

**181st. Meeting of the
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
Laniákea YWCA, Honolulu, HI**

CNMI Island Report

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 **October 1, 2019. – February 29th., 2020.**

DLNR SEA TURTLE PROGRAM

Project Manager: Lisa Sztukowski

Public Outreach Specialist: Carey Demapan

Field Technicians: James Roberto, Lucio Aldan

- The outreach program has conducted 5 events reaching approximately 670 people.
- We regularly update the CNMI Sea Turtle Program Facebook Page
- Fourteen beach signs displaying sea turtle rules and regulations have been posted in 10 beach locations.
- Media (TV, newspaper, radio) outreach is ongoing.
- The Sea Turtle Education Curriculum is completed. We intend to introduce this curriculum to PSS during the upcoming Island-Wide teacher workshop
- File activity from Oct-Jan,
 - Tracked 5 individual sea turtle
 - Observed 14 nests
 - Had 7 hotline calls and 3 poaching events

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

CONSERVATION ENFORCEMENT

DFW Director: Manny Pangelinan

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

The DFW Conservation Enforcement report covers enforcement activities conducted within CNMI and Federal waters. Enforcement of federally managed species is conducted through a Joint Enforcement Agreement with NOAA-OLE. The following are the activities performed within the months of October 2019 to February 2020:

Between the months of September 2019 to October 2019, the Conservation Enforcement Officers were tasked to performed local enforcement activities. Patrols are performed to show our presence and to monitor for violation of local ESA for pouching of the fruit bat and regulated species, and illegal fishing activities. During this period, our conservation enforcement officers intercepted five illegal fishermen fishing at Tank Beach Marine Sanctuary. Vehicles, fishing gears, fish and lobsters caught were confiscated. Each violator was issued citation and fine amounting to a total of \$3,000.00. These activities were performed in collaboration with NOAA-OLE counterparts.

On October 26th, 2019, our Conservation Enforcement Officers responded to a possible illegal sea of turtle. During their investigation, they confiscated suspected green sea turtle meat products. A citation was issued, and the case was referred to the CNMI Criminal Investigation Division for prosecution.

Vessel issue have hampered in-water activities in the month of November. The Enforcement Safeboat had issues with its throttle control, and requires replacement. We are working on procuring repair services for this issue. Additionally, the Enforcement 17ft vessel is also experiencing issues with its lower unit, and required replacement as well. This mechanical issue was fixed in latter part of January 2020. This allowed for limited in-water work to continue through this reporting period. The following is a list of activities performed for the month of November & December:

November 2019

- Execution Priority 1 – ESA
 - Justice – 27 hours of 80 approved hours
 - Dockside – 9 hours of 300 approved regular hours

December 2020

- Execution Priority 1 – ESA (Total Approved Hours 80 hours)
 - Justice – 53 hours of 80 approved hours
 - Dockside – 132 hours of 300 approved regular hours
- Execution Priority 2 – Lacey Act
 - Lacey Act – 42 hours of 100 hours

No JEA enforcement activities is reported herein since the report for the month of January 2020 is being finalized.

FISHERIES RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Project Manager: Michael C. Tenorio

Project: All-Other Activities within Fisheries Research Section

- DFW participated in the CJMT EIS proposed revisions meeting with Department of Defense.
- DFW continues to provide assistance to the coral propagation project. DFW staff assists with the cleaning, maintenance of the coral trees and data collection.
- A meeting was held with the Joint Region Marianas (JRM) to discuss the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) for the CNMI. Discussions were held about recent research efforts by the military and possible collaboration with CNMI natural resource agencies
- DFW provided spear fishing safety information to students at the CNMI Daok Academy Youth Fishing Club
- DFW provided outreach and assistance in the fishing tournaments within the CNMI;
 - a. 1st Annual Shore Casting Tournament
 - b. Wahoo in the Marianas Fishing Tournament

Project Manager: William O. Dunn

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

- Contracts were completed with a highliner hook and line fisherman and a gill net fisherman
- Fishing and tagging with Floy t-bar tags is ongoing with two fishing methods: gill/surround net and hook and line.
- Several tagged fish were recaptured by local fishermen.
- Approximately 900 fish have been tagged at various locations within the Saipan lagoon
- Outreach efforts are being conducted at various community events. Posters and handouts have been handed out to various fishermen and vendors.

