

Federal Programs Office 2023 Annual Report



NOAA
FISHERIES



A Message from the Regional Administrator

We are pleased to announce that in fiscal year 2023 (FY23), the Federal Programs Office of the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) funded \$10,285,449 in grants and cooperative agreements to support the NOAA Fisheries mission. We issued the awards through competitive and non-competitive financial assistance programs. Recipients of the federal awards included 25 U.S. and international agencies and organizations from American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Guam, Hawai'i, and the greater Pacific.



Sarah Malloy

PIRO manages programs that support both domestic and international conservation and management of living marine resources within the Pacific Islands region (PIR), which comprises American Samoa, the CNMI, Guam, Hawai'i, and other U.S. Pacific Islands. Our vision is to achieve healthy marine ecosystems that provide:

- Stability for fishery resources
- Recovery of threatened and endangered species
- Enhanced opportunities for commercial, recreational, and cultural activities in the marine environment

PIRO assists the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC) in developing fishery management plans and amendments for offshore fisheries based in the Western Pacific region. In addition to PIRO and the WPFMC, the NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) and the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) collaboratively support the conservation and management of marine fisheries, protected species, and marine habitat. Working together and employing regional expertise, these offices are committed to providing improved customer service and stewardship of living marine resources within this expansive geographic region.

Going forward, our efforts will continue to focus on capacity building and proposal-development training for Hawai'i and the territories. We will also work with communities to develop innovative projects that help NOAA Fisheries provide stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management in our region.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Malloy".

*Acting Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries, Pacific Islands
Regional Office*

Front cover: Cassie Pardee shows her son an Omilu pāpī'o at a fishing tournament in Hāna, Maui, where Poseidon Fisheries Research was collecting samples for their spawning seasons project. Credit: Caitlin Kryl

Back cover: Students aboard the sailing canoe Kūmau with Nā Kama Kai. Credit: Nā Kama Kai



Students develop methods of monitoring for silt cover and identifying limu growth on Kaho'olawe, Hawai'i. Credit: Veronica Gibson

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Federal Programs Office

The PIRO Federal Programs Office is located at the NOAA Inouye Regional Center in Honolulu, Hawai'i. With technical assistance from PIRO and PIFSC staff, Federal Program Officers administer financial assistance agreements throughout the award period, from the initial solicitation through post-award management.

They work closely with the NOAA Grants Management Division, technical monitors, and grant recipients to facilitate the successful completion of each grant's project objectives.

The Federal Programs Office supports the NOAA Fisheries mission through competitive and non-competitive grants, and cooperative agreements. PIRO funded the following grant programs during FY23:

- Western Pacific Fishery Management Council
- Congressionally Directed Community Projects
- Saltonstall-Kennedy Program
- Hawai'i Marine Wildlife Response, Outreach, and Population Monitoring Program
- Pacific Islands Region Marine Turtle Management and Conservation Program
- Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986
- Hawai'i Protected Species Projects
- Marine Education and Training Program
- Pacific Islands Region International Fisheries Program
- Pacific Islands Managed and Protected Area Community Program



To view available funding opportunities, visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/funding-opportunities>

PIRO Federal Program Officers



Scott Bloom



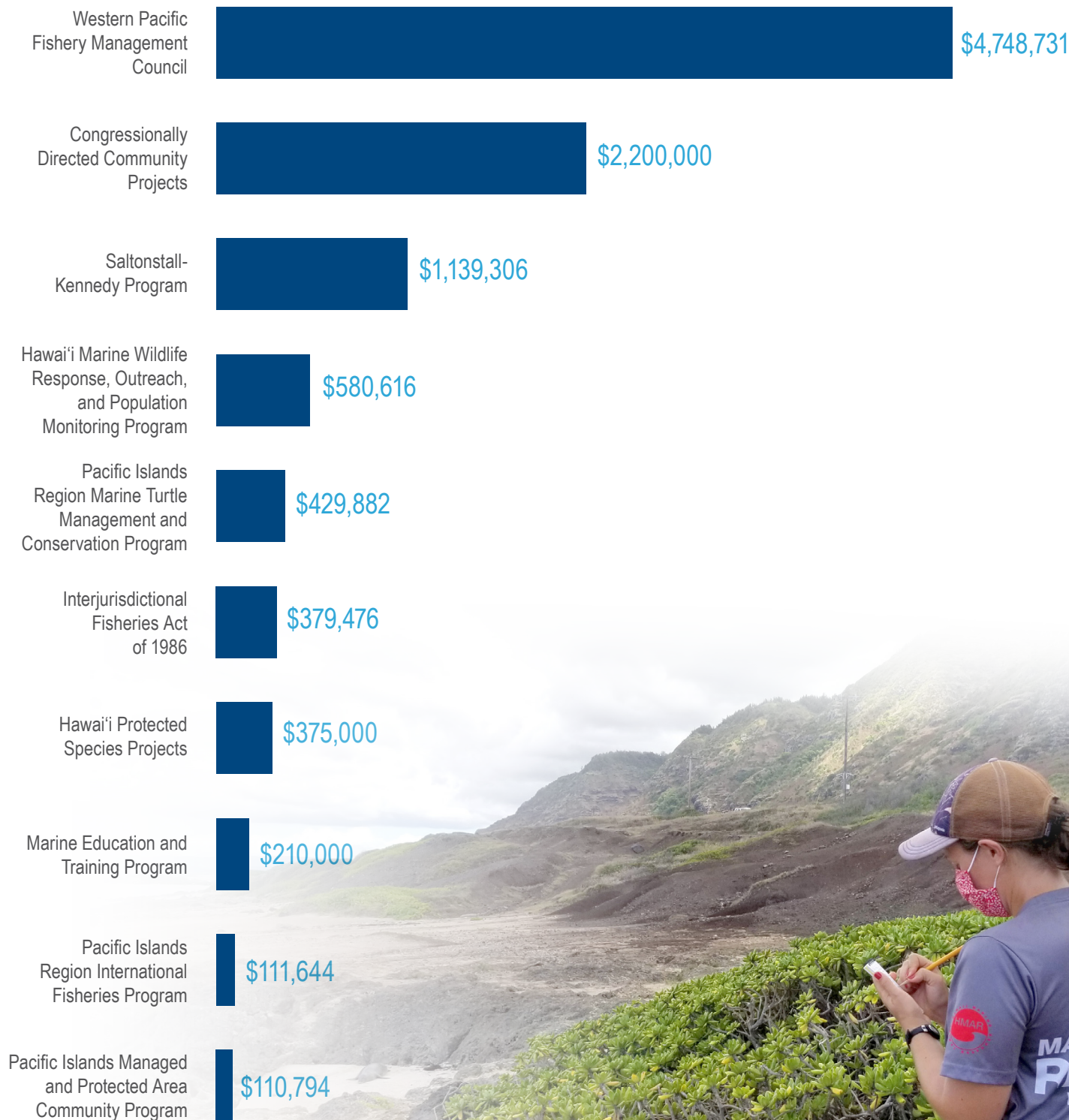
Hideyo Hattori



Tori Dodd

The Fagasā boat ramp in American Samoa will be repaired to improve safety and accessibility for fishermen, the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, and other marine-based agencies on the north side of the island of Tutuila. Credit: WPFMC

