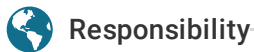




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Hawai'i nets \$5 million-plus to tackle marine debris

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

Funding to support three projects to remove and recycle marine debris, improve fishing net technology and develop community partnerships

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) and its partners were awarded over \$5.1 million to address rampant marine debris issues in Hawai'i and develop innovative solutions that can be applied worldwide.

The funding will primarily focus on derelict fishing gear that has been abandoned, lost or discarded – often referred to as “ghost fishing gear” – that threatens endangered species, such as Hawaiian monk seals, sea turtles and humpback whales. It also harms commercial and recreational fisheries, poses a hazard to shipping and boating, pollutes the shoreline and nearshore waters and is a health hazard to humans and other animals.

This investment from the **National Sea Grant College Program** (<https://seagrants.noaa.gov/>) will connect experts from across the state and region in three multi-year projects to increase the efficiency of ghost gear removal, repurpose the gear that is brought to shore and engage a network of community members and resource managers throughout the Pacific to develop a regional Pacific Islands Marine Debris Action Plan.



Funding to support three projects to remove and recycle marine debris, improve fishing net technology and develop community partnerships. Photo courtesy of PMDP.

“While Hawai'i and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument are known worldwide as hotspots for ocean plastic pollution and environmental damage, the cutting-edge technologies that will be developed through these large grants will have far-reaching impacts on other states and nations impacted by ocean plastic pollution,” said Darren T. Lerner, Hawai'i Sea Grant director and principal investigator of two of the grants.



(<http://www.choicegroup.in/canning>).

The first project, which is led by the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project (PMDP), focuses on improving the detection of fishing nets, as well as developing innovative tools to cut the net masses, which have been known to weigh up to 11 tons each and are currently cut and brought onto boats by hand. It will also develop new technologies and techniques for lifting the nets out of the water.

A second project is looking to scale up and repurpose the removal and repurposing of ghost fishing gear. Ultimately, the goal is to recycle 40 tons of ocean plastic each year for use in asphalt roads in Hawai'i.



The hidden cost of ghost gear lost by fishing and aquaculture

Abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear can inflict damage on marine life and the ocean, but what's the economic cost of ghost gear?



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The last project will connect communities that have not been traditionally engaged to address marine debris with nonprofit organizations, government agencies and academic institutions to develop a regional Pacific Islands Marine Debris Action Plan.

“Critically, the intersection of these three projects and integration of efforts across them will drive innovation at a scale not before possible in Hawai'i or anywhere in the world,” Mary J. Donohue Hawai'i Sea Grant program development and national partnership specialist. “Hawai'i Sea Grant is partnering with the most imaginative and talented researchers, practitioners, communities and other partners to both remove and repurpose this very harmful type of ocean plastic pollution. The projects in and of themselves are brilliant, but together they constitute a unique opportunity to significantly advance our ability to mitigate derelict fishing gear.”

Read more about the projects (<https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2023/04/21/5m-for-marine-debris-problem/>).

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