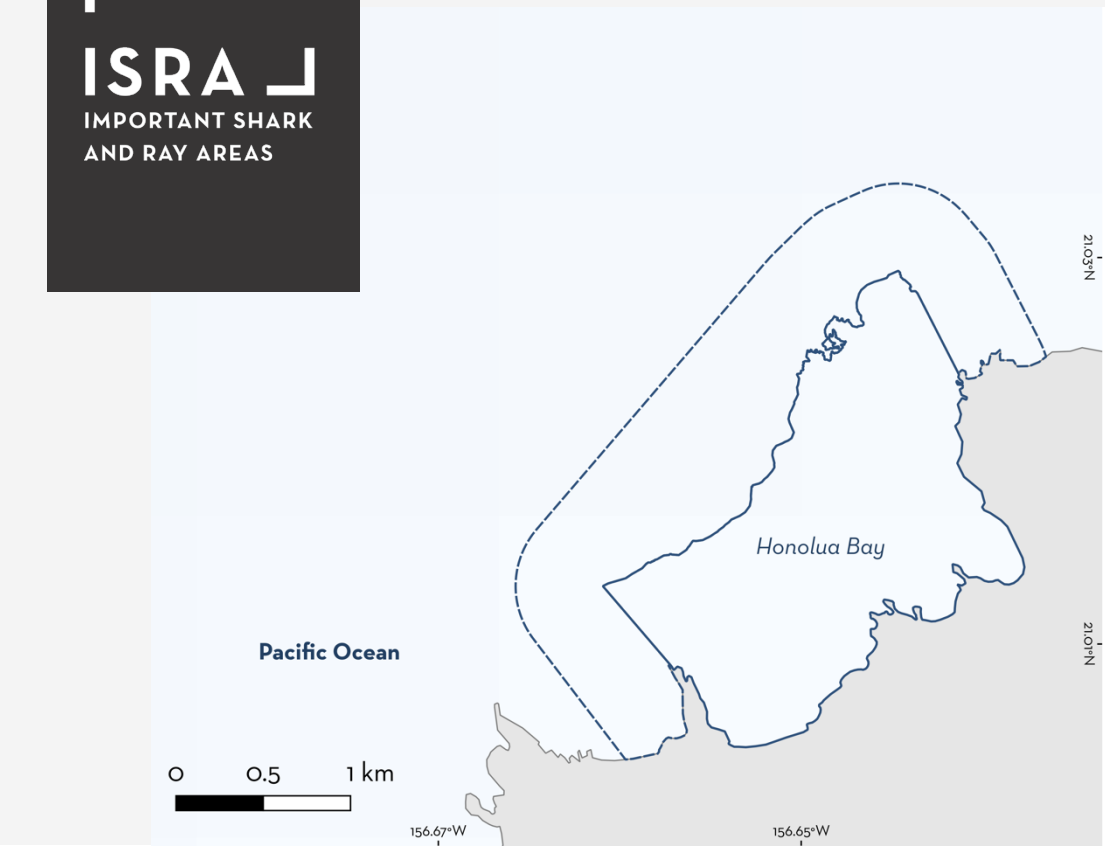
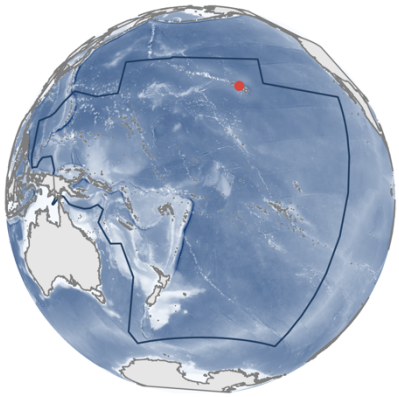
ISRA
IMPORTANT SHARK AND RAY AREAS





Blue lines indicate the area meeting the ISRA Criteria; dashed lines indicate the suggested buffer for use in the development of appropriate place-based conservation measures

HONOLUA BAY ISRA

New Zealand & Pacific Islands Region

HAWAII

0–30 metres

2.95 km²

SUMMARY

Honolua Bay is located off the northwest of Maui in the Hawaiian Islands of the United States of America. The area is characterised by dense coral patches on either side of the bay, with the middle consisting of sandy substrates. Honolua Bay is influenced by the northeast tradewinds year-round, but they are most pronounced between April–November. This area sits within the Molokai Island marine Key Biodiversity Area. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **undefined aggregations** (Reef Manta Ray *Mobula alfredi*).

CRITERIA

Criterion A – Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C5 – Undefined Aggregations

DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Honolua Bay is located off the northwest of Maui in the Hawaiian Islands of the United States of America. The Honolua Stream carries silt into Honolua Bay resulting in murky waters close to shore (Division of Aquatic Resources [DAR] 2024). There are dense coral growths on either side of the bay, with the middle consisting of sandy substrates. Small caves and archways are found on the lefthand side of the bay. To the right of the area there are large, submerged boulders, and fingers of lava occur along the point on the lefthand side (DAR 2024). The northeast tradewinds influence the area year-round, but are most consistent between April and November (Storlazzi et al. 2008). Variations in wind speed can result in a thin wind-driven oceanic surface layer in the region.

This area sits within the Molokai Island marine Key Biodiversity Area (KBA 2024).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 30 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

One Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occurs in the area. This is the Vulnerable Reef Manta Ray (Marshall et al. 2022).

SUB-CRITERION C5 – UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Honolua Bay is an important area for undefined aggregations of one ray species.

Between 2008–2024, Reef Manta Rays were regularly observed attending cleaning stations in the area (MH Deakos pers. obs. 2024). Research surveys in the area were conducted opportunistically and Reef Manta Rays were encountered on 55.4% of surveys (n = 56 out of 101 surveys). The large majority (93%) of sightings occurred between April–September, with no sightings between December–February. During 10 of the surveys, more than one Reef Manta Ray was observed being cleaned (average = 2–3 individuals). From these sightings, 18 individuals have been identified using photographic identification, and all 18 rays have been observed engaged in cleaning behaviour. Fish species involved in cleaning behaviour include the Hawaiian Cleaner Wrasse *Labroides phthirophagus*, Brown Surgeonfish *Acanthurus nigrofuscus*, and Saddle Wrasse *Thalassoma duperrey*. A combination of adult and juvenile rays have been observed attending the site, and almost half of the animals have been observed more than once in the area (44.4%; resightings range between 2–40 times; MH Deakos unpubl. data 2024). Feeding is also observed in the area, however more information is required to determine whether Honolua Bay constitutes an important feeding area for this species. However, Reef Manta Rays are known to prefer cleaning stations in proximity to foraging areas (Armstrong et al. 2021). This area has the highest number of observations of Reef Manta Rays in Maui, outside of their largest known aggregation site at Olowalu, highlighting the importance of this area to this species.

Acknowledgments

Mark H Deakos (Hawaii Association for Marine Education and Research [HAMER]) and Asia O Armstrong (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group – ISRA Project) contributed and consolidated information included in this factsheet. We thank all participants of the 2024 ISRA Region 10 – New Zealand and Pacific Islands workshop for their contributions to this process.

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QUALIFYING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met								
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2
RAYS												
Mobula alfredi	Reef Manta Ray	VU	0–711	X						X		

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Categories are available by searching species names at www.iucnredlist.org Abbreviations refer to: CR, Critically Endangered; EN, Endangered; VU, Vulnerable; NT, Near Threatened; LC, Least Concern; DD, Data Deficient.

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