

2025

MOLOKAI CHANNEL

RACE RULES



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About OHCRA

The Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association (OHCRA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to perpetuating the sport of Hawaiian Koa canoe racing. As a member of the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association, OHCRA holds over 35% of their membership with over 3800 paddlers. OHCRA is the largest Canoe Racing Association in the state.

A. Mission

OHCRA is committed to preserving Hawaiian canoe paddling traditions, fostering cultural connection, and promoting competitive excellence to honor our heritage and inspire future generations.

B. Vision

Leading the way in Hawaiian canoe racing, fostering unity, cultural connection and excellence.

C. Tagline

Rooted in culture, driven by competition.

Code of Ethics

We are all responsible to promote good sportsmanship and fair play in the activities in which we engage. This means observance of these race rules as well as generally accepted rules of behavior and all governmental laws.

Paddlers are required to avoid situations where a canoe is deliberately rammed, where there is deliberate interference with another crew, and situations where assaults and abusive language are used.

Coaches are required to support and help enforce these race rules and to avoid any circumvention of these rules.

Officials and officers are required to do their best to be fair and not biased in their decisions and in carrying out their duties.

Any club members that are found drinking at our events will result in the entire club being asked to leave the event. This included all paddlers, friends and family.

Race Rules

A. Introduction

Na Wahine O Ke Kai and Molokai Hoe are produced and administered by the O'ahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association (OHCRA). Na Wahine O Ke Kai and Molokai Hoe are the property of OHCRA, which hereby reserves all rights of any nature whatsoever. Any use of the race, its name, equipment or material associated herewith without expressed written consent of OHCRA is prohibited. All race rules set forth herein are subject to change without advance notice.

B. Entry Eligibility

This race shall be open to all canoe clubs or organizations submitting an entry application and meeting the requirements set forth by OHCRA. OHCRA Race Rules will apply to this race unless herein modified. Merging of canoe clubs is allowed. Each club or organization must submit a complete entry application on an official entry form provided by OHCRA. No entry will be accepted unless all the requirements herein are complied with. OHCRA reserves the right to accept or reject any application.

C. Entry Requirements

1. Online Registration - Crews must register online and submit all forms by the deadlines as specified on the website. OHCRA may refuse to accept any entries received after the deadline date.
2. Entry Fees - Entry fees must be submitted by the deadline stated on the website. Late fees will be assessed to any entry fee that is received after the deadline.
3. Shipping Fees (if applicable) - Shipping fees must be paid before a canoe is shipped to Molokai.
4. Coaches Meeting - A coach of each participating crew shall attend the MANDATORY coaches meeting held the day before the race. The crew will be fined **\$500** for non-attendance. THIS IS A SAFETY ISSUE AND NON-NEGOTIABLE.

D. Race Divisions

1. KOA - Each crew shall consist of 9 male or 10 female paddlers who must be 18 years of age or older on race day. Proof of age is required. The crew may include up to four (4) Junior Paddlers (ages 15-17 years old).
2. OPEN - Each crew shall consist of 9 male or 10 female paddlers who must be 18 years of age or older on race day. Proof of age is required. The Open crew may include up to four (4) Junior Paddlers (ages 15-17 years old).
3. MASTERS 40+ - Each crew shall consist of 9 male or 10 female paddlers who must be 40 years of age or older on race day. Proof of age is required.

4. MASTERS 50+ - Each crew shall consist of 9 male or 10-12 female paddlers who must be 50 years of age or older on race day. Proof of age is required.
5. MASTERS 55+ - Each crew shall consist of 10-12 paddlers who must be 55 years of age or older on race day. Proof of age is required.
6. MASTERS 60+ - Each crew shall consist of 10-12 paddlers who must be 60 years of age or older on race day. Proof of age is required.
7. MASTERS 65+ - Each crew shall consist of 10-12 paddlers who must be 65 years of age or older on race day. Proof of age is required.
8. JUNIORS - Each crew shall consist of 9 male or 10-12 female paddlers who must be ages 15-18 years old on race day. Proof of age is required.
 - a. The coach of a Juniors division crew must be at least 21 years of age.
 - b. A helper is required for all Juniors division crews.

