



# Press Release

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## **Indigenous Guam Fishermen Risk of Drowning More Than Doubled after Enforcement of MPAs**

HONOLULU (6 January 2011) For fishermen on Guam who have traditionally fished inshore, a major concern is the loss of accessible fishing grounds caused in part by the establishment of five marine preserve areas (MPAs) in 1997. Fishermen have reported that the MPAs have displaced them from traditional fishing grounds, prevent them from teaching fishing techniques in a safe environment to the younger generation and impact the future of their local culture. Now a report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), provides concrete evidence on how dangerous fishing has become for the indigenous Chamorro fishermen since fishing restrictions in the MPAs at Tumon Bay, Piti Bomb Holes, Sasa Bay, Achang Reef Flat and Pati Point have been enforced.

“The major finding of the study was that, for Chamorro fishermen, the risk of drowning more than doubled after MPAs were enforced in 2001,” note authors Devin L. Lucas, and Jennifer M. Lincoln, PhD. On the other hand, non-Chamorro fishermen experienced a sharp decrease in the risk of drowning after MPAs were established.

The NIOSH report “The Impact of Marine Preserve Areas on the Safety of Fishermen on Guam” also found that the proportion of drowning deaths to Chamorro fishermen that occurred on the East Coast (in more hazardous waters) increased from 20 percent during 1986-2000 to 63 percent during 2001-2009.

The report concludes: “Before the MPAs were established, Guam residents fished primarily in the protected areas of the Western (leeward side) and Southern Coasts. Non-Chamorro fishermen were predominately recreational users, while Chamorro fishermen were more likely to subsist on the resource. As MPAs were established and enforced, the traditional and popular fishing grounds on the West Coast and Southern tip of the island were restricted. Non-Chamorro recreational fishermen most likely scaled back their fishing activities since few accessible, safe areas remained open. At the same time, Chamorro subsistence fishermen began fishing more heavily on the East Coast (windward side of the island). ... That increased exposure to more hazardous conditions resulted in higher risk of drowning.”

For a copy of the report, which was prepared by the NIOSH for the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, please go to [www.wpcouncil.org/news](http://www.wpcouncil.org/news). For more on Guam’s MPAs, go to <http://www.guamdawr.org/aquatics/mpa>.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council was created by Congress in 1976 by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to manage fisheries in federal waters surrounding Guam, Hawaii, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the US Pacific remote island areas.