Summary of Fiscal Year 2023 Funding



Volunteer Kate Behrens observes an endangered Hawaiian monk seal to help biologists monitor behavior and assess for body condition.
Credit: HMAR

Acronym List

CI	Conservation International
CLDC	Commercial Landings Data Collection
CNMI	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
DAR	Division of Aquatic Resources (Hawaii DLNR)
DLNR	Department of Land and Natural Resources (Hawaii)
DLNR	Department of Lands and Natural Resources (CNMI)
DMWR	Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources
DOFAW	Division of Forestry and Wildlife
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FADs	Fish Aggregation Devices
FISH Inc	Fisheries Immersed Sciences Hawaii
FY23	Fiscal Year 2023
HIMB	Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology of University of Hawaii
HMAR	Hawaii Marine Animal Response
HPA	Hawaii Preparatory Academy
INDOPACOM	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command
IFA	Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986
ISSF	International Seafood Sustainability Foundation
MCP	Marine Conservation Plan
MOCMI	Maui Ocean Center Marine Institute
MOP	Marine Option Program
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MTMCP	Marine Turtle Management and Conservation Program
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OI	Oceanic Institute
OLE	Office of Law Enforcement
PIFG	Pacific Islands Fisheries Group
PIFSC	Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center
PIMPAC	Pacific Islands Managed and Protected Area Community
PIR	Pacific Islands region
PIRO	Pacific Islands Regional Office
S-K	Saltonstall-Kennedy
SAFE	Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation
STAJ	Sea Turtle Association of Japan
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
WPFMC	Western Pacific Fishery Management Council
WWF	World Wildlife Fund, Inc.



*A student catches a fish during a Nā Kama Kai program.
Credit: Nā Kama Kai*

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council

The WPFMC prepares, monitors, and revises fishery management plans for domestic and foreign fishing within the 200-mile U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. PIRO is responsible for implementing the management measures created by WPFMC. NOAA OLE, the U.S. Coast Guard 14th District, and local enforcement agencies enforce the measures.

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council Cooperative Agreement (\$4,354,202)

In FY23, PIRO funded the 4th year of a 5-year cooperative agreement to support the WPFMC base administration and operations. The WPFMC received \$4,354,202 for the following 13 activities under this 5-year cooperative agreement:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Council Base Administration and Operations (\$3,446,602) | 9. Scientific and Statistical Committee Stipends (\$55,764) |
| 2. Annual Catch Limits Implementation (\$197,528) | 10. Small Boat Management Program Data Collection (\$50,000) |
| 3. Council Peer Review (\$142,075) | 11. U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) Meeting Support (\$35,000) |
| 4. Council Education Committee Scholarship/ Internship Program (\$100,000)* | 12. Zone-Based Management Workshop (\$5,000) |
| 5. Magnuson-Stevens Act Implementation (\$89,235) | 13. International Fisheries Longline Workshop (\$4,000) |
| 6. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (\$88,998) | |
| 7. 193rd Council Meeting (\$80,000) | |
| 8. Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report Coordinator (\$60,000)* | |

* PIRO and PIFSC contribution



The CNMI DLNR installed water quality boundaries, shown in black, to protect the environment during an improvement project at the Garapan Fishing Base in Saipan. The project will build 12 steel pavilion structures, or palapala, to support local fish vendors. Credit: WPFMC

Western Pacific Sustainable Fisheries Fund (\$394,529)

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act includes authorities in Section 204(e) to permit foreign fishing within the EEZ in the PIR. Before permitting foreign fishing under a Pacific Insular Area fishery agreement, the WPFMC must develop a 3-year Marine Conservation Plan (MCP) that describes the uses for any funds collected by the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary). The CNMI and the Territories of Guam and American Samoa must develop similar MCPs.

Funding for the Western Pacific Sustainable Fisheries Fund is authorized under the Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act (Section 204(e) (7)(A)). Funds are derived from Specified Fishing Agreements between U.S. Participating Territories

of American Samoa and CNMI and vessels permitted under the Council's Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Pacific Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific Region. Regulations covering Specified Fishing Agreements and associated deposits into the Western Pacific Sustainable Fisheries Fund can be found at 50 CFR 665.819.

The Sustainable Fisheries Fund serves as a repository for:

- Permit payments the Secretary receives for foreign fishing in the EEZ around Johnston Atoll; Kingman Reef; Palmyra Atoll; and Jarvis, Howland, Baker, and Wake Island
- Fines and penalties the Secretary receives, in the case of violations by foreign vessels occurring in the EEZ around these Pacific Islands
- Funds or contributions received in support of conservation and management objectives under an MCP, as well as payments made pursuant to specified fishing agreements with the Territories

In FY23, PIRO allocated \$394,529 to five activities in American Samoa.

U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship Program (\$50,000)

This project will support one student from American Samoa for two semesters and one summer internship. The selected student will be transitioning from a community college to a 4-year college or university in Hawai'i or Guam to complete their junior or senior year toward earning a fishery-related bachelor's degree. Alternatively, the student will already have a Bachelor of Science degree and be working to complete a master's degree. The participating student, upon graduation, will be required to work for their local fishery-related agency for 1 year for each year the scholarship was received. The scholarship program provides support for recipient travel-related expenses to attend the university, as well as to participate in the internship and subsequent employment with a fishery-management agency. It also provides financial support for tuition, books, and fees; internship compensation; housing/dormitory accommodations; and other related expenses.



The WPFMC shares outreach resources with local fish vendors in the CNMI such as traditional annual lunar calendars and fish species identification guides. Credit: WPFMC

Marine Conservation Plan Coordinator (\$50,000)

This project will hire a 2-year, half-time MCP Coordinator to oversee projects funded through the Sustainable Fisheries Fund in support of the American Samoa MCP. This Coordinator will report directly to the Director of the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR), who in turn will prioritize and manage the Coordinator's workload and determine the day-to-day scope and duties of the position. In addition to administering this grant and related projects, the individual will facilitate updates and revisions deemed necessary for the overarching American Samoa MCP.

