



Responses from the Hawaii Small-boat Fisheries Survey

May 29, 2024

In April and May of 2024, Council staff, in conjunction with the Hawaii Small-boat Fisheries Working Group, held public meetings across the state with the goal of engaging the small-boat fishing community. As part of these meetings, the Council's project coordinator developed a survey to get an idea of what small-boat fishing in Hawaii is and what is important, according to the participants. The Hawaii Small-boat Fisheries Survey was also conducted at the POP Expo on May 18, 2024, in order to obtain additional responses.

The ten-question survey asked participants for how they fished (i.e. boat, shore, kayak, etc.), their fishing method (troll, handline, etc.), and what species they fish for. This was to get an idea of the types of fishing that is done in the fishery and species targeted. The survey also asked to categorize themselves as commercial or non-commercial fishers and if they kept records of their catch. Another question asked about the top issues facing fishers that ranged from laws and regulations to sharks.

Importantly, the survey asked for how to get the word out to the community and the best days and times for public meetings. The survey also asked a demographic question to categorize answers based on generational responses.

Results

The survey received a total of 110 responses, with a third of the responses coming from the POP Expo. The increase in responses from the POP Expo is a result of increased number of participants versus the workshops as well as an additional incentive of a chance to win a prize. Considering there are over 6,000 registered boats in the state, with a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error is around +/- 10%. Some of the questions asked for a primary choice while others allowed for multiple answers which accounts for why some questions have responses greater than the sample size.

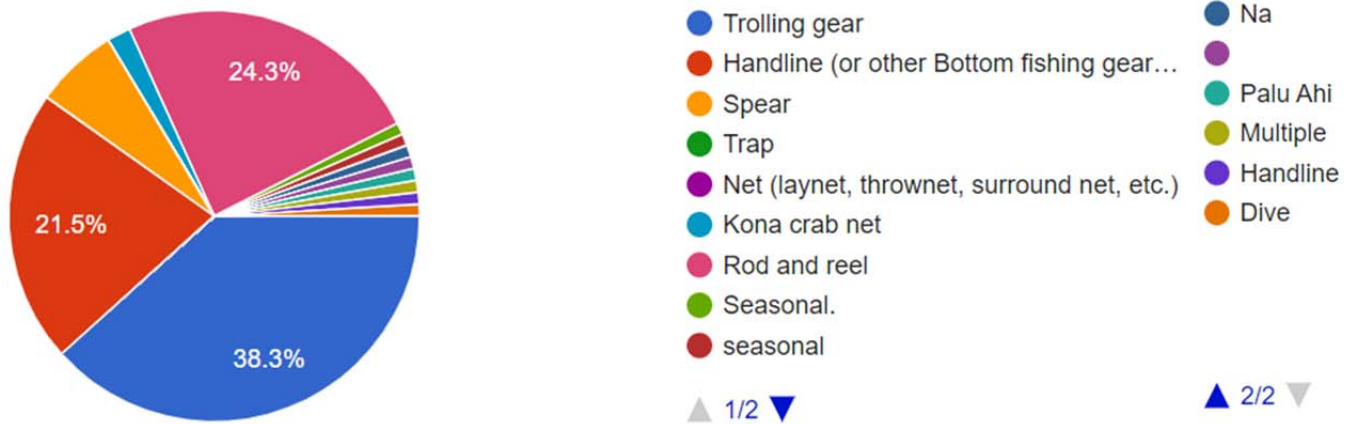
Question 1: I primarily fish from:



Over 75% of the respondents said that they fish from a boat while nearly 165 said they fish from shore and 5% fish from a non-motorized vessel. Other responses included non-fishers and tournament organizers.

While the survey was targeted at small-boat fisheries, the meetings were attended by anyone in the public which resulted in some non-boat fishers participating in the survey. Others might have had a boat but primarily fished from shore.

