



Report of the CNMI-Mariana Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel Meeting

Saturday, June 6, 2020

9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Richard Farrell, CNMI Advisory Panel (AP) Vice Chair, opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed the participants. AP members in attendance included: Ray Tebuteb, Cecicio Raiukiulipiy, Michael Fleming, Jun Yamagishi, Perry Mesngon, Lawrence Concepcion, Ray Delacruz.

Also in attendance was Floyd Masga, Felix Reyes, Joshua DeMello, Mark Fitchett, Marlowe Sabater Council Staff and Council Vice Chair John Gourley.

Members of the public included SFA President Gene Weaver, and Tina Marie To (California resident studying fisheries/aquaculture).

2. Review of Last AP Meeting and Recommendations

Council staff reviewed the report of the last AP meeting held February 27, 2020 noting the members in attendance and the items discussed. Council staff also reviewed previous CNMI AP recommendations on Bottom Fish Catch Limit and Big Eye catch recommendations and Council's decision. Council staff added discussion at the last AP meeting included the deployment of five Fads, CARES Act fishery funding assistance of \$1 million, ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, and Senate Bill 21-24 on use of chengchulu and tekkin for atulai to allow for all species to be caught.

3. Council Issues

A. Pacific Remote Island Area Marine Conservation Plan

Council staff presented the Pacific Remote Island Area (PRIA) Marine Conservation Plan (MCP) noting that the Council will be looking to approve the MCP at its 182nd meeting in June. He provided a background on the MCP and its process and noted the additions made by USFWS and the State of Hawaii. He reviewed the projects and asked for comments from the AP.

The Vice-Chair asked if the MCP only for Hawaii or applies for other regions. Staff replied that funds left over may be used for other areas.

An AP member asked if the CNMI's MCP has been approved. Staff replied that the CNMI received approval from NMFS Regional Director Michael Tosatto on May 8.

A member of the public asked what language specifically is in the MCP for the CNMI. Staff replied that the PRIA MCP points to the CNMI MCP for projects.

B. Mandatory Electronic Reporting

Council staff presented an overview of mandatory electronic reporting (ER) noting that the Council recommended January 1, 2021 to implement ER in the Hawaii longline fishery. The

issue that remains is should the ER be implemented in American Samoa. He also went over how the ER systems work and is being implemented, with a timeline on a full roll-out of ER to the Hawaii longline fishery. He noted that staff is working on implementation in American Samoa with the American Samoa AP.

An AP member asked if the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is required for all longline vessels. Staff replied yes.

C. 2019 Annual SAFE Reports

Remington provided a presentation on the 2019 Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Reports developed by the Council's Plan Team. The Annual SAFE Reports provide a tool for monitoring the fisheries. He provided the trends in bottomfish and pelagic fisheries landings and revenue, as well as ocean and ecosystem variables and indicators.

A member of the public asked if fish prices are adjusted for inflation. Remington replied yes and it is noted on the graphs.

D. Update on Data Reporting App and Launch Plans

Council staff presented on the data reporting app "Catch It-Log it" being developed to assist the fishermen capture their catch and effort data

The Vice-Chair asked if individuals will be able to print out monthly reports from the app. Council staff replied that he believes so but will double check with developer and noted that if it's from a computer you can print it out.

An AP member commented that something like this was done with the spearfishing club that was kind of successful but also had some problems with people inputting data on their own. The club ended up taking pictures from people because either they weren't tech savvy enough or lazy. The launching point is going to be the key if it is going to be successful. He said that it will be a lot easier if there is some mandatory component to this. Council staff commented that this is in support of the mandatory licensing and the launch and training is the key and fishermen should understand it's a requirement and this makes it easier for them to report.

The Vice-Chair asked if we use CNMI reporting to get a waiver from having to get the Federal one as well. Since the grid is 6x6, they might say that we need a Fed permit not just the local permit. Council staff commented that it is on their radar and will work on getting that fixed. The AP agreed to recommend the Council work on this issue since the CNMI has its own mandatory data reporting regulations and may want to seek a waiver between local and federal reporting.

An AP member asked if the NOAA research vessel when they come out to Saipan, can they share their data when they visit. Staff replied that the Council doesn't have any of the data, but can ask them to share a presentation of what they did with the AP. Council staff replied that there might be a DFW data sharing ability and commented that information may also be on the NOAA Website of published work done within the Marianas.

An AP member also asked if the AP can request a space for a fisherman or two to be on board the research vessels. Council staff commented that they can ask, but to be on the boat, you have to be a part of the research and for some of the research like bottomfish fishermen might be able to do it

An AP member commented that the AP wants to know what is going on out there and what does the CNMI get from it. Staff replied that they had previously requested NMFS to provide a science night to provide information to the community and will remind them to do that in the future. The AP agreed and recommended the Council request science presentations from NMFS.

4. CNMI Reports

Council staff reported on the COVID-19 impacts to fishing in the CNMI, fishery development project, and community fishing activities. Fishing tournaments have been canceled, government furloughs are occurring, and there is a task force to begin the process for providing funding for fishermen from the CARES Act.

He reported on the Garapan Fishing Base parking lot and slope revetment still being worked on. He also reported that the local media released a story on the FAD deployments and hopes fishermen are able to catch fish in a few weeks.

5. Report on CNMI-Mariana Archipelago FEP AP Plan Activities

The Vice Chair reported that most fishing tournaments were canceled due to COVID-19, so the AP's plan to provide education and outreach for the Council at the events may not occur. The San Jose and Rota Derbys were cancelled but hopefully the outreach can occur at the Saipan International Fishing Tournament.