E. Paddler Eligibility

1. It is the entrant's responsibility to see that their paddlers are physically fit and capable of participating in the race. If there is a question regarding a paddler's physical fitness, it shall be the entrant's responsibility to provide a medical clearance form and obtain OHCRA approval before the paddler enters the race.
2. All paddlers, captains, boat helpers and crew members must be able to swim.
3. All paddlers, captains, boat helpers and crew members must sign designated liability and publicity waivers.
4. Merging clubs: Paddlers from different clubs may merge to form a crew.

F. Insurance

All crews that are not members of an HCRA club will be charged an insurance assessment at registration unless they can provide a Certificate of Insurance (COI) for Commercial General Liability / Participants Liability from their affiliated association with minimum limits of \$1M for the race. The Certificate must name the following as additionally insured: Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association and the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association to include coverage for the race day and the two days prior.

Escort boat and safety boat insurance requirements are provided in Section K below.

G. Canoe Hull, Rigging and Equipment

1. All canoes (including rigging, 'iako, ama, hull shape above waterline, at waterline, and below waterline) must meet current OHCRA Hawaiian design canoe specifications.
2. Only koa canoes that have been measured and certified under OHCRA Hawaiian design canoe specifications for koa canoes will be allowed to race in the Koa Division.

3. Only non-koa canoes that have been measured and certified under OHCRA Hawaiian design canoe specification for non-koa canoes will be allowed to race in the Non-Koa Division.
4. The minimum racing weight of any canoe, excluding the ama, 'iako, and tying cord is set at 400lbs. Minimum weight of hulls shall be no less than 385 lbs. Lead weights must be permanently affixed to the canoe to bring the weight to 400 lbs. The added weight(s) must be evenly distributed between seats 2 and 5 and must be permanently affixed to the bottom of the seats to bring the hull weight to 400lbs. Only certified weights must be used and permanently bolted or screwed to the seats of the canoes throughout the entire race. Weights must not be removed during the race and must remain secured until the clearance is given to remove the weights after the race. Adding weights to the canoe is the responsibility of the entrant.
5. OHCRA reserves the right to weigh any canoe regardless of any other authorities' prior weight certification.
6. Full canvas or other covering on the canoe is MANDATORY during the race.
7. No fins or keels will be allowed on the canoe ama.
8. No sails or other artificial means of propulsion are permitted on the canoe.
9. No mechanical means of bailing water out of a canoe are allowed.
10. No foot support or braces of any kind are permitted inside the canoe. Only non-skid materials are allowed.
11. During the race, each entry shall have its assigned identification symbol permanently displayed on the front manu of its canoe. OHCRA will assign this identification.
12. All canoes shall have their ama to 'iako and 'iako to hull attached (rigged) with multiple cord lashings and no "quick straps".
13. Cameras can be used in or on the canoe during distance races.
14. OHCRA may elect to install a GPS tracking device on canoes for safety during the race. The GPS device may not be removed until the canoe is on the beach at the end of the race. Once the race is over, the GPS devices shall be removed and provided to the OHCRA official collecting them. Failure to return the GPS device will result in a \$200 fine.
15. An inspection of all equipment used in the race will be conducted at Hale O Lono Harbor prior to the race.
16. OHCRA shall have the final decision of approving or disapproving ANY entry, canoe or equipment.

H. Paddles

Paddles must be single bladed and can be made from any material except that it must have visible wood in it which can be solid or veneer. OHCRA will consider bamboo as a

wood. The paddles can be made by any construction method and can be solid or hollow. Extra paddles may be carried in each canoe during a race.

