

Island Report to the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

June 23-25, 2020

CNMI Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife Service

The purpose of this Island Report is to provide resource managers, scientists, constituents 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 **March 1st, 2020 – May 30th, 2020**.

DLNR SEA TURTLE PROGRAM

Project Manager: Lisa Sztukowski

Program consistent of a monitoring (PIRO) and an education/outreach component.

- Due to COVID-19 all scheduled outreach events have been cancelled. We are focusing our efforts on media outreach such as TV, newspaper, and radio announcements.
- Two documented poaching events were observed for the month of May.

Other sea turtle outreach materials are being developed at this time.

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

CONSERVATION ENFORCEMENT

DFW Director: Manny Pangelinan

DFW Conservation Enforcement Supervisor: Robert Magofna (Funding Source: CNMI Funds, JEA Funds)

- No updates provided

FISHERIES RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Project Manager: Michael C. Tenorio

Project: All-Other Activities within Fisheries Research Section

- Minimal programmatic activities have occurred between the month of March and April. Agency efforts have been shifted to assist with covid-19 mitigation.
- DFW staff were directed to stay home until further notice. Only essential positions were allowed to work.

Project Manager: William O. Dunn

Tagging Study within and around Managaha Marine Conservation Area (Funding source: Sport Fish Restoration and NOAA):

- Tagging information is being entered and updated.
- Approximately 1100 fish have been tagged at various locations within the Saipan lagoon
- A new tagging study is currently being planned and developed to look at fish movement within new habitats.

Project Manager: Francisco C. Villagomez

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

- FRS staff has shifted sampling focus to groupers including *Cephalopholis argus*, *C. urodeta*, *Epinephelus hexagonatus*, and *E. merra*. Samples and data are stored at DFW
- There are plans to shift sampling efforts in the next fiscal year to shallow water bottomfish species that are classified under the BMUS. These may include Giant Trevally, Black Trevally, Bluestripe Snapper, and the Lyretail Grouper
- DFW is also still targeting large and small *Scarus ghobban* and *Cheilinus trilobatus* that are outside of the previously sampled distributions
- A contract with a fish vendor was secured to increase sample collection of targeted grouper species
- A contract to section and provide age estimates for 789 *Scarus rubroviolaceus* and 24 *Cheilinus trilobatus* otoliths was completed. Preliminary analysis is being done.
- Histological work on the gonads of *S. rubroviolaceus* is planned for the next fiscal year.
- Additional microscopes and supplies for otolith age reading and histology have been acquired.
- The Life History Program manager will begin sectioning *S. ghobban* and *C. trilobatus* otoliths at the DFW lab once supplies are delivered and equipment are set up.

Project Manager: William O. Dunn

Marine Resource Assessment Program (Funding source: Sport Fish Restoration):

- Planning is ongoing for the summer Saipan Lagoon survey.
- Data from the Bird Island Sanctuary is continually being entered and analyzed.

Project Manager: Francisco C. Villagomez

Project: Fish Habitat Monitoring and Program Development

- Two out of six temperature sensors were lost/stolen in the field. The remaining temperature sensors were retrieved and redeployed after data were downloaded.
- Ten additional HOBO temperature sensors are in the procurement process and will be deployed in essential fish habitats when they become available. Water temperature data within the entire length of the Saipan lagoon and other locations will soon be available to DFW.
- A multiparameter meter to collect water quality data in essential fish habitats as well as a weather station to collect environmental data are currently in the procurement process.

FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Project Manager: Michael C. Tenorio

Project: Fish Aggregating Devices (FADS) (Funding source: Sport Fish Restoration)

- A total of 7 systems have been deployed around the islands of Saipan and Tinian. Plans for additional deployments are scheduled for the month of July.
- FAD ropes have been procured and are being acquired.