Feasibility Study for West Tutuila Boat Ramp (\$100,000)

This feasibility study will determine the viability of constructing a boat ramp in West Tutuila, American Samoa. It will assess the demand and need for a boat ramp, evaluate potential locations, and identify potential challenges and opportunities at each site. This project will also explore siting and design, conduct environmental assessments, research permitting requirements, and estimate construction and maintenance costs. A boat ramp for West Tutuila could maximize social and economic benefits by enhancing fishing infrastructures that provide benefits to the fisherman and encourage sustainable fisheries.

Fagasa Boat Ramp Repair (\$100,000)

The 20-year-old Fagasa boat ramp is essential to local fishermen, facilitating the transportation of their gear and catch. The boat ramp is also the primary access point for the DMWR, National Park Service, and other marine-focused agencies who conduct important management, research, and enforcement activities in the territory. The ramp suffered severe damage during the 2018 Cyclone Gita. Powerful waves battered the shores, causing significant structural damage as the top slab of the ramp was detached and rendered inoperable. This project will repair the Fagasa Boat Ramp, improving the safety and accessibility for local fishermen and marine-focused agencies.

Pago Boat Ramp Repair (\$94,529)

This project aims to address a critical flaw in the design of the boat ramp located in the Pago Pago Harbor, next to the DMWR. Currently, the ramp does not extend deep enough into the water for safe boat launching. This project will rectify the design flaw,



Fuamai Tago, a recipient of the U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship Program, conducts corals research for the American Samoa DMWR. Photo courtesy of Fuamai Tago

restore the boat ramp to its intended functionality, and provide a safe and accessible entry point to the water to further build on investments previously put in place. Addressing this issue will improve maritime activities and ensure the long-term sustainability of the fishing community.

Congressionally Directed Community Projects

In December 2022, the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023, established funds for “NOAA Community Project Funding/NOAA Special Projects.” Public Law 117-328 states at S7913: “NOAA is directed to provide ... NOAA Community Project Funding/NOAA Special Projects consistent with NOAA’s existing authorities, jurisdictions, and procedures, as appropriate. NOAA shall perform the same level of oversight and due diligence regarding these projects as with any other external partners.” The Congressionally Directed Community Projects are aligned with NOAA’s goals of understanding and predicting changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts; sharing that knowledge and information with others; and conserving and managing coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. In FY23, PIRO allocated \$2,200,000 to three projects.

County of Kaua‘i — Waimea 400 Wetlands Restoration (\$1,200,000)

The Waimea 400 Wetlands Restoration project is part of the broader Waimea 400 Conceptual Master Plan, which aims to restore coastal wetlands used for sugar production and a dairy farm. The first phase of the project is a feasibility study to include technical and engineering studies (i.e. geotechnical investigations, drainage analyst, water quality studies, soil remediation requirements, and related technical reports), implementation design, permitting requirements, and cost details necessary for the restoration of this part of the wetland system. The restored wetlands will provide crucial ecosystem services such as flood mitigation, improved water quality, and habitat for native birds, fish, and plants.



Students fish out invasive tilapia at Kanewai Spring, Kuli'ou'ou, O'ahu. Credit: Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center

Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife — Pouhala Marsh Wetland Restoration Project: Phase I (\$600,000)

In this project, the Hawai'i DLNR, Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), O'ahu Branch will execute the mission of the Pouhala Marsh Wetland Restoration Project. Phase I will restore former wetland areas that have been degraded and filled over time, to create wetland habitat for endangered waterbirds at Pouhala Marsh. This project aims to create a 5-acre restoration pond designed to replicate productive wetland areas. Constructed wetlands have proven to be an efficient tool for enhancing waterbird populations in degraded wetland habitats. Staff created habitat profiles based on site-specific studies and observation data. This has provided the baseline data to direct the wetland design, identify the most successful habitat types, and aid in the development of maintenance plans to increase the probability of recovering these endangered water birds for the long term. After construction, this restoration pond will serve as a teaching site for students, school groups, and community groups to learn about endangered water birds and their habitat from staff and other environmental educators.

Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center — Maunalua loko i'a Habitat Restoration (\$400,000)

The Maunalua Bay region, on O'ahu, once had extensive areas of wetlands and Hawaiian loko i'a (fishponds). These ecosystems have diminished due to urbanization and associated water quality degradation. Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center's mission is: "E ho'ola kākou i na loko i'a a Maunalua," which means, "let us properly preserve the fishponds of Maunalua." The heritage center currently stewards two of the remaining Hawaiian fishponds in the Maunalua region: Kalauha'iha'i Fishpond and the Kānewai Spring/Fishpond complex. This project will restore and sustain the health of loko i'a habitats and resources, associated native species, and community values, including cultural, social, educational, and scientific practices. The local community will be included in the loko i'a restoration process through volunteers and school groups, encouraging environmental ahupua'a stewardship.



A student conducts water sampling at the lava tube inside Kalauha'iha'i Fishpond, O'ahu. Credit: Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center

Saltonstall-Kennedy Program

The Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) Program is a nationally competitive program administered by NOAA Fisheries. The program provides financial assistance through grants and cooperative agreements for research and development projects that benefit the U.S. fishing industry. The program's statutory authority is the S-K Act, as amended (15 U.S.C. 713c-3). The S-K Act established a fund for the Secretary of Commerce to provide funding support for projects addressing aspects of U.S. fisheries, including, but not limited to, harvesting, processing, marketing, and associated infrastructures. In FY23, PIRO allocated \$1,139,306 for four projects.

Hawai'i Seafood Council — Branding Hawai'i Seafood with Fishing Community Outreach (\$300,000)

Hawai'i is the primary source of domestic, fresh, high-quality Pacific bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna, and swordfish in the local and greater U.S. market. The state's primary fishing community and working waterfront is the Fishing Village at Pier 38 in Honolulu Harbor that houses the Honolulu Fish Auction; fishing vessels; processors; suppliers of fishing gear, bait, and ice; restaurants; and a retail fish market. The descriptor "Auction Fresh" and Hawai'i seafood label is used by some local retailers but should be a better defined and distinguishing feature of branding Hawai'i seafood to help the wholesalers, retailers, and restaurants buy, sell, and offer customers genuine Hawai'i seafood products distinguished from imported products. This project will work directly with project partners representing the fishing industry (Hawai'i Longline Association), the Honolulu Fish Auction (United Fishing Agency, Ltd.), and consumers. Outreach to the fishing community will provide residents and visitors the ability to build relationships with fishermen and see the local fishing industry operations firsthand by conducting Fishing Village/ Fish Auction tours, providing a web-based virtual tour, and holding community outreach events. This unique opportunity will further enhance the importance of promoting local, buying local, and maintaining verified traceability.