Question 2: I primarily fish using:

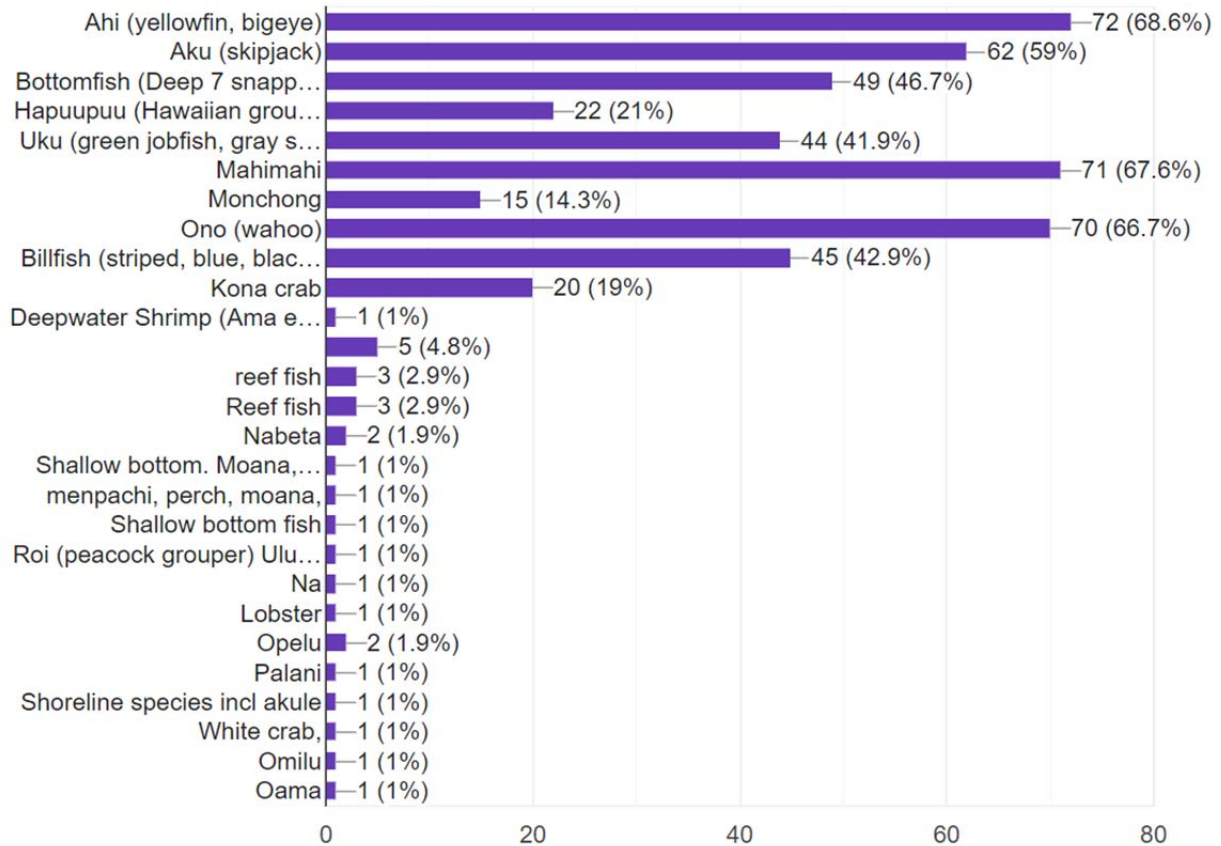


Over 38% of the respondents reported using Trolling gear, with another 24.3% using Rod and Reel. Handline gear is the third most gear used with spear and Kona crab following and then other gears.

Most of the respondents were boat fishers so it makes sense that trolling and handline gears are used most often. Rod and reel could include various methods and would need to be paired with

the results of question 3 to determine what type of fishing those respondents were doing. However, many of those respondents are likely to be using rod and reel for shore-based fishing. A few respondents noted that the gear they fish with is seasonal which may also explain some differences.

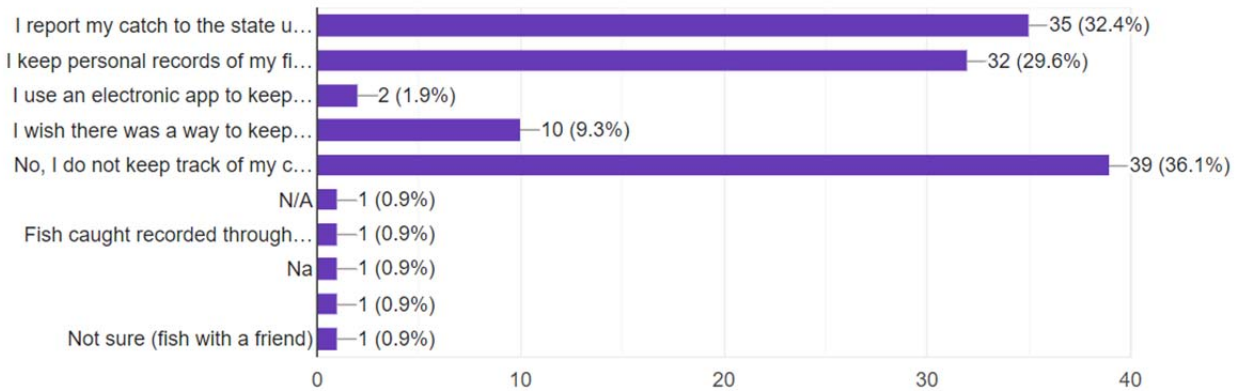
Question 3: Do you catch (or fish for) any of the species below:



