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Report of the Mariana Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel-CNMI Meeting

Wednesday, September 21 2016,

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Hyatt Regency Saipan

Garapan, Saipan, CNMI

1. Welcome and Introductions

Richard Farrell, CNMI Advisory Panel (AP) Chair, convened the meeting at 6:15p.m. AP members present included Diego Blanco, Mike Fleming, Lino Tenorio, Ray Dela Cruz, Perry Mesngon, Manny Ramon, Ramon Tebuteb, and Cecileo Raiukiulipiy.

Also in attendance were Council members Richard Seman and John Gourley, Council Staff Marlowe Sabater, CNMI Island Coordinator Jack Ogumoro, and guest speakers from Joint Regional Marianas Bill Kavanagh and Jenny Flores.

Public participants included Adam Ayers from NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center and Nathan Johnson from Micronesian Environmental Services.

2. Outstanding Council Mariana Recommendations

Ogumoro directed the attention of the members to the handout regarding the Council recommendations, and indicated their statuses are located in the end of the document. He also mentioned that some, including the Community Base Fishery Management Plan, is still pending as the AP members from Tinian and Rota are still working with the Mayor's office on both islands to nail down the date for the initial workshop for these activities.

3. Council Issues

A. 2017 U.S. Territory Bigeye Tuna Limits

Marlowe explained this issue will be an action item at the upcoming Council meeting in October. Currently the CNMI, Guam and American Samoa have two metric tons of Bigeye tuna limits and one thousand metric tons allocated to the CNMI has been given to the Hawaii longline association. In return, the association provided funding assistance for projects identified in the existing CNMI Marine Conservation Plan.

According to Seman, the association will be funding projects in the CNMI for three years, beginning with the first year at \$150,000, second year at \$175,000 and third year \$200,000.

In preparation for the WCPFC meeting this year, which sets the allocation or quota for the Bigeye tuna for the territories, the Council is soliciting comments on the following options:

A-2000 with transferrable 1000

B-2000 with transferrable 2000

C-More than 2000 with more than 2000 (or less) transferrable

After a lengthy discussion, the members had endorsed option C and recommended the Council explore the impacts of increasing the CNMI quota to 3000 mt with 3000 mt transferable.

B. Council Coral Reef Projects

Sabater discussed funding under the CRCP, indicating that other Councils compete to get funds for their respective projects. He then listed the many projects funded under this program.

The members also endorsed the list of projects as presented by Council staff. They would also be providing the Island Coordinator with ideas on additional projects for staff to explore whether the projects are eligibility for CRCP funding.

C. Report on Military Activities and Issues

Bill Kavanagh, Regional Environmental Coordinator and Jenny Flores, Mariana Range Complex Operation, from Join Region Marianas on Guam talked to the group about the military activities in the area, upcoming training schedules, environmental requirements and support, and the process in which they notify communities about their activities.

Kavanagh explained that the military work with the government and others to make sure federal laws are not violated, including the Endangered Species Act. On Tinian he indicated that an amphibious training was cancelled because there was turtle hatching occurring at the area. He said the military usually monitors the beach before training is held, and they make sure no one brings in the brown tree snake.

Flores mentioned upcoming trainings including Valiant Shield 16/Forager Fury IV, Keen Sword 16 and Cope North 17, all occurring between now and March 2017, and involving not only the U.S. but other countries as well.

4. Update on Council Projects in the Marianas

A. Coral Reef Projects

Sabater presented on the different coral reef projects conducted in CNMI. The Council funded the reef fish genetics project aimed to determine the level of connectivity for the different reef fish species. The Council funded the database analytics that would support the local fishery agency in keeping track of their fishery dependent data. The Council also funded the productivity-susceptibility analysis of the reef fish and conducted a data poor stock assessment of the vulnerable species.

B. Data Collection Projects

Sabater reported on the Territory Science Initiative project that aims to improve on the vendor reporting. Sabater also reported on the new project funded by MRIP to conduct a pilot data collection project for the non-commercial spear fishery.

C. Community-based Projects

Sabater indicated the Council staff also has been helping the Mayor of Northern Islands to develop their Community Base Fishery Management Plan, and they will be coming in October to follow-up on outstanding issues and to conduct the initiate workshops for these plans on Tinian and Rota.

Sabater also introduced Adam Ayers from PIFSC who is on island to update a report on profiling fishermen in the CNMI, and will also be traveling to Tinian and Rota to interview fishermen.

5. Mariana Archipelago FEP-CNMI Community Activities

Ogumoro indicated he has been involved in some activities, including having a booth at the first ever Marianas Trench Fish and Seafood Festival, getting ready to announce the poster contest for the Lunar Calendar and going to KKMP Radio for the Fish Wednesday Talk Show.

6. Mariana FEP-CNMI AP Issues

A. Report of the CNMI Subpanels

i. Island Fisheries Subpanel

CNMI Bottomfish Changes – Ogumoro indicated the bottomfish closure areas around the southern populated island in the CNMI and around Alamagan will no longer be in effect beginning October 7, 2016. The request to eliminate the closure area originated from AP, and the letters regarding the lifting of the closure areas are in the handouts.

Training and Marketing Needs – Ogumoro mentioned that the Council has also requested PIRO to conduct training on bottomfish regulations because fishermen and DFW staff are still confused about the regulations, especially with the lifting of the bottomfish closure areas.

ii. Pelagic Fisheries Subpanel

FADs and Sportsfish Funding – AP member Fleming pointed out that he was the one who raised this issue and is wondering whether the missing FADS have been replaced. Chairman Farrell indicated no, stating that DFW are still not allowed by their grantor agency to do any activity in the water, including deploying FADS.

iii. Ecosystems and Habitat Subpanel

Invasive Species Council and Biosecurity - Ogumoro indicated that a local Council has been established and will also be involved in addressing biosecurity issues in the CNMI, a concern raised by the Chairman in previous meetings. He also indicated the Council staffs have written a letter to DLNR secretary to address this issue.

iv. Indigenous Fishing Rights Subpanel

CBFMP in Tinian and Rota - This was also skipped as it was discussed by Sabater earlier. However, Chairman Farrell reminded members from Tinian and Rota to visit the Mayor on each island to work out a schedule for the initial workshop by Council staff.

B. Other Issues

There were no other issues to discuss.

7. Public Comment

Regarding the FADs, Seman discussed funding for these devices, indicating DFW used to be the recipient and now the U.S. Coast Guard, which receives these funds from U.S. Fish & Wildlife, has been giving the funds to the Department of Public Safety for its Boating Access Program.

Instead of spending some money for the FADs and their deployment, the program has been spending the money on vehicles and other needs, but not on these devices.

Regarding providing notices on when and where the training is going to be held, Gourley recommended the use of texting, as most people including fishermen have smart or mobile phones and they can receive texts.

Kavanagh liked the idea and would bring it up to the higher ups in the organization.

8. Discussion and Recommendations

The CNMI AP made the following recommendations:

- *Regarding big eye tuna quota, the CNMI Advisory Panel recommends the Council explore the impacts of increasing the CNMI quota to 3000 mt with 3000 mt transferrable.*
- *Regarding the coral reef projects, the CNMI Advisory Panel endorsed the list of projects as presented by Council staff. The AP members would be providing the Island Coordinator with additional project ideas for staff to explore for eligibility for CRCP funding.*
- *Regarding the boating safety, the CNMI Advisory Panel recommends the Council to assist the DPS Boating Safety to seek funding to support the deployment of the navigation lights at the channels*

9. Other Business

With no further business to discuss, Chairman Farrell adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.