



FINAL Report of the Mariana Archipelago FEP-CNMI Advisory Panel Meeting

February 22, 2018

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Micronesian Environmental Services

Saipan, CNMI

1. Welcome and Introductions

CNMI Advisory Panel (AP) Chair, Richard Farrell, called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. AP members in attendance were Ray Tebuteb, Floyd Masga, Manny Ramon, Lawrence Concepcion, and Ray Dela Cruz.

Also in attendance was Council member John Gourley, as well as Council staff Joshua DeMello (by telephone) and Council Coordinator Jack Ogumoro.

2. Report on Council Action Items

Council Coordinator informed the members about the letter from the Council to Manny Pangelinan to provide a report to the Council on the current status and future plans of the Smiling Cove, Tinian and Rota West Marinas. The letter was sent since last November 13, 2017, with followup via emails but still no response. Ogumoro noted that he would follow-up on getting a response.

3. Council Issues

A. Action Items

1. Precious Corals Essential Fish Habitat Refinement Options

Council staff indicated that this action item will be discussed in October and the item can be tabled for discussion at the next AP meeting.

2. Options for an Aquaculture Management Program

Council staff went over alternatives and past history of the action with the AP at the September meeting on Saipan. A concern was voiced over whether the action taken by the Council could be affected by future aquaculture legislation made locally. Specifically, the concern is if the Council is less restrictive and CNMI is more restrictive, or vice versa? The consensus is to keep the status quo and to revisit the issues if and when the CNMI develops its own regulations. *Thus, AP reiterated its previous recommendation for alternative 2 but would like to review the EIS and Council document prior to final action.*

3. Territory Bigeye Catch Limits

Council staff provided a background and the alternatives, noting that the Council is looking at options for a 2,000 metric ton limit with 1,000 transferable and an option with no limit and transferable limits between 1,000 and 2,000 metric tons. He said the CNMI has been taking advantage of this opportunity with the Hawaii Longline Association and has benefited with fishery development projects. A concern was raised if there is a push to get rid of territorial limits altogether and have a US Pacific-wide quota since the territories aren't catching it

anyway. Staff responded that he has not heard anything to get rid of the territorial quotas. Someone asked if the rest of the countries see the allocation as cheating the system. Staff responded that is a concern amongst the environmental groups but pointed out that the CNMI qualifies as a small-island developing state and therefore is entitled to no limit, but the Council was proactive and provided a limit. The AP discussed the alternatives and decided to keep the 2,000 metric ton limit with 1,000 metric tons transferrable.

4. CNMI Mariana Archipelago FEP Community Activities

The Council Coordinator presented on two items, the Lunar Calendar Festival and Garapan Fishing Base Project. Regarding the lunar calendar, he said the Council participated in the festival by bringing Stan Taisacan to Saipan where he and Cecilio Raiukiulipy participated in a radio talk show and discussed the Council's lunar calendars, as well as presentations about the calendars at the site of the festival where the Council has a booth. With respect to Garapan Fishing Base Project, he said the evaluation team has done their work and by next week a contractor will be announced to do the A&E design and permitting activities for the planned improvements at the site. These include 1) extend seawall and shoreline revetment; 2) floating docks; 3) maintenance dredging, 4) aids to navigation, 5) solar parking lot lights, 6) Ice machine

5. CNMI Mariana Archipelago FEP AP Issues

A. Report of the subpanel

i. Island Fisheries

The subpanel reported the fish market on Tinian has an ice machine and it can produce 400 pounds of ice a day for the fishermen to use when they go fishing. They also noted that because the winds have been high, bottomfish fishermen cannot go out. Both Tinian and Saipan reported minimal bottomfish fishing in recent months.

ii. Pelagic fisheries

The subpanel mentioned fishing is very slow this time of the year because of the weather. They reminded the AP about the mahimahi tournament on April 7.

iii. Ecosystem and habitat

The subpanel talked at length about the impacts on the environment by tourists and the need for more rest rooms at tourist's sites. They said NMI College has started a class for tour operators and this would help also in protecting our environment.

iv. Indigenous Fishing Rights

The subpanel indicated that whatever happens on land affects the ocean. Thus, something needs to be done about the destruction of our fishing grounds. The subpanel suggested having a tourist code of conduct to help alleviate the situation, and also request for an update on the pre-positioning ships.

B. Other Issues

i. Update on Marianas Trench Marine National Monument and Sanctuary Request

Council staff had requested for an update but there wasn't anything to report on these two items. Even the membership on the Monument Council has not been updated since the last administration.

Majority of the members also felt the monument is enough for the CNMI and not to turn it into a sanctuary. They also felt that it was worth continuing to push forward and request an update. *AP recommended the Council request FWS provide an update on the MTMNM management plan and timeline for completion and public commenting options.*

ii. Update on Minimum Size Regulations

Council coordinator reported on the regulation for restricting catches of some species based on sizes for commercial purposes has been published in the Commonwealth Register, with one comment from the public. Members mentioned that they submitted comments when the proposed regulation was being published. Council coordinator agreed will follow up on the process or what is going to happen next and report back to the AP.

6. Public Comment

There were no public comments

7. Discussions and Recommendations

The CNMI Advisory Panel made the following recommendations:

Regarding Aquaculture, the AP:

- Reiterated its previous recommendation for alternative 2 but would like to review the EIS and Council document prior to final action.

Regarding Territorial BET Limit, the AP:

- Recommended the Council choose alternative 2, 2,000 mt with 1,000 mt transferrable, as it is the current limit and allocation.

Regarding ecosystems and habitat, the AP:

- Recommended the Council encourage the Mariana Visitor Authority to utilize the fishermen's code of conduct to create a brochure to be issued to visitors upon arrival to ensure proper care of the fishery resources in CNMI.

Regarding the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument, the AP:

- Recommended the Council request FWS provide an update on the MTMNM management plan and timeline for completion and public commenting options

8. Other Business

The CNMI AP Chair indicated all of the AP Chairs have been meeting to come up with some ideas to make the group more effective in their roles and responsibilities, including attendance, representation of the Council, and reducing the number of members to name a few. He asked the members to review these recommendations for discussion at their next meeting.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50p.m.