He further reported that he is working with the AP and Council staff on completing the 2021 lunar calendar and requested the AP members continue to work on getting information to staff.

6. Island Fishery Issues and Activities

The Vice Chair reported on issues and activities on the island of Tinian. He said that he is working on a project with Division of Fish and Wildlife Fisheries to deploy a Community FAD off Tinian. Also, the Mandatory Data Reporting Outreach plans are still in place to conduct radio and TV ads. Funding is available but they are waiting on CPA to give them the green light for upgrading the Tinian marina. They are working on a long-term lease because the Mayor wants to improve the marina to include lighting, security cameras, restrooms, etc. Funding for the slips is there but the issue is that the Mayor wants to revitalize the whole area. He wants to harden the area-put in concrete with restrooms, two different ramps between the old ramp, etc. However the main issue is the transfer of the property to the municipality.

An AP member from Rota provided the issues and activities on the island of Rota. He said that they will be looking at the restoration of the marina but all water related activities are being postponed until next year. Starting up activities will be dependent on the outcome of the pandemic as well as their budget. In regards to the Chenchulu, Senate bill 21-24, needs to be looked into and see what the best option is. He also requested more info on CARES Act funding and how it will be provided to Rota.

Various AP members provided reports from Saipan. An AP member reported there are night divers fishing in the lagoon and the fishing may be affecting the juvenile fish in the lagoon. He said there is a need to monitor this group and find out what they are doing with the fish. There is also a concern about net mesh size and have management and registration of nets. He wasn't against subsistence fishing but they need to have a size limit on the mesh at a size that doesn't conflict with minimum size regulations. An member asked about Chenchulu registration fees. The Vice Chair said that the fee is based on length of net. The AP member said that they should put the cost of the registration fee higher on smaller mesh net and cheaper for larger mesh.

Another AP member commented that people are catching juvenile fish at night but there is also a concern over the potential regulations introduced for limits. There needs to be a good plan to manage sources for future generations. He suggested that the biggest problem is gillnet and they need some conversation locally about these issues. Council staff also added that with the current Senate Bill it indicates a 1.5 inch mesh size.

An AP member commented that there is a need to make sure legislation allows for our people to eat fish for their sustenance. He said that there may be a bill that to include Saipan zoning so they need to make sure that they have all the information. He was still unsure what the status is of the pre-positioning ship negotiations, but said it was good news that the CARES Act funding is available.

Another AP member reported that there are concerns from fishermen that smiling cove parking for trailers is very limited and suggested DLNR negotiate with American Memorial Park to create parking in that area. He said that the tourists that take boats out to Managaha have taken up the fishermen's parking. He also commented that the Council needs to continue to push to get rid of the monuments to allow people to go fishing. The AP agreed that getting rid of the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument as well as removing green sea turtles from the Endangered Species Act should be a priority for the Council. There were also concerns about identifying the Pacific Islanders as indigenous peoples in the regulations to allow for them to benefit from exemptions from regulations.

7. Public Comment

Gene Weaver commented that there has been no decision to cancel the Saipan Fishermen's Association International Derby, but may postpone the tournament. It is dependent upon the Governor lifting the travel and quarantine mandate. He said that there are also other factors involved regarding the restrictions including sponsors for the event, getting the tournament permit from the American Memorial Park but it will most likely take place later in the year.

John Gourley commented on mesh size regulations saying that there was stretched mesh measurement and bar mesh. Stretched mesh measures the maximum opening of the square (distance of the space between the knots); the bar mesh measures the distance of one side of the square (distance of the line between the knots).

8. Discussion and Recommendations

The CNMI Advisory Panel made the following recommendations:

- **The CNMI AP recommended the Council request the removal of the fishing prohibitions in the Marine National Monuments in response to the President's Executive Order 13921; further, the CNMI AP recommended the Council request the removal of the Green Sea Turtle from the ESA. There should also be an effort to look at including Pacific Islanders as indigenous so that indigenous fishermen can benefit from those same rights**
- **The CNMI AP recommended the Council request NMFS PIFSC to provide presentations to the fishing community on the research and results from the work that they do in the CNMI.**
- **The CNMI AP recommended the Council to look at potential reporting duplication between the CNMI's mandatory reporting and Federal reporting.**
- **The CNMI AP acknowledged the resignation of George Moses (AP Alternate) from the advisory panel and recommends that the Council solicits for a replacement alternate.**

9. Other Business

Council staff also noted that the recent EO by President Trump requests the Council to submit, within 180 days, a prioritized list of recommended actions to reduce burdens on domestic fishing and to increase production within sustainable fisheries, including a proposal for initiating each recommended action. Actions may include changes to regulations, orders, guidance documents, or other similar agency actions. The Council will be developing the list and providing it to the President within the time period.

Gourley commented that Trump signed an executive order last night restoring commercial fishing privileges to the northeast marine national monuments. Fishing activities may be regulated under MSA and the northwest fishery Council. He recommended a visit to www.savingseafood.org for more information.

Council staff provided an update on 2021 BET specifications and options that the Council may look at for next year. He noted that the BET is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing.

Gourley provided an update on the CARES Act funding that CNMI received noting that he got the list from Tinian and Rota of fishermen but the task force right now is outlining the qualifications for the people that are eligible for the money. Once they get that, they can go back to Tinian and Rota's list to see who is truly eligible. He thanked the AP for help in getting phone numbers so the task force can do a lot of the work in Saipan. He said that they still need to develop spend plan before it can be implemented.

Meeting adjourned at 11:28 am