decisions.
2. Estimate fishing pressure and total landings of Hawaii's various marine recreational fisheries by integrating catch, effort and U.S. Census data.
3. Fulfill the mandatory Federal requirement for all U.S. coastal states to provide recreational catch and effort data to NOAA Fisheries.

Duration

The Project Agreement is scheduled to run from October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027.

Funding Source

This Project Agreement will be funded by a combination of sources listed below in the total amount of \$1,009,000.00:

- 1) Federal funds (\$766,000.00): \$352,000.00 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and \$414,000.00 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sport Fish Restoration Program.
- 2) State Funds: \$243,000.00 from the Sport Fish Special Fund as both required and non-required State match.

HRS Chapter 343 - Compliance with Environmental Law:

This Project Agreement will continue to involve the use of state lands (submerged lands zoned in the Conservation District, Resource subzone) and use of state funds. The Department has determined that the actions to be conducted under the funding and time extension for this ongoing project will have little or no significant effect on the environment and are exempt from the preparation of an environmental assessment. See the Division's proposed Determination of Exemption from the preparation of an environmental assessment (attached).

REMARKS

Fisher surveys compile marine recreational fishing catch and effort data relevant to all DAR programs. Unlike the mandatory catch reporting required by commercial fisheries, marine recreational fishing data in Hawaii has been largely unaccounted for, yet it is believed to have a substantial impact on Hawaii's fishery resources due to its widespread popularity, cultural significance, and importance as a food source for the people of Hawaii.

By conducting routine interviews with both shoreline and private boat fishers statewide, the project provides both State and Federal agencies with baseline data that is vital to responsible management of Hawaii's fishery resources. Catch data (e.g., species, numbers, length, weight and disposition of catch), effort data (e.g., hours fished, areas fished, target species, gear types and methods used) and U.S. Census data, are to be integrated as fisheries statistics to estimate fishing pressure and total landings in Hawaii's various marine recreational fisheries for eventual public posting on a NOAA Fisheries website. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended and reauthorized, all U.S. coastal states are required to provide recreational catch and effort data to NOAA Fisheries.

Maps of the project survey sites are attached. In addition, see the following link for the most recent final report submitted to the primary federal award agency (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) of this project for more information:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:2bf995b2-cf76-43a5-a6e4-ee28093f661f>

Approval to enter into this Project Agreement is being requested concurrently from the Governor, through the Department of Budget and Finance. Also, the Project Agreement is being prepared for submission to the Attorney General's Office for preliminary approval as to form and content. DAR is aware that the implementation of this Project Agreement depends on the receipt of all required approvals and the availability of funds, and that funding restrictions may occur at any time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above discussion, the Division of Aquatic Resources requests:

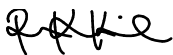
1. That the Board, based on the attached proposed declaration of exemption prepared after consultation with and on advice of those having similar expertise in exemption determinations for the proposed actions under the Project Agreement, declare that the actions which are anticipated to be undertaken under this Project Agreement will have little or no significant effect on the environment and are therefore exempt from the preparation of an environmental assessment;
2. That the Board authorize the Chairperson to approve and execute the Division of Aquatic Resources Project Agreement entitled "Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey." with the Research Corporation of the University of Hawaii, subject to approval as to form and content by the Department of the Attorney General; and
3. That the Board delegate to the Chairperson the authority to:
 - a. Approve and execute all future Division of Aquatic Resources Project Agreements and forthcoming amendments with the Research Corporation of the University of Hawaii, subject to approval as to form and content by the Department of the Attorney General; and
 - b. When appropriate, declare that actions that are anticipated to be undertaken under these Project Agreements will have little or no significant effect on the environment and are therefore exempt from the preparation of an environmental assessment.