Conservation International, Hawai'i — Optimizing Economic Benefits and Advancing the Promotion, Development, and Marketing of Hawai'i's Local Fisheries (\$299,977)

An estimated 40% of seafood in the U.S. is wasted, and in Hawai'i, where food security is a pressing concern, seafood accounts for the largest share of locally produced food in the state. This project will establish cross-sector collaboration and capacity building to develop value-added seafood products. This will economically benefit seafood producers, reduce seafood waste, and increase market demand for local seafood products in Hawai'i. This project will engage an established, multi-sector network of fishers, seafood distributors, chefs, educators, entrepreneurs, and marketing professionals who will both inform and benefit from this project. Conservation International



Students learn how to clean and prepare fresh ika. Photo courtesy of Leeward Community College Culinary Arts Program/ Chef Don Maruyama



Participants from Loko Ea (Kawailoa, O'ahu) learn about fishpond nursery systems at a Kua'aina Ulu 'Auamo (KUA) boot camp. Photo courtesy of KUA/Brenda Asuncion

(CI) will engage a local network of influential chefs and entrepreneurs who will develop a suite of value-added products and recipes using seafood byproducts. CI will then host three events during its statewide direct-to-consumer seafood marketing campaign to promote and increase the demand for local value-added seafood products and recipes. In collaboration with NOAA's National Seafood Month, this campaign will include local, regional, and global promotional activities. This project will build on CI's successful market-based model, which will promote better business practices, create local food products, increase revenue streams for seafood producers and processors, reduce seafood waste, and create local economic opportunities.

Oceanic Institute of Hawai'i Pacific University — Refining Aquaculture Methods for Kumu and Establishing Preliminary Tag and Recapture Efforts Utilizing Hawai'i's Fishing Community (\$299,900)

Kūmū, the Hawaiian white-saddle goatfish, is an overfished species treasured by recreational and commercial fishers for its cultural and economic value. The Oceanic Institute (OI) will build upon their previous NOAA award in which they developed effective technology for kūmū broodstock conditioning and production of kūmū eggs and larvae. In collaboration with the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB) of University of Hawai'i, the State of Hawai'i Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR), Pacific Islands Fisheries Group (PIFG), and local fishermen,

this project will tag and release cultured kūmū to demonstrate the potential to restore wild populations of this species. This project will refine OI's aquaculture technology, estimate abundance of wild kūmū populations to understand the contribution from cultured kūmū, and enable new commercial ventures in the local aquaculture industry.

Pacific Islands Fisheries Group — Fresh Local Fish for High School & College Culinary Programs (\$239,429)

Students are not offered the opportunity to work with fresh locally sourced fish due to costs and the limited budget of high school and college culinary programs. This project will expose young, aspiring students to potential culinary careers through hands-on opportunities in the classroom while expanding marketing networks and the sale of fresh locally caught pelagic species in Hawai'i. PIFG will collaborate with a wholesale distributor of fresh locally caught pelagic fish, college culinary arts chefs, and high school culinary arts instructors. Together, the team will source, purchase, and distribute fresh pelagic fish to participating colleges and high schools for use by students in their sustainability-themed curriculum. Students will be empowered to build networks between their culinary educators and fishing community while learning about the fresh local fish species, markets, management, and industries of Hawai'i.

Hawai'i Marine Wildlife Response, Outreach, and Population Monitoring Program

Last year, the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery and Marine Mammal Response Program, Pacific Islands Region Marine Turtle Management and Conservation Program, and the Promoting Responsible Wildlife Viewing Program funding were combined under a single competition called the Hawai'i Marine Wildlife Response, Outreach, and Population Monitoring Program.

This program supports priorities related to in-field response, educational outreach, management, recovery, population monitoring, conservation, and habitat use for Hawaiian monk seals, sea turtles, and spinner dolphins in the state of Hawai'i. Projects in this program promote the recovery of endangered Hawaiian monk seals, support responses to marine mammal strandings in the main Hawaiian Islands, and develop community-based and integrated projects designed to elevate public awareness and build capacity in the community. Projects in this program also implement recovery plans by supporting programmatic activities for Endangered Species Act

(ESA) listed sea turtle species either residing in or migrating through the PIR. In FY23, PIRO allocated a total of \$580,616 to eight projects.

Hawai'i Marine Animal Response — Hawaiian Monk Seal and Sea Turtle Management Support, Field Response, and Outreach on O'ahu (\$230,277)

Hawaiian monk seals and sea turtles are some of the most iconic and beloved marine protected species in Hawai'i. They are also vulnerable to key threats that are challenging their recovery. In this project, Hawai'i Marine Animal Response (HMAR) will provide capacity to support field response, escalated and directed surveys/responses, and interventions and strandings for Hawaiian monk seals and sea turtles on O'ahu. They will also support effective community outreach and collaboration; maintain staff and volunteer capacity; provide training programs and operational procedures; and build effective communications and reporting protocols.



HMAR and NOAA personnel carry Hawaiian monk seal RS36 (Pualani) to her new home after relocation. Credit: NOAA Fisheries (Permit #24359)



A volunteer from The Marine Mammal Center educates a beachgoer on safe wildlife viewing and behavior around Hawaiian monk seals. Credit: The Marine Mammal Center/Lauren van Heukelem

The Marine Mammal Center — Strengthening Hawaiian Monk Seal Response and Community Engagement on Hawai‘i Island (\$95,224)

The last surviving species in its genus, Hawaiian monk seals are one of the most endangered seal species in the world. The Marine Mammal Center’s (“The Center”) Ke Kai Ola facility is a hospital designed solely to provide long-term medical care and rehabilitation to sick, injured, and orphaned Hawaiian monk seals from anywhere in the archipelago. Ke Kai Ola also provides significant education and outreach aimed at inspiring and empowering visitors and residents alike to care for the Hawaiian monk seal. In this project, the Center will continue strengthening its Hawaiian monk seal response and community engagement on Hawai‘i Island, in addition to providing volunteer training and increased communications. This project will also fill a capacity need for sea turtle response in west Hawai‘i Island.

Hawai‘i Marine Animal Response — Hawaiian Monk Seal Management Support, Field Response, and Outreach on Moloka‘i (\$78,715)

Hawaiian monk seals face many threats, including inappropriate encounters with people due to a lack of public understanding and support. HMAR will provide support for field response, escalated and directed surveys/response, and interventions and strandings of Hawaiian monk seals on Moloka‘i. This project will conduct field-based community outreach, public engagement, and hotline response; triage; dispatch; multi-agency coordination; and information collection, transfer, and reporting.

The Marine Mammal Center — Building Hawaiian Monk Seal Response and Community Engagement on Maui (\$74,089)

Ke Kai Ola, The Marine Mammal Center’s Hawaiian monk seal hospital, provides long-term care and rehabilitation to monk seals and significant education and outreach about the seals to visitors and residents. With just over 1,500 individuals remaining, conservation efforts to protect and increase the population are critical to this species’ survival. In this project, The Center will continue strengthening its Hawaiian monk seal response and community engagement on Maui, in addition to providing volunteer training and increased communications.

