



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

Saturday, November 21, 2020

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Richard Farrell, CNMI Advisory Panel (AP) vice Chair, opened the meeting at 9:00 am and welcomed the participants. AP members in attendance included: Cecilio Raiukiulipiy, Michael Fleming, Lawrence Concepcion, Jun Yamagishi. Absent were Ray Tebuteb, Perry Mesngon and Ray DelaCruz.

Also in attendance was Floyd Masga, Joshua DeMello, and Marlowe Sabater (Council staff)

Members of the public included Thomas Remington

### 2. Review of Last AP Meeting and Recommendations

Council staff provided an overview of the last AP meeting and recommendations and status held on September 5, 2020. He reviewed the recommendations and provided a status, noting both the PRIA MCP and the Offshore Energy Plan were approved by the Council at its 183<sup>rd</sup> Meeting in September and can be found on the Council's website. The recommendations regarding lights and the weather reports are being worked on but have been delayed due to COVID-19.

### 3. Council Issues

#### A. Development of a Bottomfish Stock Rebuilding Plan for Guam

Council staff provided a report on options being developed for rebuilding the bottomfish stock in Guam. He reviewed how the bottomfish stock was designated as overfished and what that means for the Council. NMFS PIRO notified the Council in February 2020 that the Guam bottomfish stock assessment resulted in the stock being overfished. As part of the process, the Council is required to address the overfished condition and to rebuild the stock and must not exceed 10 years and parameters defined. The Council must complete a rebuilding plan in two years with a submission to NMFS in May 2021. He reviewed the process and details on what the rebuilding plan needs to include and the options the Council may select in December. Council staff noted that while this is for Guam's bottomfish fishery, there may be impacts to CNMI as many fishermen from Guam fish near Rota.

The vice Chair asked if the Guam fishers caught fish in Rota, do they report back to Guam or CNMI. He asked if the CNMI's ACL would be affected. Staff replied that it would only be affected if they reported to creel surveyors in the CNMI, but most likely they would report back on Guam. If they fish in the CNMI EEZ, they should have a license and report to the CNMI as required. The vice Chair said that if they go to Rota, they have to go through customs and then landings will be claimed. Staff reported that this issue is a concern since its CNMI catch is reported in Guam data.

An AP member asked how we can monitor the fishermen coming from Guam, when they are not coming into Rota. Staff reported that this is a state enforcement issue. Another AP member

commented that the problem federal waters do Guam fishers have federal permits. Staffs reported that the CARES Act data had 800 fishers but are not identified as to what type of fishers. Staff reported that fishers coming from Guam should have federal permits.

#### **4. CNMI Reports**

Council staff reported that the Department of Lands and Natural Resources Bottomfish Training Project, there have been limited activities due to that DLNR is waiting for the closing date for the public service announcement with regard to the invitation for bid for Kirida Vessel's Insurance renewal. Furthermore, the invitation for bids closed on 11.20.2020.

Under the CARES Act Rollout, Council staff reported that CNMI's CARES Act Spend Plan has been approved. Next step is the Administration will make a public announcement. Also, Council staff reported that the CNMI CARES Act will be handled by DFW and the CNMI Grant's Office.

Council staff also reported that a contractor was awarded for the Garapan Fishing Base Improvement Project. Next step is to work with DLNR to meet with CNMI Procurement and the Attorney General to allow the contract to proceed in phases.

Council staff also reported that under the Marianas Trench Advisory Committee, the Administration is working on selecting (3) Government Officials to become advisory committee's members for the Marianas Trench Monument. There has been no selection as of today.

Lastly, under the up-coming SFF-13 grant, Council staff and the Administration are working towards providing proposed projects. The Administration is reviewing the current MCP objectives and community surveys with regard to potential projects.

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

The vice Chair reported that the outreach plan for 2020 didn't pan out due to COVID-19 and said the AP agreed to continue moving forward for the rest of the year and will work on regrouping and planning for next year. He said that virtual tournaments are an idea that is being floated around that may provide an opportunity for outreach for the Catch-It, Log-It data app.

#### **6. Fishery Issues and Activities**

The vice Chair reported that the military is helping with reforesting Goat Island so he is working with the Mayor of Tinian to see if there is an opportunity to provide lighting for safety in the area. He also said that he will continue working with the USCG representative and local agencies to address harbor markers and light improvements.

An AP member received a report that Joeten in Garapan was selling Onaga but it sold out in under an hour so Joeten is looking for more bottomfish. The fish was selling at \$4-6 per pound so this provides an opportunity for fishermen to provide bottomfish to the supermarket.

An AP member commented that he and the CNMI Spearfishing Organizations would like to participate in the Catch-it Log it App outreach events.

An AP member said he would look into to requiring GPS on all vessels. Recently, it has been difficult to locate distressed vessels. He also said that a Chinese vessel is in the Marianas to conduct research and a large vessel has been spotted going around Goat Island and when approached would move away quickly.

AP member Marine Protected Areas around Managaha, observed fishers poaching and a need to provide outreach by enforcement to educate and remind people that the MPA are still in effect. An AP member noted that he will be working with the CNMI government in looking at a State Fuel Tax reimbursement. He said he will need the AP's assistance in working with new leadership to explore the feasibility of a fuel tax rebate similar to other areas of the United States.

## **7. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

## **8. Discussion and Recommendations**

The CNMI Advisory Panel made the following recommendations:

### ***Regarding the Guam Bottomfish Rebuilding Plan:***

- **The AP was concerned with Guam fishermen fishing in the CNMI EEZ near Rota and data being allocated to Guam's fishery. The AP recommends the Council relay to NMFS PIFSC the concerns of bottomfish fishing at Rota Bank to correctly allocate fishing catch and effort in the next stock assessment.**

## **9. Other Business**

Council staff reported that 138<sup>th</sup> SSC will happen Dec 1-2 and the 184<sup>th</sup> CM will be Dec 3-5 Guam time and requested all visit the Council website at [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org) for more information about these meetings. He also reported that the NMFS PIR Sustainable Recreational and non-Commercial Fishing Program and the Marine Education and Training (MET) grant opportunities are open and available and noted staff was available to assist AP members and the community in proposal efforts.