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US Rep. Bordallo Opens Regional Fishery Management Meeting on Guam

GUAM (17 March 2008) US Rep. Madeleine Bordallo opened the 140th meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council today at the Hilton Hotel on Guam, with an overview of fishery management issues affecting the US Pacific islands. Rep. Bordallo is a member of the US House Committee on Natural Resources and chairs the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans. She is also a member of the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs and the Armed Services Committee.

Rep. Bordallo said she would continue to pursue full funding for the Western Pacific Community Demonstration Project Program, which provides direct grants to eligible communities to foster and promote traditional indigenous fishing practices. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Secretary of Commerce is authorized to make \$500,000 in direct grants annually to eligible communities through this program. She noted the importance of the Guam Fisherman's Cooperative, which is a former recipient of these funds. However, the program has received no funding the past three years.

Rep. Bordallo commended the Council for its outreach and education initiatives and noted her support for the Council's work with the communities to plan for military build-up on Guam and its potential impact on fisheries and the ecosystem.

Other key topics discussed during the presentation included Congressional initiatives to address illegal, unlicensed and unreported fishing and to further promote shark finning prohibitions. Rep. Bordallo also noted initiatives to designate the Northern Islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands as a national sanctuary or monument and said that the Council should play a significant role in these discussions.

Rep. Bordallo concluded her remarks by recognizing Guam's George Washington High School student Leana Peters, who won the Council's photo essay contest "Thru the Eyes of Our Elders to the Hands of Our Youth." Peters' photo essay featured her 81-year-old grandfather Juan Benavente using the traditional net fishing method known as talaya. The photo graces the covers of Chamoru and Refaluwasch lunar calendars, produced by the Council and available at www.wpcouncil.org/education.

The meeting continues tomorrow at the Hilton Guam with the Council considering a closed area for purse seiners around Guam, regulatory amendments to the Community Development Program, and management of main Hawaiian Islands bottomfish. The Council meeting then moves to Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) on Thursday and Friday to address purse-seine and longline closed areas around CNMI; a purse-seine closed area around and longline program modifications for American Samoa; management of Hawaii swordfish fishery; permits for the squid fishery; and annual catch limits.

The Council is the policy-making agency for fisheries management in the offshore waters of the U.S. Pacific Islands. For more information, contact the Council at (808) 522-8220, info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or www.wpcouncil.org.