Respectfully submitted,



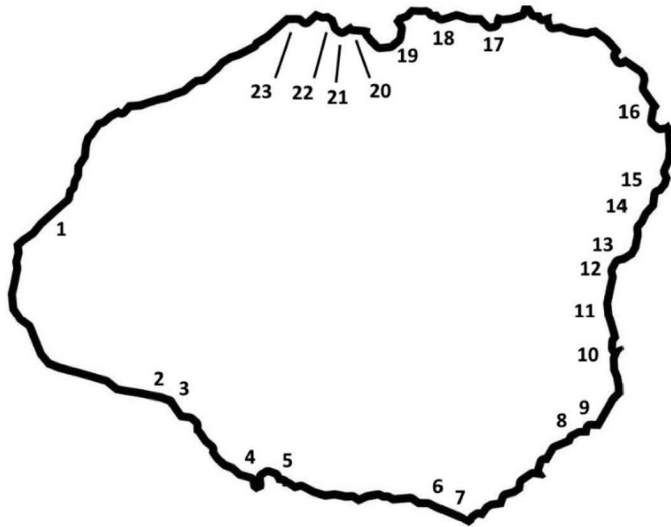
BRIAN J. NEILSON
Administrator

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:



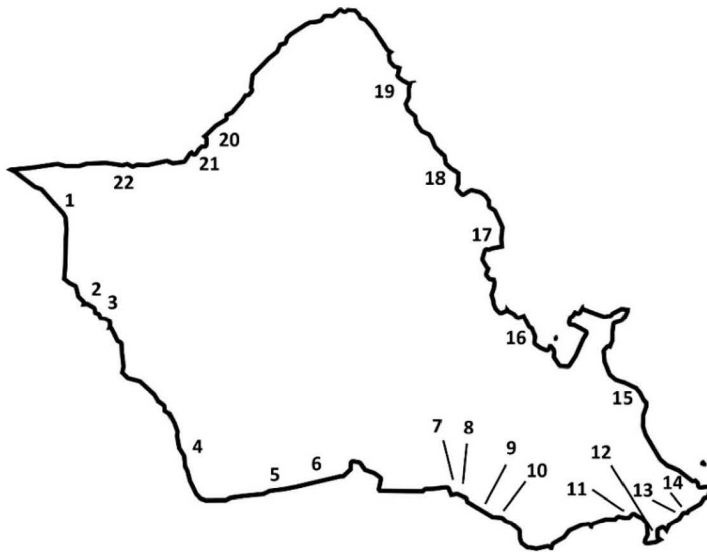
RYAN K. P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Attachment
Survey Site Maps
Declaration of Exemption – Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey



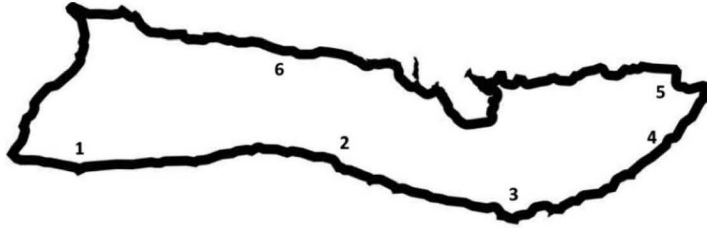
Kaua'i Sample Sites:

1. Polihale
2. Kīkīaola Small Boat Harbor
3. Waimea Pier
4. Salt Pond
5. Port Allen Small Boat Harbor
6. Kukui'ula Small Boat Harbor
7. Kōloa Landing
8. Ninini Point (Nāwiliwili Lighthouse)
9. Nāwiliwili Small Boat Harbor
10. Ahukini Pier
11. Lydgate Park
12. Lilihi Boat Harbor (Kapa'a Boat Harbor)
13. Wailua Beach
14. Kapa'a Canal
15. Keālia Beach
16. 'Ānahola Beach / River
17. Kalihawai Bay
18. 'Aninni Beach Park
19. Hanalei Bay / Waipā / Pine Trees / Pavillion / Black Pot
20. Waikoko Beach
21. Lumaha'i Beach
22. Hā'ena County Park / Tunnels Beach
23. Ke'e Beach



