

AGENCY REPORT

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Department of Land and Natural Resources,
Division of Fish and Wildlife
September 20th – 23rd, 2021
187th Council Meeting

This report describes the activities undertaken by the Department of Land and Natural Resources regarding fisheries and conservation during the periods of **July 1st, 2021– September 30th, 2021**. The report covers Fisheries Monitoring and Research, Resource Protection and Enforcement, and Other Fishery Activities.

Fisheries Research and Monitoring (Fisheries Data Section)

All fishery data collection programs are being performed as proposed. Staffing has improved during this reporting period. Two data technicians have been recruited and are being familiarized with the creel program. Programmatic support is provided through the efforts of the Data Officer. DFW is in the process of recruiting a Manager for the Fishery Data Section.

An update of the data collection programs activities are listed below.

a. Boat-based Creel Survey

- Surveys for the Boat-based creel are back to normal. However, surveys will be modified based on covid restrictions.
- Between the months of July to August, 35 interviews were conducted. Of those interviews, 15 were trolling, 17 were bottomfishing, 2 were spearfishing and 1 was hook and line.

b. Shore-based Creel Survey

- Surveys for the Shore-based creel are back to normal. However, surveys will be modified based on changes in covid restrictions.
- Between the months of July to August, 37 interviews were conducted. Of those interviews, 10 were cast net, 26 were hook and line fishing, 1 was spearfishing.

c. Commercial Receipt System

- Receipts have been collected from participating vendors, hotels, and restaurants up to the month of August.
- Between the months of July to August, an estimated 1,096.30lbs of bottom fish, 2,456.70lbs of reef fish, 12,916.22lbs of pelagic fish, and 169.35lbs of miscellaneous fish were sold.

Rulemaking and Legislation

- a. Updates on Mandatory data recording and reporting.
 - Meetings were held to review the draft implementation plan for the mandatory data reporting. DFW staff are work to finalizing the outreach and data collection procedures.
 - The Data Officer has been tasked with issuing the commercial fishing ID cards.

Resource Protection and Enforcement

- a. Update on Enforcement activities
 - Patrol
Dockside vessel inspections are performed at launching ramps around the island of Saipan. Shoreline patrol and inspections are conducted regularly by DFW enforcement personnel. At-Sea Vessel Patrols are conducted regularly for ESA, MSA and MMPA interactions.
 - Community interactions
Interviews with fishermen and boaters are performed when the situation is favorable. Information is collected on catch, hours spent fishing, areas fished, etc. Information on ESA, MSA, MMPA, and local fishing regulations is shared during these interactions.

Other Fishery Activities

- a. Updates on the DFW Fish life history program
 - Necessary upgrades to the fish lab have been made such as the fume hood installation to allow for safer processing of samples and the use of chemicals
 - Approximately 600 *Scarus rubroviolaceus* gonads and an additional ~200 *Cheilinus trilobatus* gonads have been processed for histology. Samples will be read and scored by DFW FRS biologist
 - The DFW Fish Life History Program will work to complete gonad and otolith assessments of fish collected in the previous years.
- b. Boating Access updates
Saipan Marina and Docks
 - July 10-11, 2021 International Fishing Derby was held at Smiling Cove Marina. A Special Event Permit was issued to Saipan Fishermen Association (SFA)
 - August 14, 2021 a Tuna Mix Fishing Derby was held at the Marina. A Special Event Permit was issued to Tasi To Table Association
 - August 28, 2021 a Mafuti Derby was held at the Marina. A Special Event Permit was issued to Inside San Halom Laguna Fishing Association (ISLA)
 - Operations and maintenance work continues for the Smiling Cove Marina.
 - Floodlights were installed at the Marina. This is part of the FEMA approved project to replace all typhoon damage floodlights.

- CNMI-DLNR/DFW had identified the required 10% share to pursue FEMA project worksheet for Smiling Cove Marina.

Tinian Marina

- Matching funds had been identified for the marina dock replacement project by management. Communication continues with the Public Assistance project representative and the consultant about how to proceed on the Tinian marina replacement project.
- Ground maintenance services are ongoing for the Tinian marina facility.

Rota Marina

- A Change Order No.1 was initiated to address additive cost in the amount of \$49,100 to cover the equipment rental and a 90-day extension.
- Three projects were scheduled for September 2021, these projects were to repaint the existing marina railing, installation of a Rota Marina signages and to cover the sinkhole near the walkway leading to the marina gangway. A total of 10k estimated cost for these projects, 100% covered by the WSFR Boating Access Program funding.
- Rota West Harbor Marina Rules and Regulation are being developed., which is a requirement of the Corrective Action Plan.
- Ground maintenance services are ongoing for the Rota marina facility.