The top three species fished for or caught include Ahi, Mahimahi, and Ono. Other commonly caught species include Aku, Bottomfish, Uku, and Billfish.

With boat fishing and trolling being the top answers to previous questions, it is not surprising that the species composition is that of the fish caught mainly trolling from a boat. Species such as Hapu‘upu‘u and Monchong, which may be of management interest, did show up relatively frequently as well as Kona Crab.

Question 4: Do you keep track of or report your catch?



Over a third of the respondents said they do not keep track of their catch while nearly a third said they report their catch to the state of Hawaii under the CML. Another large portion of the respondents said that they keep personal records of their fishing. There were also some that wished there was a way to keep track of their fishing.

One of the issues the Council was discussing at these meetings was non-commercial data collection. Results show that it is split between those that do not keep track of their catch and those that keep personal records. Many folks also report their catch to the state under the CML yet, as is seen in Question 5, not many consider themselves commercial fishers.

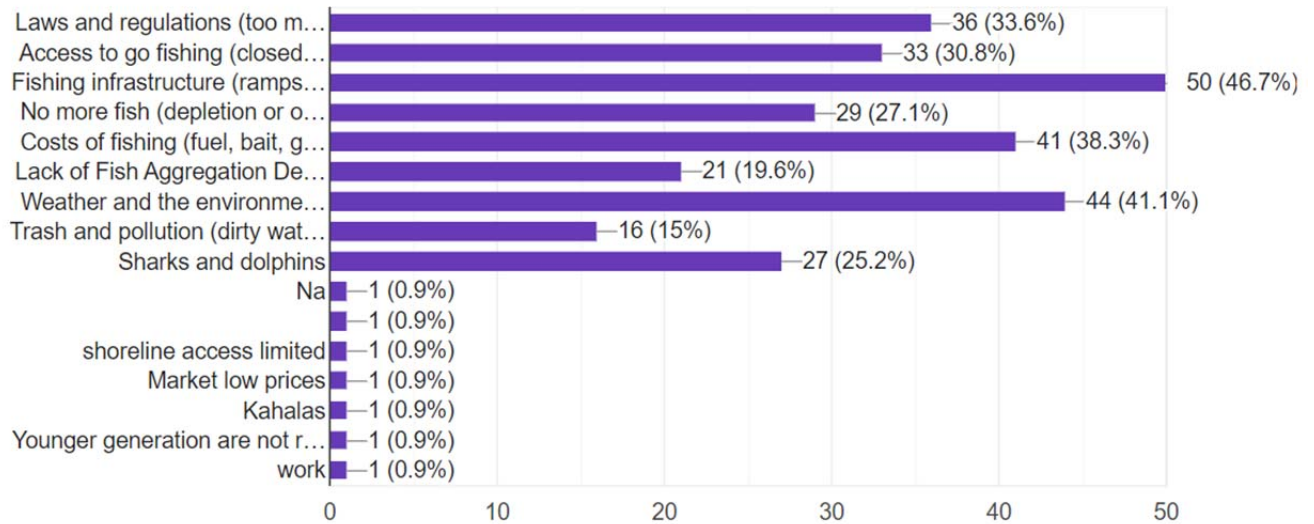
Question 5: I am a _____ fisher?



The majority of respondents classified themselves as recreational, or fish to feed the family or for fun. Nearly a quarter of the respondents classified themselves as sometimes commercial, or sell some but have a full-time job.

This question was more about what fishers identify as because some may have Commercial Marine Licenses yet they consider themselves recreational fishers. We coined this phrase the “sometime commercial” fisher to capture those folks that sell but it is not their full-time occupation. There is a significant amount of those fishers that reported as sometime commercial fishers.