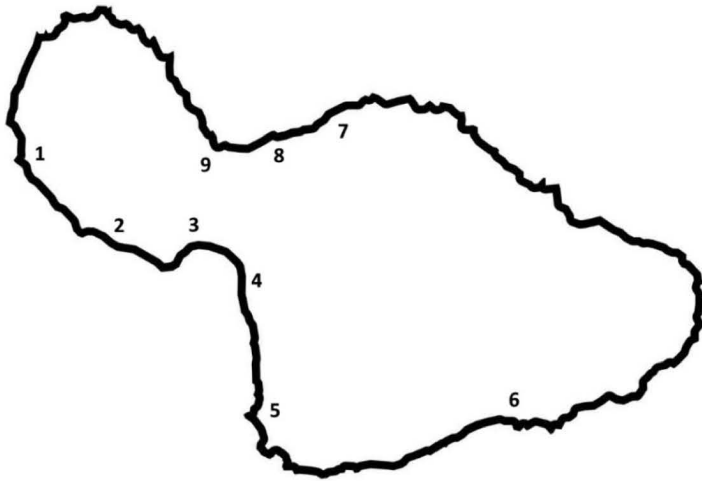
O'ahu Sample Sites:

1. Yokohama Beach
2. Wai'anae Harbor
3. Pōka'i Bay
4. Electric Beach Park
5. Chicken Creek (One'ula Beach Park)
6. 'Ewa Beach Park
7. Ke'ehi Boat Harbor
8. Sand Island State Park
9. Kaka'ako Water Front Park
10. Magic Island
11. Maunalua Bay & Beach Park
12. Portlock / Kōke'e Beach Park
13. Sandy Beach Park
14. Wāwāmalu Beach
15. Kailua Bay
16. He'eia Kea Small Boat Harbor
17. Kualoa Beach Park
18. Punalu'u Beach
19. Lā'ie Point
20. Hale'iwa Harbor
21. Kaiaka Bay
22. Army Beach



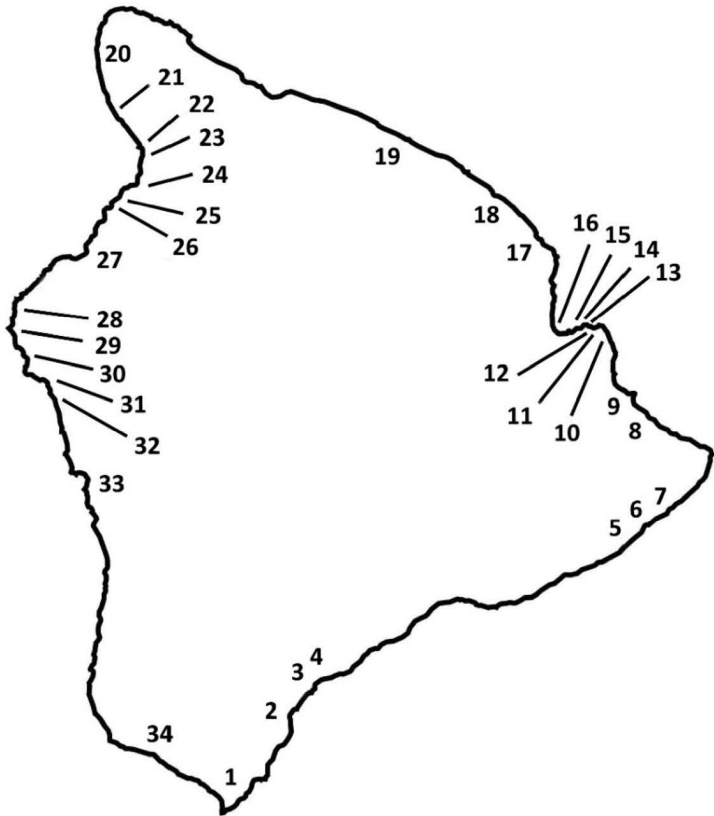
Moloka'i Sample Sites:

