



DAR Special Activity Permits FAQs and Pre-Application Information

Version: May 2025



On May 1, 2025, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) launched an interim online application form, leading to the launch of the ArcGIS-based online portal. One of the goals of this effort was to implement an improved online application system to update the application review and permit issuance process. This FAQ and Pre-Application Information guide is intended to help prospective SAP applicants:

- determine if they need an SAP,
- plan around necessary application review and/or consultation steps,
- accurately complete the SAP application, and
- be aware of other important information for their SAP application.

If you do not see the answer to your question in this guide, please contact the SAP team at dar.sap@hawaii.gov.

You may click on the topic in the list below to navigate to the relevant information.

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THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE APPLYING

I. Do I Need a Special Activity Permit for My Activity(ies)?

As authorized by section 187A-6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) may issue a Special Activity Permit (SAP) to take aquatic life, possess or use fishing gear, or engage in any feeding, watching, or other non-consumptive activity related to aquatic resources, otherwise prohibited by law, for research, education, management, or propagation purposes. This could include activities involving **the take of regulated organisms** (freshwater or marine), **the possession or use of regulated gear**, or **activities conducted in regulated areas**.

Answer the following questions to determine if your activity requires an SAP.

1. **Do you propose to take* aquatic life, possess or use fishing gear, or engage in non-consumptive activity related to aquatic resources** (e.g., feeding, watching, etc.) **for scientific, educational, management, or propagation purposes?**

** The definition of "take" depends on the statutes and/or regulations that apply to your activity. In general, "take" may mean to fish for, catch, capture, confine, or harvest, or to attempt to fish for, catch, capture, confine, or harvest, aquatic life. "Take" may also mean collect, sample, possess, damage, kill, alter behavior of, etc., depending on the subject organism or resource and applicable regulations.*

Yes – An SAP may be required. **Continue to Question 2.**

No – An SAP is not required.

2. **Do any (one or more), of the following situations apply to your proposed activity(ies)?**

- a. **Are you proposing an activity that includes the take of a regulated species that may be inconsistent with the applicable regulations** (e.g., take of a fish under minimum size, more than the allowable bag limit, out-of-season, etc.)? *Regulations concerning regulated species may be found at the following links.*

[Marine Fish and Other Vertebrates](#)

[Marine Invertebrates and Limu](#)

[Freshwater Fish and Invertebrates](#)

- b. **Are you proposing an activity that includes the possession or use of regulated fishing gear?** *Regulations concerning regulated gear may be found at the following links.*

[Regulated Fishing Gear](#)



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Note: This includes the possession or use of any unmanned aerial vehicles or UAV for the purpose of taking aquatic life. (HRS § 188-23.5).

c. Are you proposing an activity related to the feeding of sharks in state marine waters? (HRS § 188-40.6).

Yes – An SAP is required. **Continue to Question 3.**

No – None of the above. **Continue to Question 3.**

3. Are you proposing an activity, which is otherwise prohibited, in a regulated freshwater and/or marine managed area (e.g., Community-Based Subsistence Fishing Area, Fisheries Management Area, Marine Life Conservation District, Public Fishing Area, etc.)? **Regulations and information concerning regulated areas may be found at the following links*

[Regulated Areas](#)

[ArcGIS Online Map of Regulated Areas](#)

Instructions for use of ArcGIS Map:

- (1) Zoom-in to an area and you will see a polygon if the area is restricted.
- (2) Right-click on the polygon and a link to the rules for that area will pop-up.
- (3) This helps you gauge more clearly where to collect (i.e., if you are outside the polygon, you are not in a regulated area).

Yes – An SAP is required.

No to Question 3, but Yes to Question 2 – An SAP is required.

No to Questions 2 and 3 – An SAP is not required.

Important Notes on Need for an SAP:

- All portions of your proposed activity for which you answered “Yes” to Questions 2 and/or 3 require an SAP before those activities may be conducted.
- If there are portions of your proposed activity for which you answered “No” to Questions 2 and 3, those activities may be conducted without obtaining an SAP from DAR. The applicant must, however, ensure all other necessary permissions, permits, or authorizations from other divisions, agencies, or third parties have been obtained.

II. Special Activity Permit Application Processing Time

NOTE: Incomplete applications or applications submitted with errors may result in delay(s) in the review of your application and/or denial of a permit.



