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Press Release  
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## **US Pacific Islanders to Celebrate Traditional Lunar New Year on January 26**

HAGTNA, GUAM, and SAIPAN, COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS (January 23, 2009) The Chinese aren't the only communities who will be celebrating the start of the new year on January 26. Joining them will be indigenous Pacific Islanders on Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) who are reviving their traditional use of the lunar calendar.

The two US territories have created separate 2009 lunar calendars featuring the traditional lunar months and moon phases in their indigenous Chamoru and Refaluwasch languages. The calendars also feature traditional fishing almanacs for the two cultures, the tides and moon rise and set times for Saipan and Hagtna, and the winning entries of local student art contests focused on theme of the seasons of the moon and their relationship to the people, land and sea of the Mariana Archipelago. The calendars and student art contests were initiated and sponsored by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, with funding support from the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program. The calendars will be available for download from the Council's website at [www.wpcouncil.org/education](http://www.wpcouncil.org/education).

"The ancient Chamoru depended on the phases of the moon for their livelihood, and it was based on the thirteen months that begin with Tumaiguini, which falls this year on January 26," says Peter R. Onedera, chairman of the committee that worked to create the Guam calendar.

The 2009 lunar calendar project will culminate with the first-ever Lunar New Year festival on Guam, to be held Saturday, January 24, at the Guam Fisherman's Cooperative at the Hagatna Boat Basin. During the all-day event, the Guam calendar will be distributed to the public. Participants will also enjoy exhibits, crafts and entertainment that will be presented entirely in the Chamoru language.

A major highlight of the event will be a chinahan, an ancient Chamoru method of cooking underground. The public is invited to the preparation of the chinahan at 1:30 p.m. when fish and starch crops such as taro, yams, breadfruit, tapioca and sweet potatoes will be placed in the earthen oven and at the unearthing at 6:30 p.m. An evening dinner will be served at no cost to those who attend.

The festival and publication of the calendars to be publicly distributed at the event are being sponsored by the Bank of Guam, BankPacific, Docomo Pacific, DZSP, Ginen I Hila' I Maga'taotao Siha Association, Guam Department of Parks and Recreation, Guam Fisherman's Cooperative Association, Guam Gallery of Art, Kloppenburg Enterprises, Pacific Daily News, Pepsi Cola Bottling Company, South Pacific Petroleum Corporation, University of Guam's Department of Chamorro Affairs and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council is the policy-making agency for fisheries management in offshore waters around the US Pacific Islands. It is the first regional fishery management council in the nation to prohibit drift gill-net fishing, require the use of vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and to develop an ecosystem-based fishery management plan. For more information, contact the Council at (808) 522-8220, (808) 522-8226 (fax), [info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov](mailto:info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov) or [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org).

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