



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

Wednesday, September 25, 2019

Hyatt Hotel

Garapan, Saipan, CNMI

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

CNMI-Marianas FEP Advisory Panel (AP) Vice-Chair Richard Farrell opened the meeting. AP members in attendance included: Perry Mesgnon, Cecilio Raiukiulipiy, Jun Yamagishi, Ray Dela Cruz, Lawrence Concepcion, Clay Tam (AP Chair), Eddie Ebisui III (Hawaii AP Member)

Also in attendance was: Joshua DeMello, Marlowe Sabater, Amy Vandehey and Floyd Masga (Council Staff); Justin Hospital and Mia Iwane (NMFS PIFSC); Sunny Bak-Hospital (Council Contractor); Scott Bloom (NMFS PIRO); Gus Kaipat, Ray Roberto and Lei Kaipat (CNMI DLNR); Michael Tenorio (DFW)

### **2. Review of the last AP meeting and recommendations**

The Vice Chair provided a report of the last AP meeting and recommendations. The AP made a recommendation for increasing its tuna allocation limit to up to 2,000 metric tons. The Council decided to keep the tuna allocation at 1,000 metric tons at its 178<sup>th</sup> meeting. The AP also made a recommendation to request the US Coast Guard's assistance in the deployment of Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs). The Council made this recommendation and drafted a letter to the US Coast Guard, who responded that they were willing to help with deployment of the CNMI FADs. However, the CNMI's DFW declined the offer, noting they have the funding to do deploy the FADs.

One AP member noted that they needed to be provided more information and communication as he didn't feel that he didn't know what was happening and would like to be updated. The AP decided that there was a need to invite the DLNR and DFW to provide updates and presentations to the AP meetings and work on this communication. The DLNR representative said that the AP may provide a letter to the DLNR to request these meetings and noted that there are things that are happening, including the repair of the marinas. DFW Staff noted that they hear what the AP is saying and are working on some of the issues. The AP Chair noted that communication is the key and if the CNMI AP needs assistance, he was willing to help reach out and provide assistance.

### **3. 180<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting Action Items and Issues**

#### **a. Territorial Bottomfish Stock Assessment**

Council staff presented on the Territorial Bottomfish Stock Assessment developed by NMFS Pacific Fisheries Science Center. He explained how the stock assessment was done and the results of the stock assessment. He noted that the bottomfish stocks in the CNMI was relatively in good shape, but the uncertainty in the model for CNMI is large. While no overfishing is occurring and the stock is not overfished, the model is really interpreting the data used and the potential Annual Catch Limit (ACL) was reduced to somewhere near a third of the current ACL.

There is a need to ensure that the CNMI bottomfish data is solid to make sure that the ACL is appropriate for the fishery.

Discussion centered around the data collection efforts for bottomfish in CNMI. Questions were raised regarding the Federal permit issued for bottomfish and the logbooks that are supposed to be used. It was asked why the Federal data wasn't used for the model. Staff responded that the data set wasn't complete enough to be used.

Council Member Gourley asked if the bottomfish stocks should be split up into shallow and deep. Staff said that if there is an ecological unit that could be used that made sense, it might be useful. Gourley said that splitting it up would decrease the data and it might get worse. Staff said a different stock assessment method would be used so there isn't an overall prediction that could be made either way. He noted that the Council is working with the NMFS PIFSC on how they could split up the management unit species.

An AP member asked how Hawaii deals with data for stock assessments. The AP Chair replied that the Hawaii Commercial Marine License feeds the stock assessment model, as well as fishery independent data that provides fishing information into the model.

#### **b. PIFMAPS**

Council staff presented on the Pacific Islands Fisheries Monitoring and Assessment Planning Summit (PIFMAPS) held in Honolulu, Hawaii in August. The goal of the workshop was to improve the data with the eventual hope of getting near-real time data for the proper management of ACLs. He noted that the CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife Director and staff were involved in the summit, which discussed the data collection systems in each of the island areas, including creel surveys, commercial receipt books, and commercial biosampling programs. A result of the summit is that the review panel recommended a survey statistician provide guidance for optimizing the inshore creel survey design through the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). For the boat-based creel survey, the Federal Management Unit Species (MUS) stocks, particularly bottomfish, and consider mandatory self-reporting by fisher (through electronic reporting). The commercial receipt book was also recommended to utilize electronic reporting and improve species resolution and provide a trip ID to both vendor and fisher data.

The Vice-Chair noted that the mandatory commercial reporting outreach is challenging as many folks didn't come to the outreach meetings. He asked if there is a better way to get participation. Sabater said that was something that needs to be worked on.