Maui Ocean Center Marine Institute — Sea Turtle Management Support, Field Response, and Outreach on Maui (\$40,000)

The Maui Ocean Center Marine Institute (MOCMI) provides a comprehensive sea turtle conservation program on the island of Maui. Through support from this funding opportunity, MOCMI will respond to reports of sick, injured, distressed, or otherwise compromised sea turtles. Using the data obtained through stranding response, MOCMI aims to improve understanding of the issue within the community and reduce threats impacting sea turtles by establishing easily adaptable conservation initiatives and accessible environmental education. This project will allow MOCMI to increase sea turtle stranding response capabilities and expand community education and outreach efforts.

The Ocean Foundation — Improving Hawksbill Turtle Research at the Most Important Hawksbill Nest Beach in Hawai‘i; A 3-year Proposal for Halawa, Moloka‘i (\$39,226)

Hawaiian hawksbill turtles represent one of the world’s most endangered sea turtle populations. A recent study indicated that an average of only 14 nesting females and 48 nests are documented across the Hawaiian archipelago each year. The study was largely dependent on data collected from Hawai‘i Island, but recent monitoring carried out in 2018 and 2021 at Halawa Beach Park on Moloka‘i Island suggests the site might be the single-most important hawksbill nesting beach in Hawai‘i. This 3-year proposal seeks to improve research activities at Halawa during the 2022–2025 nesting seasons, with a focus on solidifying

the project’s initial successes. The project will also initiate new, high-priority research activities. These activities will include night monitoring to identify and count nesting females and post-hatching nest excavations to confirm nests, calculate hatching success, and maximize hatchling survival. Combined, these activities will generate urgently needed demographic information on this data-deficient population that is critical to informing population assessments and identifying conservation actions to support population recovery.

Mālama i nā Honu — Mālama i nā Honu Sea Turtle Management and Outreach Project (\$18,000)

The Mālama i nā Honu project focuses on conducting public outreach and education to promote responsible viewing of green sea turtles at Laniākea Beach, O‘ahu. This structured and maintained program provides a viable orientation, on-site training, and monitoring instruction for volunteers. These volunteers provide daily outreach and education to an ever-increasing number of visitors at the location. Volunteers teach about the species life cycle, foraging habits, migration, and nesting behavior to schools, clubs, service groups, and tourist venues. The project strives to bring awareness and implementation of strategies to mitigate turtle boat strikes. It collects and analyzes data on basking turtles at Laniākea and makes it available on Mālama i nā Honu’s website.

Hawai‘i Preparatory Academy — Hawai‘i Marine Wildlife Response and Educational Outreach (\$5,085)

The Hawai‘i Preparatory Academy (HPA) will support the conservation and recovery of sea turtles in Hawai‘i by operating a stranding program that covers the coast from ‘Upolu Point to Honokōhau Harbor on Hawai‘i Island. HPA will receive, vet, and document public reports and respond as appropriate to mediate the problem of sea turtle strandings. HPA will facilitate and deliver rapid and effective response to reported turtle strandings, injuries, and other situations. It will also provide education and advocacy for sea turtles with local organizations, visitors, and residents alike.



Mālama i nā Honu teaches students about the scutes of a turtle in a school outreach program. Credit: Mālama i nā Honu/Debbie Herrera

Pacific Islands Region Marine Turtle Management and Conservation Program

The Pacific Islands Region Marine Turtle Management and Conservation Program (MTMCP) implements the recovery plans for the U.S. Pacific sea turtle populations by supporting programmatic and recovery activities for ESA-listed sea turtle species. These species may occur entirely within the PIR or have documented linkages to the PIR, such as sea turtles that originate from areas outside of U.S. jurisdiction but migrate through or forage within the PIR, or are impacted by PIR federally managed activities (such as commercial fisheries) and therefore relevant to NOAA Fisheries management and recovery obligations. Projects supported by the MTMCP aim to implement regional management priorities and species-specific monitoring, protection, or conservation needs as outlined in the recovery plans. They also complement ongoing federal, state, or international activities and align with current agency initiatives (such as the [Species in the Spotlight](#) initiative to save at-risk species). FY23 focuses on international projects that monitor, protect, and conserve western Pacific leatherback sea turtles occurring in Indonesia and Solomon Islands, and sea turtle projects within Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, or Japan) with a focus on fishery bycatch, nesting beach monitoring, poaching reduction, and/or the illegal sea turtle wildlife trade. In FY23, PIRO allocated \$429,882 to five projects. The three leatherback sea turtle awards, in particular, continue funding existing programs to maintain monitoring and conservation momentum and are identified as high priority activities outlined in the Species in the Spotlight [Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle Action Plan](#).

The Nature Conservancy — Securing Co-management of Leatherback Turtle Nesting Beaches in Solomon Islands (\$119,935)

Under this project The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will support Solomon Islands' communities, the Isabel Provincial Government, and the Ministry of Environment to protect and monitor leatherback turtle nesting beaches from 2023–2026. Key objectives include: 1) building leatherback turtle monitoring and management efforts in Isabel Province by



In the Solomon Islands, field rangers with the Isabel Island Leatherback Turtle Program tag a nesting leatherback turtle to study migratory movement. Credit: The Nature Conservancy

strengthening leatherback management at three existing sites and commencing management at an additional key site; 2) formalizing conservation efforts in Isabel Province to ensure their long-term sustainability; and 3) equitably engaging Solomon Islanders in environmental conservation work by employing women as rangers across all sites and engaging all rangers in awareness activities—a traditional strength of women in Solomon Islands' communities.

World Wildlife Fund, Inc. — Implementing A Strategy to Address the Direct Take of Leatherbacks in the Kei Islands, Indonesia-Phase 2 (\$117,148)

The Western Pacific leatherback subpopulation is declining by 6 percent each year. In the waters off the Kei Islands, Indonesia, leatherback sea turtles congregate to forage on large aggregations of jellyfish where 11 villages hunt and consume leatherback sea turtles. In 2017, World Wildlife Fund, Inc. (WWF) documented 104 leatherbacks taken in this hunt. This level of leatherback take exceeds traditional levels and likely contributes to the decline of their population. Over the last 5 years, WWF has worked to develop a

multi-layer strategy aimed at reducing the ongoing leatherback hunt that has resulted in: 1) the formation of a robust regional monitoring program, and 2) broad outreach efforts that have reduced leatherback take from a high of 104 in 2017 by an average of 85% in recent years. Continued collaborations with Indonesian governmental agencies, religious institutions, village councils, and the KEI-Kecil Marine Protected Area provide a pathway to solidify these early conservation gains and achieve a more permanent solution for the recovery of the Western Pacific leatherback population.



