

Report of the Mariana Archipelago FEP- CNMI Advisory Panel Meeting
Held October 14, 2015 at Micronesian Environmental Services Office, Saipan, CNMI

1. Welcome and Introductions

Richard Farrell, CNMI AP Chair, opened the CNMI AP Meeting at 6:15 p.m. In attendance were AP Members: Lawrence Concepcion, Cecilio Raiukilipiy, Manny Ramon, Jack Villagomez, Ray Tebuteb, and Pete Itibus.

Also in attendance were Council staff Malowe Sabater and Jack Ogumoro, and Council Member Richard Seman.

2. Review and Approval of the Agenda

Itibus moved and Ramon seconded the motion to approve the agenda. The vote to approve the agenda was unanimous.

3. Issues to be discussed at 164th Council Meeting

A. Specification of Territorial Bottomfish Annual Catch Limits

Sabater explained the Council will specify the annual catch limit for the bottomfish fishery in American Samoa, Guam and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. He then provided a brief history of the stock assessment beginning from 2012 when Pacific Islands Fishery Science Center updated the 2012 Territorial Bottomfish Stock Assessment with data up to 2013. The updates were then reviewed by the Tier 3 panel following the Western Pacific Stock Assessment Review, which deemed the stock assessment adequate for management. The SSC also heard the review result. A P-Star Working Group was also formed to determine the level of risk in the assessment on the stock, as well as a SEEM working group to access the uncertainties around the social, economic, ecological and dimensions of the bottomfish fisheries.

Following Sabater's presentation, including the potential alternatives, *the AP recommended the Council select alternative 2 and set the ACL at 228,000 lbs; they also recommended the Council not prematurely reduce the ACL given the fishery currently lands a small portion relative to the established ACL and the Commonwealth is still recovering from the recent typhoon.*

B. 2016 Territorial Bigeye Tuna Catch Limit

Ogumoro explained the Council will also act on the 2016 longline bigeye catch limit specifications for the US Territories, including limits that can be transferred under fishing agreements pursuant to Amendment 7 of the Pelagic Ecosystem Plan. He said currently the CNMI is allowed to harvest up to 2,000 mt of bigeye tuna, and 1,000 of that could be transferred under a fishing agreement involving an organization of longline fishermen in Hawaii.

Council member Seman also provided a history of the bigeye tuna, indicating that the stock is being managed by the Western and Central Pacific Fishery Commission. The United States and its Pacific Island territories are members of this Commission. Seman asserted that the territories

were given special consideration to allocate some of their share for fishery development. The CNMI currently benefits from such arrangement.

Following the presentation, including discussions on the alternatives, *the AP recommended the Council select alternative 2, which specifies 2,000 mt longline total annual catch limits and 1,000 mt transferable catch limit for bigeye per territory.*

C. Council review of Mariana FEP and Proposed Changes

Ogumoro indicated the Council will also consider the non-regulatory modifications to its five fishery ecosystem plans. He said the proposed list of goals and objectives identified in the briefing document is a result of a series of meetings to solicit inputs and feedbacks, including from the Council members during their meetings. He reminded the members about their participation in the process when they attended a meeting conducted by Council staff back in November 2014. He then presented the document containing the new goals and objectives. Following the presentation, *the AP supported the proposed Marianas FEP changes.*

4. Marianas Archipelago FEP Issues

The members raised and discussed several issues for the Council to consider. However, after discussing the issues, they agreed the issues were more appropriate to be addressed locally. However, the members from each panel agreed about the need for more community education on responsible fishing. Following the discussion, *the AP recommended the Council consider printing the Fishermen Code of Conduct in Mandarin Chinese and Korean.*

B. Other Issues

There was no other issue discussed.

5. Public Comment

There was no public comment

6. Discussion and Recommendations

The CNMI AP made the following recommendations:

Regarding Territorial Bigeye Tuna Specifications:

- **The CNMI AP recommended the Council select alternative 2 and set the ACL at 228,000 lbs; they also recommended the Council not prematurely reduce the ACL given the fishery currently lands a small portion relative to the established ACL and the Commonwealth is still recovering from the recent typhoon.**

Regarding Territorial Bottomfish ACL Specifications:

- **The CNMI AP recommended the Council select alternative 2, which specifies 2,000 mt longline total annual catch limits and 1,000 mt transferable catch limit for bigeye per territory.**

Regarding Proposed FEP Changes:

- **The CNMI AP supported the proposed Marianas FEP changes.**

Regarding Mariana FEP Issues:

- **The CNMI AP recommended the Council consider printing the Fishermen Code of Conduct in Mandarin Chinese and Korean.**

7. Other Business

There was no other business

8. Adjournment

After completing all the items on the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.