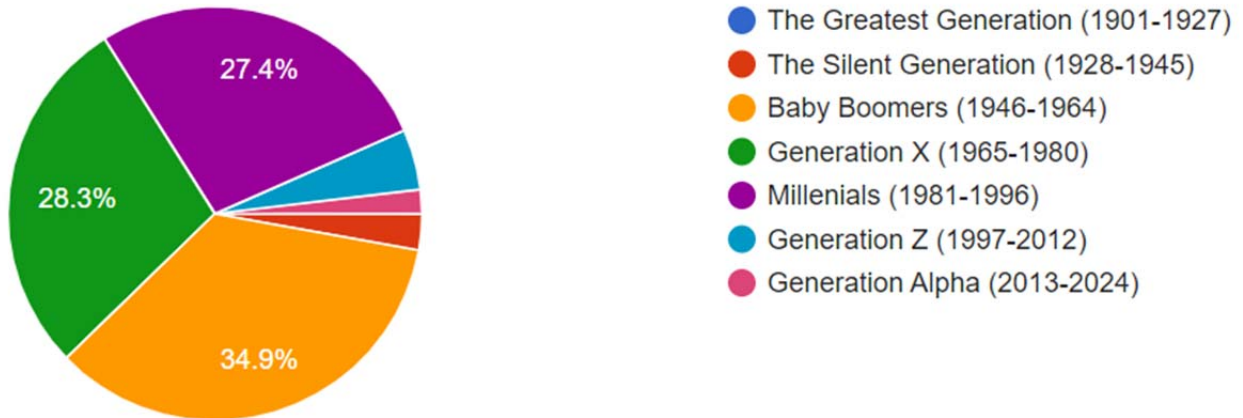
Question 6: What are the top issues affecting your fishing?



The top issue that nearly half of the respondents included was Fishing Infrastructure with Weather and Costs of Fishing included in the top three issues. Laws and Regulations, Access, and No More Fish also received votes, as well as Sharks and Dolphins, lack of FADs, and Trash/Pollution.

Participants were asked to choose their top three issues. A common theme in discussions at both the public meetings and the POP Expo was the bad conditions of the fishing infrastructure. Results of the survey are consistent with what people reported. Those discussions also included sharks being a problem but it wasn't a top priority in the survey and varied by island in the discussion. Cost of fishing and Weather and the environment are two of the other top issues that can be used to explain any potential data discrepancies.

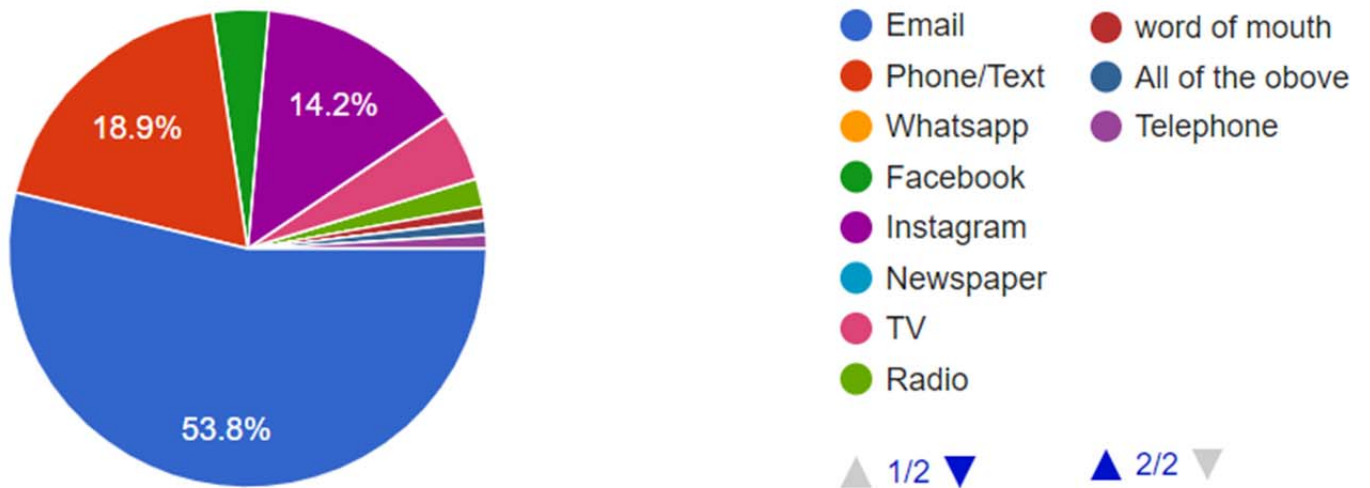
Question 7: I am a member of the



Survey respondents came mainly from the Baby Boomer generation, followed by Generation X and Millennials. There were also a few responses from the younger generations Z and Alpha, as well as the Silent Generation.