A field ranger with the Buru Island leatherback turtle project in Indonesia excavates a nest to collect data on hatching success. Credit: Yayasan World Wildlife Fund-Indonesia/Dicky Bisinglasi

World Wildlife Fund, Inc. — Leatherback Sea Turtle Nesting Dynamics in the Maluku region (\$97,166)

The Pacific leatherback sea turtle is a species most at-risk for extinction. The Indonesian archipelago is important nesting habitat for the surviving population, but their numbers have dramatically declined in part due to egg harvesting and direct take from nesting

beaches and foraging grounds. In 2017, conservation efforts were put in place on a newly found leatherback nesting site on Buru Island, where egg poaching and direct take of nesting females was rampant. By 2019, significant results in the protection of mothers and nests made Buru Island the first substantial nesting population discovered outside of Papua, Indonesia in the last decade. This project continues this conservation work in Buru Island. The objectives are to maintain monitoring, continue collection of genetic samples, and deploy satellite tags to improve understanding of turtle movement patterns. This data will inform the boundaries of a proposed marine protected area, which will allow a transfer of conservation responsibilities to Indonesian agencies.

Sea Turtle Association of Japan — North Pacific Loggerhead Conservation: Nesting and Threat Assessment (\$70,593)

The population of loggerhead turtles inhabiting the North Pacific Ocean is endangered. Accurate sea turtle population modeling assessments are reliant on robust data on both nesting levels and threat impacts, especially fisheries bycatch. North Pacific loggerheads nest exclusively in Japan and data from the index nesting beach complex of Yakushima Nagata-hama represents the primary nesting input needed for population modeling. The organization historically responsible for coordinating the collection and sharing of nesting data from Yakushima Nagata-hama has undergone several organizational challenges in recent years, culminating with the group's dissolution in 2022. As a result, loggerhead nesting data has not been made available to national and international stakeholders since 2016. In addition, bycatch assessments carried out between 2007 and 2011 identified high levels of loggerhead mortality at multiple sites in Japan that have coastal pound net fisheries. Funding limitations, unfortunately, led to the cessation of research activities and have left major gaps in our understanding and quantification of this threat. Via this 3-year proposal, the Sea Turtle Association of Japan (STAJ) will lead a collaborative effort to ensure nesting beach monitoring continues at Yakushima Nagata-hama and that past, current, and future nesting data are organized and made available for domestic (Japanese) and international stakeholders (e.g. NOAA). Additionally, STAJ will spearhead efforts

to re-establish and initiate new fisheries bycatch assessments and monitoring at several high-priority sites. This will generate urgently needed information on bycatch mortality and advance the identification of potential mitigation strategies. Combined, these efforts will provide important data streams for the conservation and management of loggerhead turtles in the North Pacific, with direct implications for U.S.-based longline fisheries.

Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute Philippines, Inc. — Olive Ridley Turtles in the Philippines: Collection and Centralisation of Data to Support the National Action Plan for Marine Turtle Conservation in the Philippines and Regional Stock Assessment (\$25,040)

Despite being the most common and widely distributed sea turtle species, olive ridley turtle populations have been declining substantially for decades. This is due to unsustainable harvest of eggs and adults, habitat loss, and fisheries interactions, with a 30–50 percent decline reported globally and up to 92 percent in the Central & Western Pacific Ocean (Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia). The Philippines hosts extensive nesting beaches along the West Philippines Sea/South China Sea and the south coast of Mindanao. But site management, conservation interventions, and data collection have thus far been disconnected and inaccurate, covering only a fraction of the existing and potential nesting sites, with currently no regional or national data officially available. Through a collaborative network with local stakeholders, the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development, and the DLNR, this project will assess the conservation status of the olive ridley turtle in the Philippines. This will be done through direct nesting beach monitoring, communities patrolling, hatchery management enhancement and expansion, consumption and trade monitoring and mitigation, telemetry, and genetics, while collating and managing historical data and citizen science reports in a centralized online database. Outreach programs will aim to identify major threats and possible mitigation measures and identify potential sites for the deployment of bycatch mitigation technologies. Emphasis will be given to understand the impact of the threats on turtle populations' recovery and their connectivity with the PIR.



Dr. Alexander Gaos, NOAA Fisheries, presents the Species in the Spotlight "Hero" award to Andreas Hero Ohoiulum, WWF-Indonesia project leader, for his dedicated protection of Western Pacific leatherbacks. Credit: WWF-Australia/Christine Madden Hof

Project Update

Leatherback turtles are the largest turtles in the world—they're also one of the most imperiled. These endangered turtles face a high risk of extinction in the near future. Our work with partners like the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is essential to their survival. Since FY20, we have funded two ongoing WWF projects in Indonesia that combat leatherback loss. The first project is in the Kei Islands, where villages have traditionally engaged in an annual harvest of leatherbacks. WWF-Indonesia implemented a multi-faceted strategy to reduce hunting efforts. They collaborated with leadership in 11 villages, as well as local fisheries agencies, to successfully reduce leatherback harvest by 85 percent. They also helped establish the Kei Islands Marine Protected Area (MPA), a major driver for leatherback conservation. WWF-Indonesia's second project is on Buru Island. Approximately 60 percent of leatherback nests on the island were being poached by villagers or eaten by predators. Villagers were also harvesting three to five nesting females each year. WWF-Indonesia again collaborated with village leadership and local agencies. Together, they reduced poached nests to less than 1 percent and eliminated harvest of nesting females completely. Additional Buru Island successes include the creation of a community-based conservation group and initial steps to create an MPA to protect nesting leatherbacks. Project leader Andreas Hero Ohoiulum championed both of these WWF-Indonesia projects, and NOAA Fisheries recognized him as a 2023 Partner in the Spotlight "Hero" for his efforts!

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986

The Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986 (IFA) assists states in managing interjurisdictional fisheries resources. Apportionment to states is based on the average value and volume of raw fish that domestic commercial fishermen land. The data obtained is the principal source of information and analysis for fisheries activities and management options that are used to address federal requirements for fisheries management plans under NOAA Fisheries' jurisdiction. In FY23, PIRO allocated \$379,476 to five projects.

American Samoa Government: Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources — Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (\$181,699)

For this project, DMWR will provide fisheries data collection, fisheries data quality/control measures, training and development of program staff, consistent outreach and awareness programs, and support in enforcement efforts for the territory of

American Samoa over a 4-year period. DMWR will collect fisheries data on the highly migratory inter-jurisdictional fish species caught within American Samoa's local fishery, contributing to the Fishery Ecosystem Report administered by the WPFMC.

Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Aquatic Resources — Maintain and Support Commercial Fisheries Reporting Web Portal Systems and Recreational Marine Fishing Surveys for the State of Hawai'i (\$129,944)

This grant supports DAR's efforts to monitor the status of marine resources and the development of regulations for fisheries in State waters and in the U.S. EEZ. Over the next 4 years, DAR will 1) continue ongoing contracted maintenance, updates, and other necessary support for the commercial licensing and catch and dealer reporting systems, and 2) implement its Hawai'i Marine Recreational Fishing Survey, which surveys non-commercial fishermen at public boat ramps and popular shoreline fishing areas. The data collected is intended for use by fisheries managers and scientists from DAR, NOAA, and WPFMC.

Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Aquatic Resources — Quantifying Fishing Effort at Anchored Fish Aggregation Devices Through Acoustic Monitoring (\$34,797)

DAR currently maintains an array of approximately 50 fish aggregation devices (FADs) around the main Hawaiian islands. These buoys are intended to enhance fishing opportunities by attracting pelagic fish. While research has demonstrated that FADs work in attracting fish, there is little data on boat-based fishers' use of FADs. DAR recently received a grant to purchase and deploy four passive acoustic receivers on select FADs, as well as collect and analyze acoustic data to understand the movement of vessels around FADs. In this project, DAR will purchase additional acoustic receivers and supplies to quantify fishing effort at select FADs around the main Hawaiian islands. The work will be done in collaboration with Dr. Kim Holland of HIMB and other University of Hawai'i



From left: Fernan Asalele, Tepora Toliniu Lavata'i, and Panisia Luteru of the American Samoa DMWR conduct routine visits with vendors in the pelagic fish trade to gather data on locally caught species. Credit: NOAA Fisheries

faculty and students that have experience deploying acoustic monitors on FADs and analyzing acoustic data. This project will provide valuable information on the importance of FADs to local fishers, leading to better management and allocation of resources to maintain FADs. This State of Hawai'i project is supported by IFA formula funds allocated in FY22 and awarded in FY23.

Government of Guam: Department of Administration, Bureau of Statistics and Plans — Commercial Landings Data Collection Program (\$16,518)

These funds will support the Guam Commercial Landings Data Collection (CLDC) receipt program that collects information from local vendors that purchase and sell fish caught from local waters. Funds are to partially support one staff member for data collection, analysis, and entry of commercial vendor purchasing information. The staff will also conduct outreach to local fishermen in support of the Guam CLDC program. The data collection activities of the staff includes maintaining relationships and working with vendors to address their needs in support of the CLDC receipt program, supplying and collecting completed commercial receipt forms from vendors, scanning and uploading forms and copies of receipts into a digital archive system and databases, visiting sites of current and potential vendors, and performing data quality control tasks. Outreach activities will also educate local fishermen who catch and sell to local vendors on how to provide data to the Guam CLDC program. This project will provide information to the Guam government, NOAA Fisheries, and the WPFMC to help ensure that Guam fisheries are sustainably managed and fish landings and sales are tracked.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: Division of Fish and Wildlife — Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act 2023-2027 (\$16,518)

Using funding provided by this grant, the Division of Fish and Wildlife proposes to monitor the status of marine resources and support fishery regulations developed for fisheries in territorial waters and the U.S. EEZ over the next 4 years. The division will accomplish this by 1) collaborating and participating in sanctioned CNMI fishing tournaments, 2) collecting and digitizing fish data from the tournaments, 3) monitoring



Broc Calvo was a member of the first Peskan Taddong workshop session in December of 2021. The workshop teaches deep bottomfish fishing techniques in the CNMI. Photo courtesy of Broc Calvo

commercial harvest and purchase data for compliance with mandatory data reporting requirements, 4) monitoring activity in marine conservation protected areas within the Northern Mariana Islands, and 5) monitoring the use of gill nets for cultural take in Saipan. The data collected is intended for use by CNMI fisheries resource managers and scientists, NOAA, and the WPFMC to support federal and local fisheries management programs.

Hawai'i Protected Species Projects

In December of 2022, the Senate Congressional Record established appropriate funds for “Protected Species in the Western Pacific.” Vol 168, No 198 at S7909 states: “...for Hawaiian monk seals, Hawaiian sea turtles, and false killer whales...not less than \$375,000 shall be made available to support State activities related to these protected species, and not less \$375,000 shall be used for additional research to mitigate interactions between fisheries and false killer whales.” In FY23, PIRO allocated \$375,000 to one project.

Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Aquatic Resources — Promoting Recovery of Insular False Killer Whales, Hawksbill and Green Sea Turtles, and Hawaiian Monk Seals in the State of Hawai'i (\$375,000)

The highly endangered insular distinct population segment of false killer whales, the highly endangered Hawaiian monk seal, the endangered hawksbill sea

turtle and the threatened central Pacific distinct population segment of green sea turtles are all protected species critical to a healthy Hawai'i ecosystem. In this project, DAR will conduct investigation, threat reduction, outreach and education, and management projects for these four species. Specifically, DAR will 1) start a new project to respond to the continued decline of the insular false killer whale population, including feasibility studies and pilot projects on data-gathering and threat reduction methods; 2) start a new project to respond to the increasing number and intensity of threats to hawksbill and green sea turtles on Kaua'i island, including surveying for and protecting nests and hatchlings; and 3) continue successful DAR programs regarding all four protected species on Hawai'i island. This project will facilitate long-term population recovery of endangered marine species in Hawai'i.



Did You Know?

In the Hawaiian Islands, there are three populations of false killer whales, which are genetically distinct from one another. This includes the endangered insular population associated with the main Hawaiian Islands, a population associated with the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, and a pelagic population dispersed throughout offshore waters. NOAA Fisheries researchers have used a machine learning algorithm to see if there are differences in the populations' whistles. The different populations' whistle characteristics were too similar for the algorithm to distinguish, but it was able to correctly identify whistles from the insular population more often than the other populations. This suggests there are subtle differences in the whistles of the endangered population.

A group of false killer whales swims in waters off Lāna'i, Hawai'i. Credit: Cascadia Research Collective/Trent Ellis and Lee James (NOAA Fisheries Permit #20605).

Marine Education and Training Program

In 2007, the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act was amended to include §305 (j), which provides guidance on the development of a marine education and training program. Public Law 109-479 states: “the Secretary shall, in cooperation with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, establish programs that will improve communication, education, and training on marine resource issues throughout the region and increase scientific education for marine-related professions among coastal community residents, including indigenous Pacific Islanders, Native Hawaiians, and other underrepresented groups in the region.” The Pacific Islands Region Marine Education and Training Program was established to meet Congressional intent. In FY23, PIRO allocated \$210,000 to two projects.