Project Manager: Francisco C. Villagomez

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

- Hired a new Fisheries Biologist who will be managing the Life History Program after recently completing his Master's Degree
- 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
- New fishing locations and strategies are being investigated to increase catch of these target grouper species
- A contract to section and provide age estimates for 800 *Scarus rubroviolaceus* otoliths has been secured and awarded to Brett Taylor, PhD of Pacific Otolith Services
- 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 are currently in the procurement process.
- The Life History Program manager will begin sectioning *S. ghobban* and *C. trilobatus* otoliths at the DFW lab once supplies are delivered

Project Manager: William O. Dunn

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

- Multiple survey dives have been conducted in-support of the Coral Nursery project being led by one of DFW's local partners
- Bird Island underwater surveys have been conducted with more surveys planned once sea conditions stabilize
- Sampling design and planning underway for the expansion of DFW's underwater data collection activities to allow increased coverage, including shallow-water nursery habitats, such as seagrass beds
- Evaluation and analysis of existing datasets currently ongoing

Project Manager: Francisco C. Villagomez

Project: Fish Habitat Monitoring and Program Development

- Project leader for this project left DFW. A new project manager will take over this project.
- Two out of six temperature sensors have been 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.
- There are plans to expand data collection activities once new equipment is procured
- 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)

- The contract for deployment has been completed and the notice to proceed has been issued to the vendor. A meeting was held with the contractor to discuss deployment requirements.
- A total of 8 systems have been rigged and are ready for deployment.
- The contract for fad ropes is still being processed.

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. DFW has resumed data collection from vendors who previously provided invoices to Micronesian Environmental Services. Vendors who never have reported to either are being visited by DFW staff to inform them of the mandatory reporting regulation conditions. Business licenses are also being examined to get an accurate total of vendors in the CNMI.
- Shore-based creel surveys are ongoing. Opportunistic surveys are also being conducted on eastern Saipan to capture more coral reef species and spearfishing data.

- Boat-based creel surveys have resumed since last reporting period. Opportunistic surveys are also being conducted at night to capture more bottomfish fishing effort and catch data.
- Seafood import data collection is ongoing and is entered as they are available. Export declarations are often missing important information necessary for data entry, so only declarations with complete information are entered.
- SFR-funded staff have been reduced to two data agents. Two additional positions have been approved for vacancy announcement.

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)

- Attended the CNMI-NOAA CRCP Coral Priority Meetings on Fishery Management and on Coral Restoration on November 12, 2019 held at the NOAA office.
- Submitted the CNMI-NOAA CRCP NA progress report for the period of April 2019-Sept 2019 on November 13, 2019.
- Submitted the CNMI NOAA CRCP Comprehensive report for the period of October 2017 – Sept 2019 on December 17, 2019.
- Public school outreach was performed at Garapan Elementary School (GES) on December 4, 2019.
- Other public schools outreach scheduled later in December and January were rescheduled with tentative dates for February 2020 barring inclement weather.
- PowerPoint presentations used last year are undergoing visual and other related changes based on teacher/substitute (or student) teachers (or assistants) feedback from outreach performed in the previous fiscal year. New outreach materials are being created to better simplify and educate people on “Climate Change in the CNMI” and “Marine Debris in the CNMI”.

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 maintenance services on Saipan Launching Ramps
 - b. Continue daily maintenance and monitoring of Smiling Cove Marina facility
 - c. Continued the weekend work duty to closely monitor the marina and to provide services to SCM tenants when needed
 - d. Repair of Gangway #3 ramp has been completed.
 - e. Continue the operation of the Marina. Issued 16 Notice of Renewal Letters to current tenants and processed four Lease Renewals
 - f. Acquired needed equipment for operational use around Smiling Cove Marina Facility
- **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. Continued the collaboration with Army Corp. of Engineer (ACOE)
 - b. Received the approval of the Nationwide Permit for the requested change order on Rota West Harbor Marina Rehabilitation Project.