



Assessing the Sociocultural Characteristics of the Proposed Ho'okena Community-Based Subsistence Fishing Area

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Funded by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the Laura Jane Musser Fund in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



BACKGROUND

The community of Ho'okena in the South Kona District of Hawai'i Island, Hawai'i, is known as a fishing village that continues to use many traditional Hawaiian practices to sustainably harvest food from the ocean for the purpose of feeding their families. Without access to this food source, Ho'okena fishermen believe that community members' lifestyle, cultural practice, and physical health would be jeopardized. Community representatives are working toward strengthening the management of marine resources in their 12-mile traditional fishing area. They are developing a management plan including proposed regulations that reflect the cultural and historical traditions of Ho'okena as well as they are able under the modern system of centralized management. As part of this process, the community representatives and other partners undertook a sociocultural assessment of Ho'okena.



GOALS OF ASSESSMENT

1. Establish a baseline snapshot of the community currently utilizing the proposed Ho'okena Community-Based Subsistence Fishing Area.
2. Establish a baseline of the Ho'okena community's dependence on subsistence fishing and utilization of traditional Hawaiian fishing methods in the proposed Ho'okena CBSFA.
3. Determine the degree of support among stakeholders for increased management in the proposed Ho'okena CBSFA.

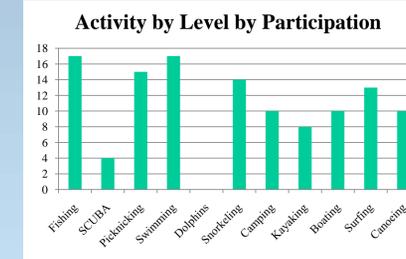
METHODS

Because the Ho'okena area is relatively small and because we wanted to include as much of the community as possible in decision-making, we identified a sociocultural assessment as the best possible research method and a household survey as the best strategy. A household survey form was developed, and we attempted to reach each household during a two-and-a-half day period in May 2009. This included households in the oceanside or *makai* village and households in the upland or *mauka* areas. We also alerted community members of our availability to conduct the survey at Ho'okena Beach Park in case they were not available during the daytime house-to-house survey. We combined the survey with a socioeconomic monitoring training workshop involving members from other communities around Hawai'i that are part of a community-based resources management learning network. At each household, we asked to speak with a representative of the household that was most familiar with fishing in Ho'okena, and we asked respondents to speak on behalf of their entire household. Surveys were conducted by two research partners, one of whom read the survey questions and one of whom recorded respondents' answers. Each evening, research partners entered the gathered data into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. After the field research, Microsoft Excel was used to analyze the data.

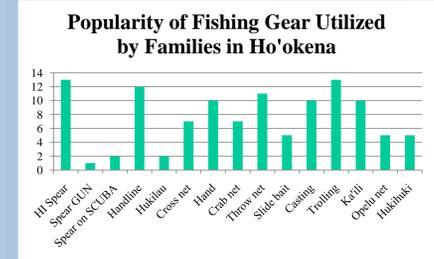
DISCUSSION

We had hoped to complete a full census of Ho'okena area households. Instead, we completed surveys at 21 households, or 50% of Ho'okena area households. When we add members of households represented by respondents, 110 people are represented in survey results. Thirteen surveys were conducted at homes, and eight surveys were conducted at Ho'okena Beach Park. We spoke to household representatives from 10 *makai* homes and 11 *mauka* homes. Thirteen of these respondents reported living in the Ho'okena area, two others live in nearby communities, one lives in California, and five declined to answer.

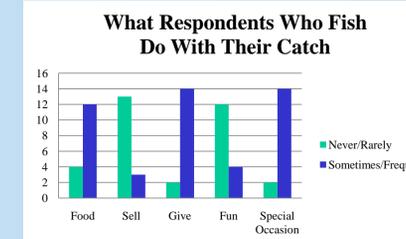
Of the 21 surveys completed, 17 were with men and 4 were with women. Most respondents were between the ages of 45 and 64 and reported being of at least partial Hawaiian ancestry. Twelve respondents said they had more than 20 years of fishing experience, while two had between 11 and 20 years of fishing experience, one had between 6 and 10 years of fishing experience, one had between 1 and 5 years of fishing experience, and five respondents had no fishing experience. To fully understand who utilizes the Ho'okena traditional fishing grounds, we will need to survey people at boat ramps and talk to shoreline fishermen.



Ho'okena households utilize the area mainly for fishing, swimming, and picnicking. Snorkeling and surfing are other popular activities.



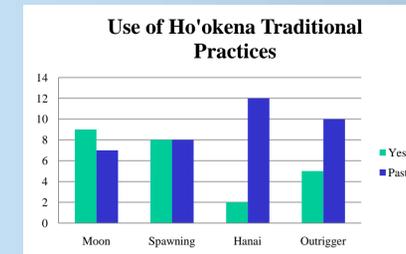
Households utilize a variety of fishing methods in the Ho'okena traditional fishing grounds, with the most popular being trotting and spearfishing with the Hawaiian spear. The methods least utilized include spearfishing with a spear gun, spearfishing on SCUBA, and traditional hukilau fishing.



Respondents reporting using the fish they catch for special occasions and parties, to give away, and to eat. They rarely or never fish primarily for fun and/or to sell the fish.

Respondents reported mainly getting fish from family and friends. Less frequently, they purchase fish from the store or from road-side stands.

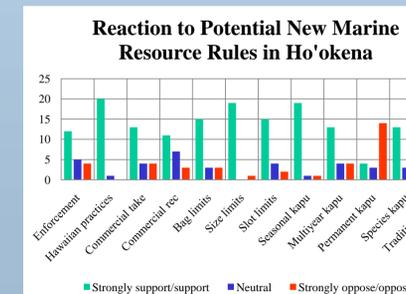
A correlation existed between the frequency of reported fishing and the stated dependence upon fishing. The converse was also true. Of the eight respondents who fish frequently, 4 depend a lot and 3 depend somewhat on marine resources. Of the respondents who sometimes and rarely fish, only one reported depending a lot upon marine resources.



Every respondent said they believed it is important for community members to practice fishing methods considered traditional for Ho'okena, with 15 saying that it is "very important" and one saying that it is "somewhat important." About their own utilization of traditional fishing practices, nine respondents reportedly use the Hawaiian moon calendar and spawning cycles; five reported using outrigger canoes; and two reported following the Hawaiian practice of *hānai ko'a*.

When asked about the health of marine resources in the Ho'okena traditional fishing grounds, two-thirds said resources were healthy, with an additional person saying they were "very healthy." 75% of respondents said they thought the condition of these resources had gotten worse over the past five years. 84% said they thought the condition of these resources had gotten worse over the past 20 years. Several people mentioned that the Fishery Replenishment Areas have led to an improvement in reef fish abundance.

When asked why conditions had gotten worse, respondents answered with a diversity of opinions, including the number of people fishing, a change from subsistence to commercial fishing, greed, disruption to the ecosystem, a lack of freshwater input, and illegal and destructive fishing methods such as chlorine fishing.



In order to address the threats to the Ho'okena Traditional Fishing Grounds, fishermen and other community members have developed a list of possible new rules. We asked survey respondents to share whether they support or do not support several new potential resource management rules for Ho'okena. Most of the potential rules drew support, as indicated by green columns in the chart to the left. The potential rule most disliked was the permanent *kapu*, or closure.