University of Hawai‘i: Department of Biology — Support of Marine Option Program (2020-2025) (\$150,000)

The Marine Option Program (MOP) provides experiential opportunities for students with ocean-related interests. It offers marine education programs and activities for undergraduates across more than 40 disciplines. MOP continues to provide career counseling, help students identify and implement hands-on internships and research projects to meet their MOP certificate requirements, liaise with project mentors, and monitor student progress. MOP also provides scientific diving opportunities, which help to teach aspects of hands-on underwater-surveying practices and principles courses.

Hawai‘i Academy of Science — Hawai‘i State Science & Engineering Fair (\$60,000)

Every student in Hawai‘i has the opportunity to participate in a science fair activity, helping build interest in marine and natural sciences. The science fair provides a platform for students to use the scientific method to investigate questions and solve problems in the real world. High school students interact with leading scientists in Hawai‘i to conduct in-depth and comprehensive science investigations. Exposure to science activities could provide a catalyst to increase the number of students in Hawai‘i pursuing

advanced degrees in areas of study related to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The Hawai‘i State Science and Engineering Fair connects students, scientists, and teachers by leveraging partners and donors and offering scholarships and awards to winners. The Hawai‘i State Science and Engineering Fair has temporarily moved to a virtual format, requiring an innovative approach to this effort.



Hawai‘i Technology Academy students complete a mock tagging of a Hawaiian monk seal. Credit: Kupu

Pacific Islands Region International Fisheries Program

This grant program supports projects to inform conservation and management practices for international fisheries and transboundary marine resources in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Past and present awards include projects for protected species such as marine mammals, sea turtles, sharks, and mobula rays. Projects may also focus on a broad range of initiatives related to international fisheries in the area, such as protected species interactions, ecosystems and biodiversity, climate change, maritime security, regional fisheries capacity building, and strengthening international partnerships. In FY23, PIRO allocated \$111,644 to one project.

International Seafood Sustainability Foundation, Inc. — Skipper Workshops to Improve Safe-handling and Release of Vulnerable Species By-caught in the U.S. Purse Seine Fishery Operating in the Pacific Ocean (\$111,644)

This project aims to reduce mortality of incidentally caught sharks, rays, sea turtles, and other protected species. The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) will hold workshops for U.S. purse seine vessels operating in the Pacific Ocean to increase awareness of best practices for safe-handling and release of these vulnerable species to increase post-release survivorship. In addition to the in-person workshops, ISSF has developed a train-the-trainer program to increase reach across more skippers worldwide and aims to expand to other fleets.



Giant manta rays are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Credit: Marine Megafauna Foundation/Jessica Pate

Project Update

Fisheries regulations protect Mobula rays from targeted catch and retention, but these rays are sometimes caught unintentionally as bycatch. In FY21, we allocated funding to a 2-year International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) project to improve conservation of Mobula rays. The project prioritizes collaboration with the U.S. purse seine fleet to: understand purse seine fishery interactions with these species; define and test handling and safe-release best practices; and train fishers and observers to increase the post-release survival rate of unintentionally caught rays. In 2021 and 2022, project scientists developed and distributed training materials on Mobula identification and sampling. As pandemic travel restrictions eased, they then held interactive workshops in 2022 and 2023 with vessel crews and observers. The crews gained valuable knowledge on how to differentiate between ray species. They were also able to demonstrate safe handling and release practices. Additional project efforts underway include tissue sample collection and analysis, and sorting grid testing. Sorting grids are devices designed to help fishers get bycaught rays back into the water as safely and quickly as possible. The project's work and relationship building will continue through award completion in December 2023.

Pacific Islands Managed and Protected Area Community Program

The Pacific Islands Managed and Protected Area Community (PIMPAC) program aims to provide continuous opportunities for the sharing of information, expertise, practice, and experience to develop and strengthen site-based and ecosystem-based management capacity throughout the PIR. PIMPAC began in 2005 as a pilot program to identify and address the unique set of challenges faced by Marine Protected Area (MPA) managers in the region and they determined the need for 1) training and technical support around priority topic areas, 2) learning exchanges among their peers, 3) partnership building that would foster increased and long-term support and capacity building, and 4) information sharing of lessons learned and opportunities. PIMPAC continues to provide capacity-building opportunities to community members and government and non-government staff from Hawai'i, Guam, CNMI, American Samoa, Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands. In FY23, PIRO allocated \$110,794 to one project.

FLOAT Partners, LLC — Improve Coral Reef Ecosystem-Based Management for the Pacific Island Managed and Protected Area Community Network (\$110,794)

This award to FLOAT Partners, which consists of Fisheries Immersed Sciences Hawai'i Inc. and Lynker Ocean Alliance Team, will support PIMPAC's goal to provide continuous support for marine protected area managers through training, knowledge sharing, and partnership formation over a 3-year period. This project will focus on ecosystem-based management to include: 1) building existing on-the ground site managers capacity to lead activities for effective management, 2) leveraging regional success to improve protected area networks, and 3) expanding opportunities for youth and existing staff to access capacity building.



*Coral reef ecosystems, such as this reef on Hawai'i Island, support and provide habitat for a wide diversity of marine life.
Credit: Arizona State University/Greg Asner*

FY23 Unfunded Federal Programs

The following programs were not funded in FY23 due to budgetary constraints:

Sustainable Recreational and Non-Commercial Fishing Program: This program supports recreational and non-commercial fishing projects in the PIR that improve sustainable fishing opportunities, maintain stability of fish stocks, and protect cultural fishing traditions.

Western Pacific Demonstration Projects: Public Law 104-297 (16 U.S.C. 1855) authorizes grants for Western Pacific Demonstration Projects that foster and promote the involvement of communities in the Western Pacific.

Native Fishery Observer Program: The NOAA Fisheries Observer Program is responsible for providing longline observers, who obtain data on incidental sea turtle takings and collect fishing effort data. The observers document interactions of all protected species; tally fish that are kept and discarded; and process selected specimens for life history. The Native Fishery Observer Program targets Native Hawaiian, American Samoan, and other Pacific Islander residents for employment as fishery observers in the Hawai'i and American Samoa fisheries.

Hawai'i Seafood Program: The Hawai'i Seafood Program strengthens the economic viability of the Hawai'i fishing and seafood industry through activities that promote Hawai'i fisheries as high-quality, safe domestic seafood produced by a responsible and well-managed fishery.

Marine Education and Training Mini-Grant Program: This program supports projects that prepare communities for employment in marine-related professions; increase the safety, marketing, or management of seafood and fishing; or develop or use technology or data collection to increase the sustainability of fishing practices. All projects are developed and executed in partnership with government or non-government organizations that contribute to or expand relationships in the fishing and marine community.



*A student engages in traditional
aquaculture in Loko ea Fishpond,
in the Kawaihoa ahupua'a, O'ahu.
Credit: Malama Loko ea Foundation*





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