

**CNMI Island Report
164th Council Meeting
Oct. 19 to 23, 2015
Gov. H. Rex Lee Auditorium
(Fale Laumei), Utulei, American Samoa**

The purpose of this Island Report is to provide resource managers, scientist, constituencies and the general public the most recent fisheries progress information from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). This report will provide a broad look at the fishery related activities that have occurred during the months of July-October 2015. The island report entails activities performed by the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) from the last Council meeting.

FISHERIES RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Checklist of CNMI Fishes (Funding source: Sport Fish Restoration):

- DFW is awaiting comments from the NOAA researcher on the results from the previous NOAA research cruise in the Marianas. Once this information is obtained, it will be updated into the checklist database.
- Additional fact sheets of fish species have been developed from samples collected during research cruises.

Marine Protected Area Monitoring Program:

- A manuscript detailing the results from the information collected around the MMCA is being developed
- Preliminary graphs have been developed and additional comparative analyses are being considered
- No in-water surveys are planned for fiscal year 2015.

Fisheries Data Collection Programs (Funding source: WPRFMC, Sport Fish Restoration, NOAA WPacFIN, and NOAA PIRO):

Saipan Shore-based creel survey (Sport Fish Restoration)

- A new Creel Biologist is being recruited after the resignation of Mr. Sean Macduff.
- Progress is also being made with the recruitment process of two fisheries creel data technicians

Saipan Boat-based creel survey (NOAA-WPacFIN)

- Monitoring for this project was not performed in August due to unforeseen circumstances. However, monitoring effort was reinstated the following month.

Saipan Commercial Purchase Invoice System (NOAA-WPacFIN)

- The implementation of the mandatory reporting law is still on-going

Territorial Science Initiative (WPRFMC)

- Mr. Tony Flores identified as contractor.
- He will focus on assisting the vendors on filling out the required form, training the vendors on fish identification, and serve as outreach for the mandatory reporting law

MRIP – pulse fishery assessment (WPRFMC)

- Mr. Danandro Barcinas (the MRIP contractor) has been collecting information on catch and effort for seasonal fish such as juvenile goatfish, jacks, rabbitfish and atulai

Tinian Creel Survey (WPRFMC)

- The final report for the Tinian Creel Survey has been completed and submitted.

- This program will come to an end in November.

Rota Creel Pilot Project (NOAA PIRO)

- A final report is being developed for the Rota Creel Project.

Fishing Tournaments (NOAA-IFA, SFR)

- DLNR-DFW has provided assistance to the Luta Fishing Derby by officiating the fishing tournament.
- Assistance was also provided to the 31st International Fishing Derby on Saipan

Fish Life History Evaluation (Funding source: Sport Fish Restoration, NOAA PIFSC):

- 246 samples of Orangespine unicornfish (*Naso lituratus*) otoliths were processed with the assistance of NOAA-PIFSC and a contractor. 130 of the processed samples were paired for a comparison of aging differences between the two researchers
- Plans for fiscal year 2016 are to process the remaining otolith samples and draft preliminary reports

FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADS) (Funding source: Sport Fish Restoration): [FRANK]

- The SFR funding for the FY16 CNMI FAD Program has been awarded
- Two FAD anchors were delivered to DFW compound
- An Invitation to Bid has been drafted for the deployment of FADs HH, KK, and LL for Saipan/Tinian, and FADs DD and DE for Rota
- Consultation with the US Army Corps of Engineers in regards to the use of an Indian Ocean-type FAD is currently in the process for permitting
- The US Coast Guard Private Aids to Navigation permit for the use of the Indian Ocean-type FAD has been approved

All-Other Activities within Fisheries Research Section

- An amendment to extend SFR funding for the FY15 FRS Grant has been approved
- FRS warehouse will undergo renovation due to extensive termite damage
- An Invitation to Bid has been drafted for the purchase and installation of 2 new boat engines for the FRS 27' Boston Whaler
- Received preliminary results from the latest samples provided to USGS National Wildlife Health Center. Results have indicated that the Blue lined surgeonfish (*Acanthurus lineatus*) on Saipan and Tinian. Frozen samples have been collected from Saipan from local fishers and will be delivered to the USGS National Wildlife Health Center, Honolulu Hawaii have tested negative for toxins.
- DFW is working with PSS COOP Students program to assist in FRS related projects for fall quarter.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH PROGRAM (Funding source: Sport Fish Restoration)

Educational Outreach

- This position has become vacant and DFW is currently working to fill the position

Community Outreach

- Presentations were held throughout the summer to students of all ages.

MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA) COORDINATION (Funding Source: NOAA CRI)

- The MPA Coordinator compiled a 'CNMI MPA laws and regulations' packet with all laws/legislation pertinent to CNMI's MPAs included, to be distributed to stakeholders and local resource managers. Packet is complete and is available on the homepage of the DFW website at: <http://www.cnmi-dfw.com>.
- The MPA Coordinator contributed content to CRI and DFW websites (<http://www.cnmi-dfw.com/marine-protected-areas.php> and <http://cnmicoralreef.com/our-work/marine-protected-areas.htm>), including photos, MPA documents, descriptions of MPAs, pertinent laws and regulations, and general information.
- The MPA Coordinator supervised two CRI interns from June to August 2015. Interns assisted with creating MPA outreach plans for all 5 of Saipan's MPAs, designing outreach materials, writing and recording radio advertisements, and helping with other MPA program tasks.
- The MPA Coordinator collaborated with DFW staff and external organizations (BECQ, MINA) and CRI Interns for input on MPA signage design schemes, locations, and priorities. A general template was designed for welcome signs and interpretive signs at Bird Island, Forbidden Island, LaoLao Bay, Lighthouse Reef, Tinian Marine Reserve and Sasanhaya Bay Fish Reserve.
- The MPA Coordinator conducted an initial MPA sign replacement needs assessment, taking GPS points of all existing and proposed signs on Saipan and Mañagaha, photographing the signs (if present) and noting condition (if present). In order to get an idea of the timeline for replacing/installing MPA signs, the Marine Protected Area spoke with permitting staff at DPL, Zoning, and BECQ about sign permitting requirements.
- The MPA Coordinator reviewed the recent NOAA NCRMP MPA social survey proposal, giving written comments and participating in a phone conference to provide further comment and to make more useful for DFW to potentially use the data in the future.
- The MPA Coordinator visited the Mañagaha Marine Conservation Area (MMCA) several times during this reporting period to collect data on the number of visitors participating in different activities on land or in the water.
- The MPA Coordinator made significant progress in planning for MPA management plan updates in the upcoming year.
- The MPA Coordinator began incorporating basic updates to facilities lists, fish species lists, and more to the three existing MPA management plan documents (Mañagaha Marine Conservation Area, Bird Island Marine Sanctuary, Forbidden Island Marine Sanctuary), and re-formatting the documents. The MPA Coordinator will soon incorporate sections of the documents updated by their respective government agencies.
- The MPA Coordinator attended Western Pacific Fishery Management Program High School Summer Program field trip on a submarine through the MMCA. The following week she delivered a 30-minute presentation about CNMI's MPAs to the same group of students.
- The MPA Coordinator took the 2015 CRI intern cohort to Mañagaha Island, where she delivered a 15-minute presentation on CNMI's MPAs, and on the MMCA. She had interns conduct perimeter walks of the island and count visitors participating in each activity. Interns also updated text and map from MPA management plan to reflect current condition and facilities in the MPA.
- The MPA Coordinator provided comments and content about Marine Protected Areas for a BECQ's coral reef species booklet and a CRM coastal access points booklet.

BOATING ACCESS PROGRAM (FUNDING SOURCE: SPORT FISH RESTORATION)

- Funding has been provided to renovate the Rota West harbor marina. An invitation to bid is being developed for advertisement.
- Funding has also been received for the improvement of the fishing base parking lot.

SMILING COVE MARINE DOCK FACILITY (Funding source: Local & Sport Fish Restoration)

- Effort has been focused on debris removal from the marina roads and grounds.
- Temporary repairs of dock slips were conducted.
- Damage assessments were performed on all docking facilities.