This question was asked to determine potential demographics of answers in further analysis. The top three generations are those that are more likely to fish with a boat having both the time and the money. There were also some responses from Generation Z and Alpha which is attributed to the children that attended the meetings and participated in the survey. Additional analysis could be done to determine the answers by generation as well.

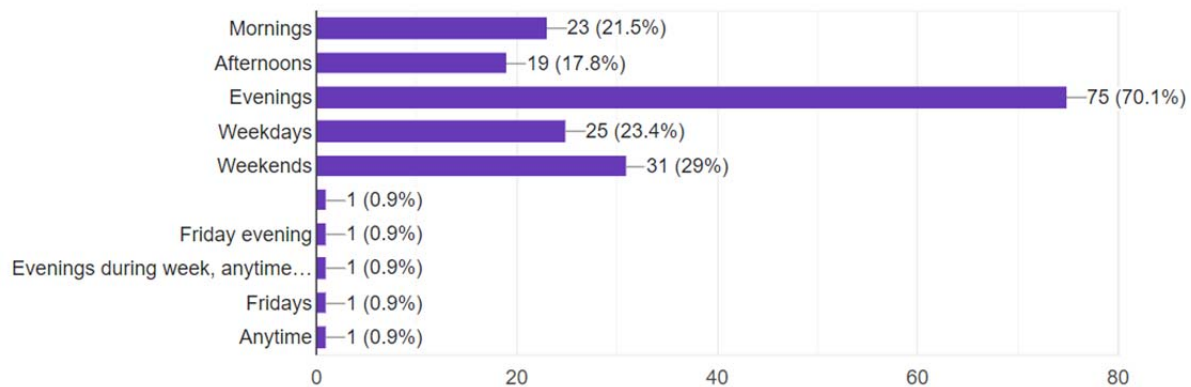
Question 8: What is the best way to communicate (get the word out) with you and your community?



More than half of the respondents said that email is the best way to communicate, with phone and text coming in second and Instagram coming in third.

Most of the responses said email but a harder part will be to figure out how to get seen in the email. The Council uses Constant Contact but the open rate for these messages is low. An email-tree or list-serve may be more important to keep providing notices to the community. Instagram being singled out and including 14% of the responses show that it may be an important venue for outreach to the community. Facebook, with its low showing, may no longer be effective. Traditional media, including TV, radio, and newspaper only received a few responses which may mean that the Council needs to go beyond its usual announcement and notices of meetings.

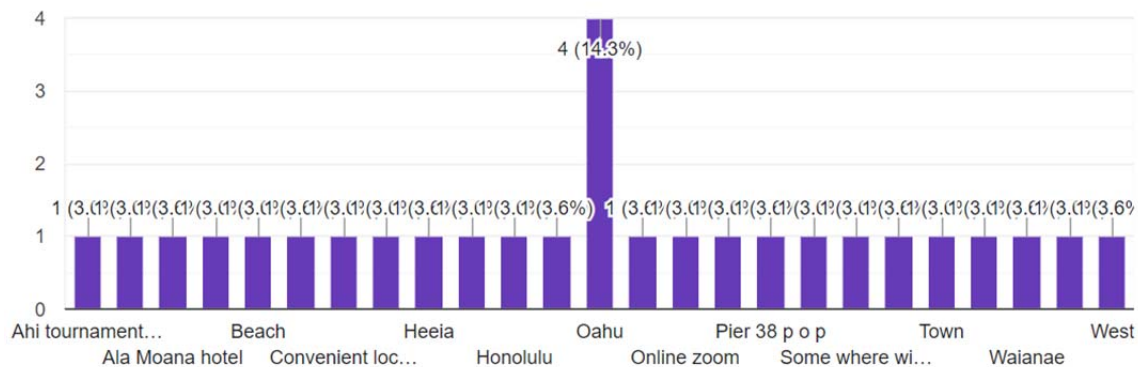
Question 9: What are the best days/times for meetings like this?