FISHERIES DATA SECTION

Section Supervisor: Jude Lizama

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

- Commercial invoice collection is ongoing. Data collection paused on March 17 and resumed on May 6. For this reporting period, we identified that there are 16 sellers and 196 buyers in the CNMI based on business listings from CNMI Department of Commerce as of September, 2019. Of the 16 sellers, we are currently only collecting from 9. 1 among the 7 is on Tinian and the other 6 are on Saipan and are being located.
- Shore-based creel surveys are ongoing. Surveys paused on March 17 and resumed on May 6. Missed sample days from mid-March to April are being conducted when possible during this year's second quarter. Due to curfew hours being exercised to prevent the spread of COVID-19, night surveys are not being conducted since no one should be out past 10 PM.
- Boat-based creel surveys are ongoing. Surveys paused on March 17 and resumed on May 6. Missed sample days from mid-March to April are being conducted when possible during this year's second quarter. Due to curfew hours being exercised to prevent the spread of COVID-19, whole-day surveys are not being conducted since no one should be out past 10 PM. The sampling design also prevents all scheduled surveys from being conducted since consecutive surveys are not permissible.
- Seafood import data collection has paused since March 17. Other fishery data collections take priority due to limited staff and temporal coverage of surveys as well as the Saipan International Airport being used for COVID-19 testing.
- A vacancy has been announced for a creel surveyor and closes on May 20. This position and an additional one will guarantee there are enough staff to dedicate day and night crews to minimize fatigue, sample all catch from fishing tournaments, and sample all catch from fishing exemptions and trips from the Northern Islands.

AQUATIC EDUCATION

Program Manager: Gina B. Tomokane

Project: Aquatic Education & Outreach Program (Funding source: Sport Fish Restoration)

- The Federal Program Coordinator performed outreach at the Marianas fishing and Seafood Festival on October 12, 2019
- The Federal Program Coordinator performed outreach at the Rota Fishing Derby held on November 9-10, 2019
- Three different Fish Posters are currently being distributed amongst fishermen as well as the general public.
- The Federal Program Coordinator performed outreach on Fisheries Project at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library for the 3-Day Birthday celebration of the library as well as the Community Aquarium.

- The Federal Program participated in the Basic/Advance Hybrid Grants Management Training that was held in Guam on January 14-17, 2020. This training was held by the Wildlife Sport Fish Restoration Program.
- The Federal Program Coordinator also performed outreach and assisted at the Saipan Fisherman Association Kids Shoreline Derby on January 25, 2020.

MARINE PROTECTED AREA

Program Manager: Kevin Camacho

Project: Marine Protected Area (MPA) Coordination (NOAA CRI)

- A new poster board for outreach demonstrations was created to replace last fiscal year's poster board.
- Presented at the Island-wide STEM fair held at the Marianas High School campus on March 14, 2020.
- Submitted the CNMI-NOAA CRCP NA progress report for the period of October 2019- March 2020 on April 8, 2020.

BOATING ACCESS PROGRAM:

Boating Access Program Supervisor: Vicente A. Camacho

Project: Boating Access Program

- **Smiling Cove Marine Dock Facility and launching ramps (Funding source: Sport Fish Restoration)**
 - a. Continue daily maintenance and monitoring of Smiling Cove Marina facility and launching ramps
 - b. Continued the weekend work duty to closely monitor the marina and to provide services to SCM tenants when needed
 - c. Worked on the FY2021 Grant Proposal
- **Tinian Marina**
 - a. Continue ground maintenance services on Tinian boat launching ramp and marina facility
 - b. Continue the collaboration with FEMA Rep. and PA.
- **Rota Marina**
 - a. Continue ground maintenance services on Rota West Harbor Marina facility.
 - b. Continue the collaboration with FEMA Rep. and PA.

Legislative Activities

- S.B. No. 21-24: "To amend 2 CMC § 5631 to allow surround nets (chenchulun umesugon) in the Third Senatorial District during Bigeye Scad (Atulai) seasonal run." *Status: On May 22, 2020, The House passed the Senate Bill No. 21-24 with amendments. Members amended the Bill to also include Gill Nets. Also, members removed the original intent from Bigeye Scad to all species. Bill is now with the Senate.*
- H.B. No. 21-28: "To prohibit the sale, offer for sale, and distribution in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands of sunscreen containing oxybenzone and octinoxate without a prescription from a licensed healthcare provider." *Status: No action as of June 1st. 2020*

- H.B. 21-38: “To establish a one-day non-resident sport fishing license fee in the CNMI; and for other purposes.” Introduced by House Natural Resource Chairman Rep. Antonio San. Nicolas Borja seeks to amend Title 2, Division 5, Chapter 1 of the Commonwealth Code by adding a new section 5109 to implement a one-day non-resident sport fishing license fee in the CNMI. *Status: No action as of June 1st. 2020.*