1. Hale O Lono / Paka'a / Kawākiu
2. Kaunakakai Wharf / Rice Patch
3. Kamalō Wharf / Pūko'o Harbor
4. Rocky Point / Morris Point
5. Hālawa Bay
6. Anahaki



Maui Sample Sites:

1. Mala Wharf
2. Olowalu
3. Mā'alaea
4. Kīhei
5. Mākena
6. Nu'u Bay / Kaupō Church
7. Ho'okipa Bay / H'Poko Point
8. NASCA / Sprecklesville
9. Kahului Harbor

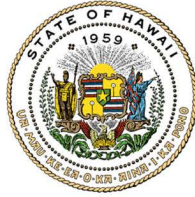


Big Island Sample Sites:

1. South Point
2. Whittington Beach Park / Kawa Bay
3. Nīnole Cove
4. Punalu'u Harbor
5. Kehena
6. 'Opihikao
7. Poho'iki
8. Maku'u
9. Kaloli Point
10. King's Landing
11. Lele'iwi / Onekahakaha / Lālākea Beach Parks
12. Hilo Bay Break Wall / Puhi Bay
13. Coconut Island / Banyan Drive
14. Hilo Harbor Boat Ramp
15. Wailoa State Park / Waiākea Pond
16. Hilo Bayfront
17. Onomea Bay
18. Kolekole / Hakalau Beach Park
19. Laupāhoehoe
20. Kapa'a Park / Māhukona
21. Red Hill / Kaiopae / Black Point
22. Spencer Beach Park / Coral Flats
23. Kawaihae Harbor
24. Puakō Harbor
25. Mauna Lani
26. 'Anaeho'omalu Bay / Hilton Waikoloa
27. Kīholo Bay
28. Kekaha Kai Beach Park
29. Natural Energy Lab (OTEC)
30. Honokōhau Harbor
31. Ali'i Drive
32. Keauhou Boat Harbor
33. Hōnaunau / Nāpō'opo'o Bay
34. Miloli'i

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY
CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER
AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

May 22, 2026

TO: Division of Aquatic Resources File

THROUGH: Ryan K.P. Kanaka'ole, Acting Chairperson

FROM: Brian J. Neilson, Administrator
Division of Aquatic Resources

SUBJECT: Declaration of Exemption from the Preparation of an Environmental Assessment under the Authority of Chapter 343, HRS, and Chapter 11-200.1, HAR, for a Request for Approval to Enter into a Project Agreement between the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and the Research Corporation of the University of Hawaii (RCUH) for the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) Research Project Entitled "Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey."

The following Project Agreement activities are found to be exempted from the preparation of an environmental assessment under the authority of Chapter 343, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) and Chapter 11-200.1, Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR):

Project Title: Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey

Project Description: Fisher surveys compile marine recreational fishing catch and effort data relevant to all DAR programs. Unlike the mandatory catch reporting required by commercial fisheries, marine recreational fishing data in Hawaii has been largely unaccounted for, yet it is believed to substantially impact Hawaii's fishery resources due to its widespread popularity, cultural significance, and importance as a food source for the people of Hawaii.

By conducting routine interviews with both shoreline and private boat fishers statewide, the project provides both State and Federal agencies with baseline data that is vital to responsible management of Hawaii's fishery resources. Catch data (e.g., species, numbers, length, weight, and disposition of catch), effort data (e.g., hours fished, areas fished, target species, gear types, and methods used), and U.S. Census data are to be integrated as fisheries statistics to estimate fishing pressure and total landings in Hawaii's various marine recreational fisheries for eventual public posting on a NOAA Fisheries website.

DLNR/RCUH Project Agreement – Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey
May 22, 2026

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended and reauthorized, all U.S. coastal states are required to provide recreational catch and effort data to NOAA Fisheries.

Key project objectives during the grant period include the following:

- 1) Collect baseline data on marine recreational catch and effort to assist fishery resource management decisions.
- 2) Estimate fishing pressure and total landings of Hawaii's various marine recreational fisheries by integrating catch, effort, and U.S. Census data.
- 3) Fulfill the mandatory Federal requirement for all U.S. coastal states to provide recreational catch and effort data to NOAA Fisheries.