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1. How long will it take for a decision to be made on my SAP application?

DAR processes SAP applications on a rolling basis. The information provided below is only an estimate and is intended to assist prospective SAP applicants' planning. The estimates provided are calculated from the date a submitted application is determined to be complete (i.e., applicant has submitted all required information in the required format).

Basic Activities

Applications for basic activities may take approximately 30 days from submittal of a complete application to a final decision. Examples of basic activities may include, among others:

- a.** Activities involving less than twenty (20) different species or organisms
- b.** Activities involving between 1-3 sites and/or not involving sites with area-based restrictions or regulations (e.g., FMA, MLCD, etc.)
- c.** Incident response (e.g., clean-up activities)
- d.** Restorative activities (e.g., coral restoration)

Complex Activities

Applications for complex activities may take 90 days or more from submittal of a complete application to a final decision. Examples of complex activities may include, among others:

- e.** Activities involving more than twenty (20) different species or organisms
- f.** Activities involving multiple sites, particularly when area-based management is applicable (e.g., FMA, MLCD, etc.)
- g.** Complex restorative activities
- h.** Experimental research and/or management
- i.** Activities for multiple research programs or laboratories from one institution
- j.** Applications requiring submittal to the Board of Land and Natural Resources (see, Section II.2).

Renewals of Existing Permits

Time to process applications to renew an existing SAP varies. Renewals for basic permits with no or minimal changes requested, with all required reports timely submitted, may be processed as quickly as 30 days.

Applications for renewal may take longer to process because of a variety of factors, including, but not limited to:

- k.** Renewal of complex permits
- l.** Request to make multiple changes to the existing permit
- m.** Changes to ecosystem or environmental conditions
- n.** Required reports have not been timely submitted (report due 30 days before expiration of existing SAP)



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Special Issues

These estimated times for a decision on an SAP application may increase by several weeks if the proposed activity requires additional steps during review due to the proposed take of aquarium fish or activities that might require community consultation.

Additional Consultations, Permits, or Authorizations

Time needed to process other required, non-DAR permits could delay your ability to start work under an SAP. Section III, below, includes non-exhaustive information about permits from other agencies that are often required for activities in conjunction with an SAP from DAR.

2. Board of Land and Natural Resources Requirement

Certain aspects of a proposed activity may require presentation to and approval from the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR). BLNR meetings are held twice a month. SAP applications that require submittal to the BLNR take, on average, 3+ months due to the time required to prepare the materials needed for the meeting.

Examples of aspects of a proposed activity that may require review and approval by the BLNR, include, but are not limited to:

- a.** Collections or activities proposed in Marine Life Conservation Districts (MLCD)
- b.** Large collections (e.g., "bio-blitz" or identifying as many species as possible in a specific area)
- c.** Use of certain gear (e.g., electrofishers/electroshockers; certain chemical compounds)
- d.** Collections or actions involving resources that may be considered rare or valuable (e.g., corals that are > 1 meter or 100 years old)
- e.** Activities that may be regarded as contentious and require public presentation for public input and transparency
- f.** Applicants who are not recognized Hawai'i institutions where permits are perennial (continuous, year after year) for scientific research purposes.

3. Projects Requiring Community Consultation

Certain proposed activities may require community consultation because they may involve species of cultural importance and/or significance, or methods, gear, or areas of specific cultural or community importance. If your proposed activity requires



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community consultation, DAR can connect applicants with appropriate networks and practitioners on each island, depending on where the activity may occur.

4. Projects Concerning Aquarium Fish Species/Aquarium Purposes

If your proposed activity includes aquarium fish species or is otherwise determined to be for aquarium purposes, additional review will be required, and DAR may request that you submit additional information. Depending on the nature of the proposed activity, adjustments, best practices, and/or additional conditions may be required.

5. Projects Involving Removal of Sand or Sediment

Sand/sediment generally falls under the jurisdiction of OCCL for actions that include the placement of objects on sand or the use of submerged land. When permanent collections of sand or sediment are requested, OCCL refers to the following two Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) for the collection of sand:

HRS, Sec. 205A-44 Prohibitions. (a) the mining or taking of sand, dead coral or coral rubble, rocks, soil, or other beach or marine deposits from the shoreline area is prohibited...