I. Water Safety

1. Each entry is responsible for complying with all applicable State, Federal, and U.S. Coast Guard regulations and requirements.
2. Each entry must provide U.S. Coast Guard approved personal floatation devices (PFD) for each person that boards their escort / auxiliary boat and each paddler in the canoe.
3. Each entry is responsible for assuring that each paddler, coach, helper and / or guest are water safe and has been briefed on the method(s) by which water changes will be made.
4. Each entry is responsible for providing basic first-aid supplies.
5. Each entry is responsible for providing adequate nourishment and liquids for all crew members in the canoe and each person, including the assigned official, on the escort / auxiliary boat.
6. OHCRA reserves the right to disqualify any crew if they determine that the crew is not capable of participating in or finishing the race within a reasonable time.
7. OHCRA reserves the right to place an official on any entrant's escort / auxiliary boat.

J. Sponsorship Signage

1. Any signage used by the entrant must be pre-approved by OHCRA who reserves the right to remove any signage which is not in good taste or which conflicts with the promotional rights of the sponsors. Use of conflicting sponsorship signage on canoes, escort / auxiliary boats, and the athletes themselves, shall be left to the discretion of OHCRA.
2. Signage on a canoe must be between the two (2) 'iako of each canoe. Signage on the escort / auxiliary boat(s) may be any place except the port side of the bow where the OHCRA requires placement of the assigned identification for each entry.
3. Any flags used by the entrant must be pre-approved by OHCRA.
4. Race sponsor signage may be put on any canoe or escort / auxiliary boat used in the Race at the request of OHCRA.
5. Final determination for use of sponsorship signage will be left to the discretion and judgment of OHCRA.

K. Course Rules

1. Start of the Race

- a. Prior to the start of the race, all escort / auxiliary boats must do a visual radio check with the designated official boat, per instructions given at the coaches

meeting. If it is determined that the crew did not do a visual radio check, that crew may be disqualified and/or fined up to \$500 at the discretion of OHCRA.

- b. All canoes shall be ready to start before the time set for the beginning of the race at Hale O Lono. The race will begin at approximately 8:00am.
- c. The starting line of the race will be approximately 300 feet seaward to the Hale O Lono Harbor entrance groin. The start will be conducted in the following manner:
 1. All canoes will assemble behind the buffer zone line until called by officials to move up to the start line.
 2. The start of the race will be signaled by the consecutive raising of a yellow, red and green flag from the official starter boat, or other method as described at the coaches meeting.
 3. Any canoe over the starting line at the start of the race will be penalized ten (10) minutes which will be added to their official finish time.
- d. All crews must start and finish in the same racing jersey which shall be the same colored short sleeve, long sleeve or sleeveless.

2. Course

- a. The course shall be from the starting line at Hale O Lono Harbor, Molokai to the finish line at Duke Kahanamoku Beach, Kālia, Waikīkī Beach.
- b. A crew may follow any course to the finish line provided that it rounds the marker buoy at the channel entrance to the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel before crossing the finish line.
- c. Specific diagrams will be provided at the coaches meeting. Entries are encouraged to visit the finish line area before the race.

3. Paddlers and Relief Paddlers

- a. The final selected race crew will consist of the following number of paddlers. (see matrix below). These names shall be submitted before 11am the day before the race.

Division	Na Wahine	Molokai Hoe
KOA	10 paddlers	9 paddlers
Open	10 paddlers	9 paddlers
Masters 40+	10 paddlers	9 paddlers
Masters 50+	10-12 paddlers	9 paddlers
Masters 55+	10-12 paddlers	9-12 paddlers

Masters 60+	10-12 paddlers	9-12 paddlers
Masters 65+	10-12 paddlers	9-12 paddlers
Juniors	10-12 paddlers	9 paddlers

- b. Each canoe must start and finish the race with six (6) paddlers in the canoe to qualify for placement and awards. There may be no more than six (6) paddlers in any canoe at any time during the race.
- c. Starting and relief paddlers may be used at the discretion of the coach.
- d. The first change of paddlers will take place at the discretion of the Lead Official Boat. It shall be no earlier than La'au Point or thirty (30) minutes and not later than forty-five (45) minutes. The Lead Official Boat will signal the first change as described at the coaches meeting.
- e. The last change shall be before the marker buoy leading to the channel off the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel. It is strongly recommended that there is no change 100 yards prior to the marker buoy for safety reasons.

