



**182<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the  
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council  
June 23-25, 2020**

**CNMI Community Activities and Issues**

**1. COVID-19 Impacts**

March 16th, 2020, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) begins to implement quarantine procedures, conducting mass media announcements to stay home, practice proper hygiene and social distancing.

By March 31st, the CNMI Government announced the closure of all boat access points within the Islands. The closure of boat access points, compounded by continued curfew hours and cancellation of all flights coming and leaving the CNMI has undoubtedly affected fishing communities.

On April 22, 2020, due to these restrictions, CNMI Fishers started to mobilize by routing a petition, requesting the Governor to reconsider the COVID-19 directive that has closed certain sectors of the fishing industry. On April 28th, CNMI Fishers Petition was submitted to the Governor's office with 602 signatures from Saipan, Rota, and Tinian

On May 1st, the administration responded by amending the curfew hours from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am as well as opening all boat access points. Expanding the hours for fishing for CNMI residents.

The CNMI continues to face the threat of COVID-19 restrictions like the rest of the world. Curfew hours are still in place, however, the CNMI has implemented a "Condition Yellow" allowing businesses to open longer hours with social distancing measures in place. On May 24th, government employees have been ordered to return to work. Government hours are now from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, except during austerity Fridays.

**2. Bottomfish Fishery Development Project**

During the on-going COVID-19 restrictions the Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) has had limited activity with regard to conducting training due to COVID-19 restrictions.

However, DLNR is still working with the Administration in conducting bottomfish training for the Island of Rota. Furthermore, maintenance of the vessel has been maintained to include regular maintenance runs as well as working collaboratively with the Division of Fish and Wildlife's FAD deployment activities. Providing the crew with needed knowledge on the use of the vessel GPS and Depth Sounder equipment.

**3. DLNR/DFW FADs Development**

Department and Lands and Natural Resources in collaboration with the Division of Fish & Wildlife joined forces to deploying (7) Fish Aggregating Devices (FAD) around Saipan and Tinian. The DLNR Vessel Kirida was used to assist as a guide vessel in the deployment of the CNMI FAD's.

The use of the vessel allowed the crew to conduct regular maintenance runs as well as refine the skills of the crew with regard to using the vessel GPS and Depth Sounder.

#### **4. Garapan Fishing Base Improvement Projects**

Once again, due to COVID-19 the Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) had limited activity with regard to the Garapan Fishing Base Improvement Project. However, DLNR did hold several meetings with the engineering firm as well as the Department of Public Works. The primary focus is to proceed in phases with limited funding.

Phase (1) is to obtain a proposal from GHD Engineering on utilizing alternative materials to strengthen the southern portion of the launching area in order to prevent erosion and damages to the existing boat trailer parking area. DLNR is now waiting on the GHD proposal in order to proceed with the procurement process.

#### **5. Mandatory License and Reporting Regulation**

During this reporting period, there has been no activity with regard to fully implementing the Mandatory Data Reporting Regulations by the Division of Fish and Wildlife. However, DFW Enforcement has also suffered a reduction of force due to the implementation of furloughs and lay-offs within the government.

DFW Enforcement is down to (1) Supervisor (1) Conversation Officer and (1) Conservation trainee.

#### **6. Marine Conservation Plan**

On May 8th. CNMI's Governor Ralph DLG. Torres received confirmation from NOAA/NMFS Regional Administrator, Michael Tosatto informing Governor Torres that CNMI's Marine Conservation Plan (MCP) has been approved for the 3-year period August 4, 2020, through August 3, 2023. As well as, the Federal Register notice reflecting approval of the CNMI Marine Conservation Plan was published.

#### **7. CNMI Tournaments**

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and lack of funding majority of all fishing tournaments on Saipan have been canceled. The Saipan Fishermen's Association (SFA) 36th Saipan International Fishing Tournament is tentatively scheduled for July 18-19, 2020. Also, the Marianas APNEA Spearfishing Club Tournament is slated for August of this year.

However, tournaments scheduled for the Island of Rota and Tinian have all been canceled.

#### **8. CARES ACT – Taskforce**

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is currently working on developing a spending plan for the CARES Act. The CNMI as of June 01, 2020 has created a taskforce under the Office of the Lieutenant Governor to create a process on identifying and

submitting a spending with regard to disbursing funds to address direct or indirect fishery-related losses as well as subsistence, cultural, or ceremonial impacts related to COVID-19 within the CNMI. The taskforce is led by the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife Director, Mr. Manny Pangelinan.