HRS, Sec. 171-58.5 Prohibitions. (a) the mining or taking of sand, dead coral or coral rubble, rocks, soil, or other beach or marine deposits seaward from the shoreline is prohibited with the following exceptions: (1) The inadvertent taking from seaward of the shoreline....

There are certain provisions/exceptions in these statutes, however, currently, there is no provision for the permanent collection of sand for research/education purposes.

III. Additional Consultations, Permits, or Authorizations

Depending on your proposed activity, you may be required to obtain authorizations from other county, state, or federal agencies, in addition to the necessary SAP from DAR. The consultations and permits mentioned below are additional authorizations that SAP applicants are often required to obtain. DAR provides this information to assist prospective SAP applicants but does not have authority over these consultations or permits and cannot make determinations on behalf of other agencies, divisions, or offices. **It is the responsibility of the applicant/Permittee to ensure compliance with all county, state, and federal agencies.**

1. DLNR Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands (OCCL) and Land Division

If your proposed activity includes the placement and/or installation of objects or instruments (e.g., scientific instruments, marine instruments, cinder blocks, eyebolts, rebar, fish/benthic survey transect pins, etc.) on submerged land (i.e., lands from the shoreline seaward to the extent of the State's jurisdiction, including on live rock/hard substrate/sand) for **ANY** duration, you **MUST** consult with the Department of Land and



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Natural Resources Office of Conservation and Coastal Land (OCCL) and Land Division.

OCCL may require you to apply for and obtain a Site Plan Approval Permit or Conservation District User Permit to conduct your activities. Any permits required by OCCL would be in addition to the necessary SAP from DAR for the applicable activities.

OCCL Contact Information

Phone: (808) 587-0377
Fax: (808) 587-0322
Address: Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands
Kalanimoku Building
1151 Punchbowl St., Room 131
Honolulu, HI 96813

[Information on OCCL Site Plan Approval and Conservation District User Permit](#)

Land Division may require you to apply for and obtain a Shoreline Certification to conduct your activities. A "shoreline certification" is a process where the State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) determines and verifies the location of the shoreline for the purpose of establishing setbacks for development and protecting coastal areas. Any permits required by the DLNR Land Division would be in addition to the necessary SAP from DAR for the applicable activities.

Land Division Contact Information

Email Address: Reid K. Siarot, State Land Surveyor reid.k.siarot@hawaii.gov
Phone: (808) 586-0390
Fax: (808) 586-0383
Address: Department of Accounting & General
Services
Land Survey Division
1151 Punchbowl St., Rm 210
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

2. Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH – Clean Water Branch)

Use of certain chemicals or preparations (e.g. hydrogen peroxide or rotenone, tephrosin, saponins, or plant materials from *Barringtonia acutangula*, *Barringtonia asiatica*, *Barringtonia racemosa*, *Barringtonia longiracemosa*, *Barringtonia speciosa*, *Careya australis*, *Cocculus ferrandianus*, *Cocculus trilobus*, *Cocos nucifera*, *Hura crepitans*, *Hura polyandra*, *Piscidia acuminata*, *Piscidia carthagenensis*, *Piscidia erythrina*, *Planchonia careya*, *Tephrosia purpurea*, *Tephrosia piscatoria*, *Wikstroemia*) for eradication (e.g., AIS) or other applications, or any other substance or material deleterious to aquatic life, may require consultation with the DOH's Clean Water



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Branch prior to obtaining a SAP from DAR:

Email Address: CleanWaterBranch@doh.hawaii.gov
Phone: (808) 586-4309
Mailing Address: Clean Water Branch
Environmental Management Division
State Department of Health
P.O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378

3. Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW)

Work and research within Forest Reserves, Natural Area Reserves, Wildlife Sanctuaries, and Game Management Areas, or with land species including but not limited to birds, bats, plants, and invertebrates may require a permit from DOFAW:

Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry & Wildlife Contacts:
Statewide Administrative Branch

Address: Kalanimoku Building
1151 Punchbowl St., Rm. 325
Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: (808) 587-0166
Fax: (808) 587-0160
Email: dlnr@hawaii.gov

Kaua'i Branch

Address: 3060 Eiwa Street, Rm. 306
Līhu'e, HI, 96766
Phone: (808) 274-3433
Fax: (808) 274-3438

O'ahu Branch

Address: 2135 Makiki Heights Drive
Honolulu, HI, 96822
Phone: (808) 973-9778
Fax: (808) 973-9781
Email: dlnrdofoaw.oahubbranch@hawaii.gov