4. Swamping or Overturning of a canoe

- a. If a canoe swamps or overturns after the start of the race, the canoe may be righted and bailed out and will be allowed to continue in the race. No mechanical devices will be allowed throughout the race to bail a canoe.
- b. Relief paddlers and additional qualified persons on an escort boat may assist in righting and bailing out a swamped canoe.
- c. The escort / auxiliary boat will standby and render any assistance to the swamped canoe but must not tow a swamped canoe in the direction of the finish line while the canoe is officially entered in the race. This will result in disqualification of the crew.
- d. The escort / auxiliary boats must be equipped with bridle straps in the event that a canoe needs to be towed. Failure to have bridle straps aboard the escort / auxiliary boat will result in a penalty.

5. Escort Boat / Auxiliary Boat

a. Size and Options

- 1. The escort and auxiliary boats are the responsibility of the club/ crew that are escorting.
- 2. Each entry must have one (1) escort powerboat to accompany them throughout the race. For crews with 9-10 paddlers, the escort boat must be a minimum of 22 feet long. For crews with 11-12 paddlers, the escort boat must be a minimum of 24 feet long.

3. Each entry may have one (1) optional auxiliary powerboat. If an escort boat is used in conjunction with an auxiliary boat then the minimum length for the auxiliary boat is 19 feet and be registered with the crew.

Crew Size	Required Escort Min Length*	Required Auxiliary Min Length*
9-10	22 feet	19 feet
11-12	24 feet	19 feet
* All lengths are calculated from the bow to the stern.		

4. For safety purposes, all escort / auxiliary boat(s) must have a combined U.S Coast Guard approved carrying capacity to accommodate a minimum of nine (9) paddlers, (1) race official, and any additional passengers along with the U.S. Coast Guard required equipment.

b. Additional Equipment Needed

1. Crew ID Sticker - shall be affixed to the hull as issued by OHCRA. If a powerboat does not have a crew ID sticker, they will be asked to leave the course.
2. Bridle Straps - All escort / auxiliary boats must have bridle straps to tow a canoe
3. 3' x 5' Red Flag - is required to be onboard that can be flown in the event of an emergency.
4. Marine band two -way VHF radios - must be installed in the escort / auxiliary boat(s) and no "hand-held" radios will be allowed. Any entry whose escort / auxiliary boat(s) does not have working two-way VHF radio will NOT BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE.
5. Ladder - or other means must be available for onboarding.
6. GPS units - are recommended to be onboard all poweredboats.

c. Required Paperwork

1. Boat Drivers Certificate / License - must be provided no later than 11am on the Saturday before the race.
2. Boat Registration - All escort / auxiliary boats must provide a copy of the boat's registration no later than 11am on the Saturday before the race.
3. Insurance - is mandatory insurance for all escort / auxiliary boats. It is recommended that all escort / auxiliary boat(s) carry a minimum of

\$300,000 liability insurance coverage. Proof of insurance must be provided no later than 11am on the Saturday before the race.