AP members asked how Hawaii's stock assessment model and data was dealt with. A Hawaii AP member replied that it was a lot of work and sacrifice by the fishermen to work with the scientists to improve the data through going to meetings and working on fishery independent data. The AP Chair added that there were many steps which included complete and accurate reporting by the fishermen. He said that it was a steep learning curve and the CNMI is in a similar situation right now and said it is going to be rough to get through it but it is worth it. He also said that the fishermen need to make sure that they don't short change themselves and they should document their participation in the fishery in case future allocations are used by

management. By not reporting, you are only hurting yourself. Staff noted that you can't participate in the fishery under allocation if you don't have a catch history. There was some discussion on how to split the catch history amongst captain and crew, but it was noted that it all depends on how everyone wants to do it individually.

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

##### **a. Coordinator Report**

Council staff reported on the fishery activities and happenings in the CNMI that will be reported to the Council at its 180<sup>th</sup> meeting in October. He reported on the mandatory data reporting regulations and the public meetings held on each of the islands, and all three islands supported the regulations. He also said that a size regulation was adopted previously and the regulations are being worked on. His legislative report noted that a surround net bill was introduced as well as a sunscreen bill.

He also reported on the bottomfish fishery development project and noted the training was done for the community earlier this summer. He also said that there was a Garapan Fishing Base improvement project that completed its first phases for designwork to repair and strengthen the fishing base ramp. There was also a project that would provide ice to fishermen in exchange for fishing data.

Staff provided a presentation on the education and outreach initiatives by the Council over the summer, including providing outreach at the fishing tournaments in CNMI, and noted that more tournaments are still coming up and he will be providing assistance and outreach at those as well. The High School Summer Course was also conducted again this summer that had guest presenters and hands-on activities to provide education on fisheries, management, and science.

##### **b. 2018 Mariana Archipelago Fisheries Economic Survey**

NMFS PIFSC staff provided an update on a fisheries economic survey conducted in the CNMI and Guam. Preliminary results were presented for the AP's consideration, noting the final report is being worked on.

#### **5. Island Fishery Issues & Activities**

##### **a. Issues**

The Vice-Chair noted that the marinas in Tinian, Rota and Saipan are in bad shape and repairs need to be done. It is unsafe in Tinian as people are getting hurt using makeshift ramps and docks. An AP member added that there are parts of the Smiling Cove marina that are unsafe as well.

The CNMI AP also reviewed the Marine Conservation Plan and was concerned with the process and transparency of projects that are developed and funded. One idea is to provide information and feedback to the community on the process and past projects.

The CNMI was concerned with the FADs and are looking into developing community FADs in each of the island areas. The CNMI DFW is working on putting together a FAD to provide for the community FAD on Tinian and plans on approaching the US Coast Guard to assist in deployment. The AP Chair noted that Hawaii AP members are willing to assist the CNMI AP in

creating community FADs and offered the Hawaii AP's support and help. The Vice-Chair asked if the fishing associations on Tinian and Rota can help with the FAD design and construction. Tenorio replied that they should talk about it.

An AP member noted that the Lunar Calendars used to include the schools and asked if it could be done again in the future.

#### **b. Activities**

NMFS PIFSC staff provided a project proposal on the socio-economic impacts of shark depredation in the Marianas. The NMFS PIFSC is working in response to members of the fishing community's concerns about the loss of catch, gear, time, etc. She is asking for fishermen to provide their perspective on their experiences and knowledge, as well as those from the resource agencies on how they understand the issue. She solicited for participation from the AP.

Council staff provided a project proposal for the biological impacts of shark depredation in the Marianas. He noted that the Council is working with a UH researcher to determine the species of sharks that are depredating the fishermen's catch in order to determine which deterrent is the best one to use. He solicited volunteers to help provide swabs from depredated fish and to use "trollpro" cameras for species identification. He said that the researcher is soliciting participation and if anyone is interested to let the Council know.

Council staff provided a report on the Hawaii AP brochure being developed. This is a redesign of the previous brochure and a template based on the Hawaii AP input. She is looking to redesign the CNMI AP brochure as well and asked if the Hawaii format was agreeable and solicited ideas for pictures and information.

#### **6. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **7. Discussion and Recommendations**

The CNMI Advisory Panel made the following recommendations:

**1. Recommends the Council request participation from the CNMI DLNR or DFW in its future meetings to ensure good communication with the AP and put them in the loop with government projects. The AP would like to assist with projects and but needs to know how to be informed of what is going on or what the government needs.**

**2. Recommends the Council include the schools in future lunar calendar development.**

#### **8. Other Business**

Council staff noted that the CNMI MCP is up next year so this is the time for the AP to get involved in what projects should be in the next MCP. The AP will work on getting a list of projects that were completed under past MCPs as well.