



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OHCRA Cancels 2026 Na Wahine O Ke Kai and Molokai Canoe Festival Kulaia to Developing Weather Conditions

HONOLULU — The O‘ahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association has made the difficult decision to cancel the 2026 Na Wahine O Ke Kai, scheduled for Sunday, September 27, due to the potential wind, ocean and community impacts associated with the developing tropical weather system approaching Hawai‘i.

Molokai Canoe Festival Kulaia Hoolaulea has also been canceled in light of the upcoming weather forecast and concerns for the safety and well-being of the Moloka‘i community.

The decision follows a comprehensive review by the OHCRA Race Committee, whose experienced watermen have been closely evaluating the evolving conditions and the safety of the entire race operation. The committee has consulted with race and escort-boat officials and considered information provided by government and weather agencies.

“This decision is not a reflection of our paddlers’ ability to navigate the Kaiwi Channel,” said OHCRA Race Director, Kapuni Patcho. “These women are among the strongest and most accomplished paddlers in the world. Our responsibility, however, extends to everyone required to make this race possible—from our paddlers and escort crews to our officials, volunteers, partners and the Moloka‘i community.”

The race depends upon an extensive fleet of escort boats whose captains and crews must first travel safely to Moloka‘i and then accompany paddling crews across the Kaiwi Channel. Some escort boats must cross the ‘Alenuihāhā, Pailolo and Kaiwi Channels to reach Moloka‘i, adding another significant safety consideration as weather conditions develop.

“A channel race begins well before the paddlers cross the starting line,” said Assistant Race Director Luana Froiseth. “We must consider whether the entire escort fleet can travel safely, get into position and provide the support each crew may need. Looking at the complete operational picture, caution is the responsible decision.”

OHCRA also considered the importance of protecting Moloka‘i’s limited emergency and community resources during a potential weather-related event.

The organization held out hope that the race could proceed while recognizing that hundreds of paddlers, escort crews, volunteers, vendors and partners were making important travel and



logistical decisions. Announcing the cancellation at this time provides those involved with as much notice as possible.

“We know how much these women have trained, sacrificed and prepared for this moment,” Siana Austin Hunt, OHCRA President, said. “The canoes are already staged at Hale O Lono, and our Moloka‘i partners have worked tirelessly to prepare for our arrival. Canceling this world championship race is heartbreaking, but the safety and well-being of our people and communities must come first.”

OHCRA is working directly with its crews, vendors, transportation providers and Moloka‘i partners to coordinate the next steps. An OHCRA team still plans to travel to Moloka‘i to help safeguard the canoes ahead of the approaching weather and support crews with their individual logistics.

The organization is also assisting with arrangements for canoes that will remain on Moloka‘i for Moloka‘i Hoe, October 11, 2026 canoes that may be made available to men’s crews and canoes requiring return transportation through Young Brothers. Registered crews are receiving detailed information directly from OHCRA.

OHCRA extends its deepest gratitude to the paddlers, escort-boat captains and crews, Moloka‘i community, volunteers, sponsors, vendors and partners whose commitment and aloha continue to sustain Na Wahine O Ke Kai.

About Na Wahine O Ke Kai

Na Wahine O Ke Kai is one of the world’s premier women’s outrigger canoe races, bringing crews together from Hawai‘i and around the world to cross the Kaiwi Channel from Moloka‘i to O‘ahu. The race celebrates the strength of women, the traditions of Hawaiian outrigger canoe paddling and the enduring connection among our island communities.

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