

Narrator: Layne Nakagawa grew up on the island of Maui and has been going fishing since the day he learned to walk.

Layne Nakagawa: I started bottom fishing with my dad and my grandfather, from when I was old enough to walk I guess. Maybe not even old enough to swim yet. We were like weekend fishermen. Go out on our small 21-foot Alii Kai. And fish mainly for 'Paka and Lehi. My dad and my grandfather, they never let me touch anything on the boat. All I could touch was the palu. Because I had to chop the thing all day long. So that was my job as a little boy on the boat. I had to chop palu all day. And, I had my little spinner that I fish from shore, and I was hooking Opelu from the side of the boat, and the Opelu kept on going deeper, and deeper, and deeper and I'm like okay, so I put on a lead, and dropped it down deeper and deeper and deeper and eventually a Lehi bit my hook and I had it on 10-pound test with like a 20-pound test leader, this little papio hook on there because I was hooking Opelu. And I fought it for, I don't know 20, 30, 40 minutes and could feel it hitting the bottom and it was all the way to the end of the knot in my spinner reel and I ended up catching it. You know, ever since that day, it was, that's what I wanted to do. Then as the years went on, I got older, I got my own boat. Did mostly pelagic fishing for a little while, and then went back to bottom fishing because I just saw that I needed to get back to my roots kind of and not so much being the glory of a fisherman but actually going back to what my family had taught me since I was a kid. Today, is I'm a full time commercial bottom fisherman. I don't do any other fishing. I make my whole livelihood from this fishery. And, in the management they call us highliners. On the Naomi K, probably close to 30 thousand pounds of bottom fish, 'Paka, Onaga, Lehi, and we fish for Uku during the summer and we're getting upwards of close to 10 thousand pounds of Uku every summer as well. And I fish around the whole island of Maui and Moloka'i, Kaho'olawe, Lana'i. We tried to spread the fishing pressure evenly throughout the islands because we are full time commercial fishermen, we're not into going back to the same spot over and over and over. We want to let our resources replenish and keep it sustainable for our future for sure. Our market drives our fishing, so we fish for a restaurant, Mama's Fish House. We catch what they need for the week. I get a set price. I don't have a fluctuation in price on species or sizes because they have us kind of sort of on a contract to only sell fish to them and because we're the most consistent, it's not really price driven for us because we have a set price across the year and across the board and all species, so that makes it makes a kind of a safe job security for us. But, yet it's a big commitment for us to know that when the demand side comes, and it is blowing 30 knots we have to go fishing we don't really have a choice. Even though the weather opportunities does give us more opportunities, at times, if we do supply the restaurant with enough we don't go back out, we stay home. Sometimes it's a good thing, sometimes it's a bad thing, but when you look at the fishery and if you want it to be sustained, you know you can't go back over and over and over you need to let the fish rest, you need to let the fish replenish itself. And you know just taking responsibly is your ultimate goal if you want to be in business if not you make your money today and you'll be out of business tomorrow you know if you have that kind of attitude it'll be bad, bad for the fishery for sure. The future of the fishery is looking really bright. It looks really strong in our area. We're seeing a lot of big fish in a lot of places that actually have a lot of fishing pressure. So that gives you an even more broader idea of how much fish are out there. Because we're catching big fish in areas that everyone can access, not just me or my 31-foot Radon you know. That keeps it kind of a brighter future knowing that if there's bigger fish in places everyone can go, what's in everywhere where nobody can go? That keeps a really bright outlook on the fishery for sure.