Consulted parties: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Sport Fish Restoration Program; NOAA, Marine Recreational Information Program.

Exemption Determination: After reviewing §11-200.1-15, HAR, and DLNR's departmental exemption list approved on November 10, 2020, including the criteria used to determine significance under §§11-200.1-13, HAR, DLNR has concluded that the activities under this Project Agreement would have minimal or no significant effect on the environment and that approval of the Project Agreement is categorically exempt from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment based on the following analysis:

1. All activities associated with this Project Agreement have been evaluated as a single action. Since this Project Agreement involves activities that are precedent to a later planned activity, i.e., the collection of data to fulfil mandatory federal data-reporting requirements, the categorical exemption determination here will treat all planned activities as a single action under § 11-200.1-10, HAR.
2. The General Exemption Type #5 for Basic Data Collection and Scientific Research with no Serious or Major Environmental Disturbance Appears to Apply. § 11-200.1-15(c)(5), HAR, exempts the class of actions that involve "basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource and infrastructure testing and evaluation activities that do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource." This exemption class has been interpreted to include data collection, research, and resource evaluation activities related to the Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey project, such as those being proposed.

The proposed activities here appear to fall squarely under the exemption class identified under § 11-200.1-15(c)(5), HAR, and as described under the revised 2020 DLNR exemption list (Concurred on by the Environmental Council on November 10, 2020) under the General Exemption Type #5 (Part 1), items #2 and #13, respectively, which includes "non-destructive data collection and inventory, including field, aerial and satellite

surveying and mapping” and “research that the Department declares is designed specifically to monitor, conserve, or enhance native species or native species' habitat”.¹

As discussed below, no significant disturbance to any environmental resource is anticipated. Thus, so long as the below considerations are met, the general exemption types should include the action now contemplated.

3. Cumulative Impacts of Actions in the Same Place and Impacts with Respect to the Potentially Particularly Sensitive Environment Will Not Be Significant. Even where a categorical exemption appears to include a proposed action, the action cannot be declared exempt if “the cumulative impact of planned successive actions in the same place, over time, is significant, or when an action that is normally insignificant in its impact on the environment may be significant in a particularly sensitive environment.” §11-200.1-15(d), HAR. To gauge whether a significant impact or effect is probable, an exempting agency must consider every phase of a proposed action, any expected primary and secondary consequences, the long-term and short-term effects of the action, the overall and cumulative effect of the action, and the sum effects of an action on the quality of the environment. §11-200.1-13, HAR.

Significant cumulative impacts are not anticipated as a result of these data collection activities, and these activities, such as fisher surveys, will be conducted onshore and will not significantly affect any sensitive marine environments. All assessment and data integrative activities will be conducted in a manner that will not diminish the quality of marine resources or their ecological integrity, and the proposed activities will not have any indirect, secondary, cultural, or cumulative effects.

Since no significant cumulative impacts or significant impacts with respect to any particularly sensitive aspect of the project area are anticipated, the categorical exemptions identified above should remain applicable.

4. Overall Impacts will Probably have No Significant Effect on the Environment. Any foreseeable impacts from the proposed activity will be further mitigated by general and specific conditions attached to the Project Agreement. Specifically, all research activities covered by this Project Agreement will be carried out with strict safeguards for the natural, historic, and cultural resources, other applicable laws and agency policies, and standard operating procedures.

Conclusion. Upon consideration of the Project Agreement to be approved by the Board of Land and Natural Resources, the potential effects of the above listed project as provided by Chapter 343, HRS and Chapter 11-200.1 HAR, have been determined to be of probable minimal or no significant effect on the environment and exempt from the preparation of an environmental assessment.

¹ Exemption list for DLNR, approved on November 10, 2020. See Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC) website: http://oeqc2.doh.hawaii.gov/Agency_Exemption_Lists/State-Department-of-Land-and-Natural-Resources-Exemption-List-2020-11-10.pdf