The majority of responses noted that evenings were the best time to hold meetings with not much of a difference between weekdays and weekends.

Evening meetings have always been the best time for the Council because of conflicts with work schedules and child care.

Question 10: Where is the best location to hold our next public meeting on your island?



The largest response was Oahu but not anywhere specific. There were just as many responses noting the availability of parking. Specific places included Waianae, He'eia, Haleiwa, and online. Specific venues included Ahi tournament, Pier 38, and Ala Moana Hotel.

This question could have been worded better because it provided a space for writing in suggestions and should have been tailored to each island. However, there were many that responded that a convenient location with lots of free parking was preferred. There were also requests for a meeting in Waianae and Haleiwa, two ports that are relatively far from the two meeting venues on Oahu.

Conclusions

The Hawaii small-boat fishery is made up of fishers on a boat using troll and handline gears, precisely what the result of the survey showed. The main species in these fisheries are pelagic and bottomfish management unit species but the Council is also interested in crustacean management unit species as well. The survey also captured responses for those species as well. Monchong and Hapu'upu'u were species of interest going into the survey due to the belief that there were fishers targeting these species but not very many. Responses to the survey however supports that there are probably more fishers catching these species.

Self-classification of fishing sector is difficult because the idea of a commercial fisherman is contrary to the MSA definition of selling one fish. Instead, Hawaii small-boat fishermen see commercial fishing as a job and most of them consider themselves recreational fishers, providing food for their family. Still there are those that are sometimes commercial and will sell fish with or without a CML.

The top issues identified through the survey were infrastructure, costs, and weather. This was verified by in-person discussions at the public meetings. Depredation (by sharks and dolphins) ranked seventh in the list of top issues, a concern but not as high a priority as access, regulations, or depletion of fish. Shark depredation varied by island with some saying it's a big problem and others saying it happens, but is not as big of a concern. That seems to echo the results of the survey.

In Hawaii, the distribution of population by age is greatest in the Baby Boomers at 28.5%, followed by Millennials at almost 27% of the population, and Generation X at 17.8% (in 2021: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1021897/hawaii-population-share-age-group/>). Majority of respondents were also in these three groups but not in the same percentage. While demographic information was collected to see if there could be generational differences, further analysis with its use has yet to be completed. The percentage of each generation at the meeting could reflect the interest in the meeting, those that have time and money to go fishing on a boat, etc.

One of the major points of this survey was to get an idea of how to get the word out about future meetings and to engage with the fishing community. The question asked what was the best way to communicate and the majority said by email. This can be difficult when you don't have everyone's email but if there is a list-serve or movers and shakers in the community that maintain email lists, that may be the best option to get information out. This can also be done

through the second most popular method, phone/text. The Council maintains an email database for mailing constant contact but open-rates are low. In previous surveys, word of mouth (coconut wireless) and Instagram were noted as the best methods. Instagram also ranked high in this survey so the Council might want to invest some time into using this platform in the future. Word of mouth did not rank very high in this survey; however attendees of the public meetings did note that they got the information from friends. The traditional media sources did not rank in the survey but there were meeting attendees at the first meeting that said they saw the meetings mentioned on TV.

It is no surprise that the response to best times and days for the meetings is evenings. That has been the experience of the Council that evening meetings work best in order for people to get off of work and take care of their responsibilities before the meeting. The public meetings were generally well-attended but participants did note that there should have been more people. They accounted for not knowing what was being talked about for the lack of participation. From experience, people tend to go to meetings when they feel that something is threatened and in this case it was a talk story session. Weekends and weekdays were split and that also showed in the public meetings where a Kona morning meeting received about the same amount of participants as the evening meetings elsewhere.

When asked where to hold meetings in the future, many said to make sure there was ample (free) parking and where convenient. Many of the Oahu respondents noted there should be meetings in Waianae, Wahiawa, and Haleiwa as well. Most of the responses were different however and did not get into the specifics of locations. This question can be revised to request specificity of location.

Overall, the survey addressed the intentions of finding out more information about the Hawaii small-boat fishery. Additional analysis can be done to look at answers by island and by generation to see if there is anything else to be gleaned from the survey results. Some of the questions could be revised to be more specific in order to get more details from the response as well.