Waimano Office

Address: 2551 Waimano Home Rd
Pearl City, HI, 96783

Maui Branch

Address: 685 Haleakala Hwy
Kahului, HI, 96732
Phone: (808) 984-8100
Fax: (808) 984-8114



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Moloka'i

Address: P.O. Box 347
Kaunakakai, HI, 96748
Phone: (808) 553-1745
Fax: (808) 553-1746

Lāna'i

Address: P.O. Box 630661
917 Fraser Avenue
Lanai City, HI 96763
Phone: (808) 565-7916
Fax: (808) 565-7917

Hawai'i Island Branch

Address: 19 E. Kawili Street
Hilo, HI, 96720
Phone: (808) 974-4221
Fax: (808) 974-4226

[Information on Permit Guidelines and Online Applications.](#)

4. United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

The placement of larger structures in the water or any action that is a potential hazard to navigation may require consultation with the USACE. If you are proposing to install a structure like a buoy, aquaculture cages, artificial reef structures, etc., consultation with the USACE may be required in addition to obtaining an SAP from DAR:

Unit/Office: Permits/Regulatory
Email: CEPOH-RO@usace.army.mil
Phone: (808) 835-4303
Address: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Honolulu District Regulatory Office
Building 230
Fort Shafter, HI 96858-5540

[Information on USACE permits](#)

5. Hawaii State Department of Agriculture (DOA – Plant Quarantine Branch)

All imported agricultural items, including plants, plant parts, non-domesticated animals, microorganism cultures, microbial products, arthropods, and soil require inspection by the DOA upon arrival in Hawai'i. These items must be checked before the shipment can be released to ensure they are free of pests or will not become pests themselves.

Hawaii Department of Agriculture Plant Quarantine Offices:

Hawai'i Island

Inspection Office: 95 Akahana St. Rm 9, Hilo, HI

Mailing address: 16E Lanikaula Street



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Hilo, HI 96720-4302

Hilo Phone & Fax:

Phone: (808) 961-9393

Fax: (808) 961-9397

Kailua-Kona Phone & Fax:

Phone: (808) 326-1077

Fax: (808) 326-2126

Kaua'i 4398A Pua Loke Street
Lihue, HI 96766-5671
Phone: (808) 241-7135
Fax: (808) 241-7137

Maui 635 Mua Street
Kahului, HI 96732-2322
Phone: (808) 873-3962
Fax: (808) 873-3586

Oahu: 1849 Auiki Street
Honolulu, HI 96819
Phone: (808) 832-0566
Fax: (808) 832-0584

Visit [Importing Animals to Hawai'i from the U.S. Mainland](#), including Hawai'i DOA's List of Conditional Approvals Animals, which includes certain aquarium fish and live shellfish.

If you have questions concerning the import status of animals other than cats and dogs, including aquarium fish and shellfish, contact the O 'ahu office of the Plant Quarantine Branch at (808) 832-0566.

Toll-Free Pest Hotline Number: (808) 643-PEST (7378)

To report a pest after hours: (808) 837-8092

6. United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The export of organisms or biological samples (dead or alive) is regulated by the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement and may require consultation with the USFWS Office in Honolulu and completion of the [Wildlife Shipment Form](#).

Address: Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
300 Ala Moana Boulevard
Room 3-122



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Honolulu, HI 96850
Phone: (808) 792-9400
Email: pifwo_admin@fws.gov

[Information for exporters from USFWS.](#)

HELPFUL INFORMATION WHEN FILLING OUT YOUR APPLICATION

IV. Filling Out the Special Activity Permit Application

A comprehensive guide to navigating DAR's online SAP portal and filling out your SAP application will be available on DAR's SAP portal: [COMING SOON]

V. Coral Restoration Activities and Projects

If your proposed activity involves coral nurseries (either *in-situ* or land based) and/or coral restoration, you will need to complete the Special Activity Permit Coral Restoration Framework Tool **in addition** to the standard SAP application.

To submit the completed SAP Coral Restoration Framework Tool, you will upload it as an attachment to your SAP application and submit it together.