4. Boat Waiver of Responsibility - must be completed by the escort / auxiliary boat captain(s) with the information pertaining to his craft and all helper information. The deadline for submitting this form will be no later than 11am on the Saturday before the race.
5. HCRA Waiver and Release of Liability form must be signed by all persons on the escort / auxiliary boat including the captain and helpers.

d. Course Conduct

1. Right-of-way - is always granted to canoes over escort / auxiliary boats.
2. Follow - Escort / auxiliary boat(s) must follow behind its assigned canoe throughout the race, except when canoes are swamped and overturned. It can at no time come alongside or ahead of the canoe *except* during the transfer of relief paddlers, supplies, or in the case of an emergency.
3. Safe Distance- must be maintained from the canoes and other boats at all times.
4. Wake / Blocking - Escort / auxiliary boats cannot deliberately cause wake to assist their own canoe or interfere with or block another canoe.
5. Coaching - from the escort / auxiliary boat is permitted.
6. Overcrowding - Unsafe conditions due overcrowding, or not meeting U.S Coast Guard requirements or OHCRA requirements, can be declared unfit or unseaworthy as an escort / auxiliary boat by the OHCRA. Said entries will not be allowed to participate.
7. Transporting of articles - Escort / auxiliary boat(s) cannot be used to transport any articles to the canoe. However, any qualified person may pass refreshments or other articles to a canoe from the water, this person need not be one of the registered paddlers.

e. Relief paddler changes

1. Safety brief - should be conducted to discuss the details of how changes will be conducted to including exiting and boarding the boat from the water to ensure the safety of all persons on the course.
2. Dropping off - of relief paddlers off shall be done a safe distance ahead of the canoe. Ensure the boat is in neutral before the paddlers enter the water and maintain a safe distance from them until the change is made.
3. Outside assistance - Paddlers cannot be helped in or out of the canoe by an outside person.

4. Picking up - Drivers shall ensure that all persons in the water are in sight at all times, and should confirm that the boat is in neutral before allowing them to board.

6. Finish Line

- a. All escort / auxiliary boats must do a visual “End of Race” radio check on the designated radio channel with the Lead Official Boat before departing the race course. No powerboats are allowed to enter the channel leading to the Hilton Pier without permission from the Lead Official.
- b. Relief crew members and crew members on the escort / auxiliary boat should follow the instructions of the pier personnel while unloading gear off of the escort and auxiliary boats. Crews shall keep the pier clear and are asked to remove off loaded gear in a quick and timely manner to ensure everyone’s safety.
- c. All GPS devices on the canoes will be removed and turned in to the Official collecting these devices.

L. Alcoholic Beverages are Prohibited

The consumption and possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited on State of Hawaii property (beach and sand area at the finish line); City and County property (restroom and grass area at the finish line); and on Federal Government Property.

M. Emergency Protocol

Should there be an emergency during the race, contact race officials on VHF channel 72 where you will receive further detailed instructions and follow the Safety Policy and Guidelines distributed at the coaches meeting.

N. Race Cancellation Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for conducting a safe outrigger canoe race.

Cancellation of the race will occur under the following conditions:

- Adverse Weather Conditions
- Medical/Health Conditions (ex. sewage spill)
- Darkness
- Other reasons as determined by the Committee in conjunction with the US Coast Guard

The Committee is responsible for making the announcement to cancel the race.

The Committee will listen to weather reports and consult with the US Coast Guard,

Official Boat Captains, Race Sponsors (if necessary), prior to making the decision to cancel the race.

Cancellation based on adverse weather conditions may include the following:

- Winds in excess of 25 MPH (small craft warning)
- Wave heights of 12' to 15'
- Current and other tidal changes affecting the race course

The announcement to cancel the race will be done no later than the morning of the race, unless we are sure that the race will be canceled the night before the race. All participants will be notified ASAP. Although unlikely due to logistics, permits, etc., the Committee will determine if there will be an alternate course or date and time to make up for the canceled race.

If the race is postponed or canceled, all crews are responsible for returning all paddlers, personnel, and equipment to their island of origin. OHCRA is not responsible for relocating persons or equipment from Molokai in the event that the race is canceled or postponed. All fees are non-refundable upon cancellation or postponement of the race.

O. List of Fines

REASON	FINE AMOUNT
Coaches Meeting - Missing attendance	\$500
Race Start - Visual Radio Check Failure	\$500
GPS Device removal	\$200