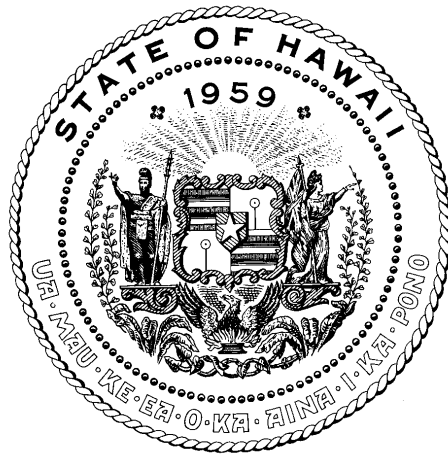


REPORT TO THE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
STATE OF HAWAII
2024 REGULAR SESSION

IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER 190D, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES
OCEAN AND SUBMERGED LANDS LEASING



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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND
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IN RESPONSE TO SECTION 12 OF ACT 176, SESSION LAWS OF HAWAII 1999

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1.0 Introduction

Act 176, Session Laws of Hawaii 1999, went into effect on July 1, 1999, allowing greater use of Hawaii's ocean resources for research and commercial development of open ocean aquaculture. In addition the law requires the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture (DOA), to submit a report to the Legislature prior to each regular legislative session. This report highlights related national activities and addresses the progress in implementing ocean leasing for open ocean aquaculture during 2023.

2.0 The National Scene

On May 7, 2020, President Trump signed the Executive Order on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth – signaling a renewed Federal interest in developing and sustaining the fishery and ocean aquaculture industries. The order authorizes National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as the lead entity to consolidate and streamline the review and permitting process and establish aquaculture opportunity areas in Federal waters. The State will continue to work closely with the NOAA's Pacific Islands Regional Office on implementation of the executive order.

The NOAA Office of Aquaculture has continued to define its priority areas which include regulation and policy, science and research, outreach and education, and international activities. Each priority area is explained below.

Regulation and Policy

The purpose of this effort is to enable domestic aquaculture production within the context of NOAA's marine stewardship responsibilities, which include the protection of the marine environment while balancing multiple uses of coastal and ocean waters. NOAA's role in aquaculture regulation include:

- consultations with the United States (U.S.) Army Corps of Engineers on permitting
- consultations with the Environmental Protection Agency on endangered species, fish habitat, and marine mammal protection
- issuing permits under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
- developing guidance and working with regional Fishery Management Councils on a regulatory framework for aquaculture in federal waters.

Science and Research

The goal of the research initiatives is to provide science knowledge for the agency's regulatory and resource management decisions and foster innovative and sustainable approaches to aquaculture.

The program's current research initiatives focus on:

- strengthening aquaculture research capabilities at the agency's regional Fisheries Science Centers;
- in-house research focused on genetics, alternative feeds for marine fish, restoration of threatened and endangered species, and stock enhancement; and

Outreach and Education

Outreach and education activities include disseminating scientific and general aquaculture information and NOAA research at public meetings and conferences, through the Sea Grant and U. S. Department of Agriculture Aquaculture Extension networks, and through the web and social media.

The program's primary audiences for this information are coastal communities, research scientists, the aquaculture and seafood industries, commercial and recreational fishermen, fishery management councils and commissions, other

government agencies, academia, and interested non-governmental organizations.

International Activities

The NOAA Aquaculture Program is involved in a variety of international bilateral research exchanges, including a Living Marine Resources Exchange with China, an ongoing scientific exchange program with Korea, and the U.S.-Japanese Cooperative Program in Natural Resources. The program also works with policymakers and researchers from France, Norway, and Canada on an ongoing basis.

3.0 Hawaii Activities

3.1 Commercial Development Progress

3.1.1 Keahole Point Fish

Keahole Point Fish (doing business as Blue Ocean Mariculture, the only open-ocean fin fish farm in the United States) produced 900 tons of Hawaiian Kanpachi – 38% of their current allowable yearly production under its state concession. The company is selling as much product as possible in the local market to address food security issues and reduce its carbon footprint by minimizing air cargo shipments. Further local investments included hiring two dedicated Hawaii-based salespeople, expanding walk-up sales opportunities for the local community, increasing the marketing budget for Hawaii, and developing a paid intern program with University of Hawaii at Hilo.

3.1.2 Ocean Era Farm

Ocean Era Farm continues to develop their proposal for an integrated multi-trophic aquaculture operation to be located off Ewa Beach, near to the previous Oahu Cates International site. The project would integrate

Nenue (Kyphosids), Moi (threadfin) with seaweed in a submersible array. Ocean Era Farm is in final stages of preparing a submission to through the relevant regulatory agencies.

3.2 Other Activities and Major Developments

The Board of Land and Natural Resources and the Board of Agriculture recently approved entering into a memorandum of agreement regarding the orderly transfer of revenue collected from mariculture leases from DLNR to DOA's Aquaculture Development Program.

4.0 Conclusions

The continued expansion by Keahole Point Fish Co and the introduction of Ocean Era Farm are promising signs for the offshore sector. Hawaii must find at least two more sustainable operations to establish a sustainable industry that will generate significant tax revenue and protein production.

5.0 Recommendations

The proper infrastructure must be established to balance environmental concerns with opportunities for development. Areas for focus are governance, environmental impact and health management. Governance is crucial because there is a current lack of clear federal responsibility and jurisdiction in governing the open ocean space and a lack of standards to protect the marine environment. Funding needs to be secured to support research and the implementation of protocols to identify and mitigate environmental and health risks for aquaculture products. Additionally, a system to disseminate authoritative information needs to be implemented to support further expansion of the aquaculture industry.