The SAP Coral Restoration Framework Tool is available here:

https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dar/files/2025/05/SAP_Coral_Restoration_Framework_Tool.pdf

Guidelines for completing the SAP Coral Restoration Framework Tool is available at: https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dar/files/2025/05/SAP_Coral_Restoration_Application_Guidelines.pdf

THINGS TO KNOW ONCE YOU HAVE A PERMIT

VI. Sampling Moratoriums

The Division of Aquatic Resources has the right to request a voluntary sampling moratorium, or in some cases, implement a mandatory moratorium, for certain organisms authorized for collection under any current permit during times of ecosystem pressure caused by natural or anthropogenic stressors. An example of ecosystem pressure may include coral bleaching events, which have occurred most recently in Hawai'i from July/August to November of 2019. Please take this into consideration when applying for a permit, plan your collections accordingly, and be prepared to take a sampling hiatus, if necessary, until the stressor event is determined to have ended.

VII. Annual Reporting Requirement



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The permittee must provide to DAR a final written report (Annual Report) in PDF format summarizing the results of the collection activity carried out under this permit and analysis of the data, if applicable/available. The Annual Report should provide a written description of the activity and objective, and a written explanation as to how the collection of or activity with a protected/regulated aquatic organisms or non-regulated organisms (if collected with regulated method/gear or in regulated area), use of regulated method/gear and/or collection in regulated area for scientific, education, management or propagation purposes is benefiting the State of Hawai'i in general, and specifically the improved management of the species or related species. The Annual Report should also include examples of protocols, best practices, key findings, challenges, and lessons learned.

Deadline to Submit Your Annual Report

- If Permittee plans to apply for renewal: **30 days before the expiration** date of the SAP.
- If renewal is not needed: **90 days after the expiration** date of the SAP.

Where to Submit Your Annual Report

To submit your completed Annual Report, email: dar.sap@hawaii.gov

Required Information for Your Annual Report

1. **Project Narrative** – a written report detailing the scope and objectives of the activities conducted under this permit. This narrative shall include, but is not limited to:
 - The purpose and intended benefits of the collection or activities involving fully protected or regulated marine species, specifically as they pertain to the interests of the State of Hawai'i and species management.
 - A description of the methodologies, protocols, and best practices implemented during the course of the permitted activities.
 - A summary of key finding, challenges encountered, and any modifications or alternative methodologies employed in response to unforeseen circumstances.
 - A comprehensive account of community engagement efforts, including stakeholder participation and the outcomes thereof.
2. **Signature Pages** (found at the end of issued SAP) – All Designated Assistants who engaged in regulated activities under the permit – including, but not limited to, collection, possession, transportation, utilization of regulated gear, or work in regulated areas – shall provide ink or electronic signatures. The signed pages must be submitted as a PDF document.
3. **Publication and Data Analysis Results** – If applicable, the Permittee must submit copies of any relevant publications, reports, or findings derived from activities conducted under the permit. This must include any chemical, genetic, physiological, histological, pathological, statistical, or other data analysis undertaken.
4. **Reporting Spreadsheet** –The Permittee must complete and submit the official Reporting Spreadsheet, which is accessible through the [DAR SAP website](#), or upon request via email at dar.sap@hawaii.gov. The spreadsheet must be completed in accordance with the instructions provided therein and must include, but is not



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limited to:

- Scientific and common names of species collected.
 - Total quantities and sizes of specimens.
 - Disposition of collected specimens.
 - Geospatial data
 - Each sample or activity location must be recorded using **GPS coordinates (decimal degrees) and associated geographic descriptions** (e.g. “windward side of Patch Reef 8”, or “north side of Lilipuna Pier”). Multiple samples collected in one single area can be geo-referenced by a single GPS point and associated geographic location.
 - If GPS data is unavailable at the time of collection, the Permittee must accurately record sampling locations in the field and subsequently obtain coordinates from Google Earth Pro.
5. **End-of-Period Inventory** – The Permittee must submit an listing all organisms (living or deceased) in possession at the conclusion of the reporting period.
6. **Photo Documentation** – The Permittee must provide photographic documentation as follows:
- ***For coral restoration projects**, please refer to the specific reporting requirements outlined for such activities in the Coral Restoration Framework Tool*
 - **A representative example of each species collected.**
 - Documentation of **representative methods** including but not limited to:
 - Collection gear
 - Sampling methodology
 - Transportation methods
 - Holding tanks and facilities
 - Biosecurity measures
 - Experimental setups
 - Fieldwork activities
 - Disposition of organisms