



Report of the Guam-Marianas FEP Advisory Panel Meeting

Thursday, September 9, 2021

6:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via WebEx

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ken Borja, Guam Advisory Panel (AP) vice Chair opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m. Guam AP members in attendance included: James Borja, Myles Driscoll, Jason Miller, Judy Amesbury, Matthew Orot, Jason Biggs. Council staff Felix Reyes, Josh DeMello, and Diana Kitona provided support.

Others in attendance included: Monique Amani (Council member), Darrin Pangelinan (CILI Guam Administrator). Members of the public included: Javier Cuetos-Bueno (The Nature Conservancy) and Brett Taylor (University Of Guam Marine Lab).

2. Review of Last AP Meeting and Recommendations

Council staff presented the report of the last AP meeting held on June 10, 2021. He reviewed the recommendations made at that meeting and provided an update on the status.

3. Council Issues

A. Proposed Magnuson-Stevens Act Changes

Council staff presented a summary of proposed changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). There are three comprehensive MSA reauthorization bills that would have an impact on fisheries in the Western Pacific region, HR 4690, HR 3674, and HR 59. These bills provide for addressing climate change impacts to fisheries, reinforcing protecting essential fish habitat, and directed changes at the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and its responsibilities. He noted that there were requests for the Council's comments and solicited the Guam AP to help guide those comments.

The Guam AP noted that Guam and the other territories are considered data poor. Previous MSA legislation required Annual Catch Limits which are derived from stock assessments that use incomplete/bad data. The result is that Guam's bottomfish is now considered overfished and ridiculously low ACLs were placed on the fishery because of the MSA mandate that did not take into account Guam's situation. The same thing happened in American Samoa. The territories do not have much say in Congress or in the legislation that comes through. They said that Guam and the territories get the short end of the stick, mandated to do things like ACLs when the fisheries and data collection systems are not set up to properly implement it. The AP agreed that an increase in mandates would have a bigger impact on the data poor territorial fisheries.

B. Regional Research Priorities

Council staff presented the updates to the MSA Five-Year Research Priorities to satisfy the requirements of MSA§302(h)(7). The Cooperative Research, the Management Strategy Evaluation, Social Science and Pelagic Research priorities are integrated within this priority

document. Staff highlighted some priorities that the Guam AP might be interested in and solicited other priorities that should be addressed. The process covers 2020-2024.

The AP vice Chair said that Guam should look at how the research is done in Hawaii and the other territories. Guam is not there yet in terms of quality data but is still subject to all the regulations. The AP agreed and recommended the Council include bottomfish research as a priority for Guam.

4. Review of US Support to the Pacific Nations

Council staff presented an overview of foreign aid that the US provides to Pacific island and East Asian nations that compete with the US in fisheries. The data provided by USAID showed that in 2018 that just over \$1.6B was provided to East Asia and Oceania for economic development, agriculture, environmental protection, developmental food aid, and food security. Many of the countries under the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission are provided aid yet does not support the US in its fishery management efforts. He said it is important to note that funding is being provided to support the fisheries in other countries while continuing to see an inequitable share of the catch.

5. Tuna Quota Transfer Review and Options

Council staff reviewed the bigeye tuna (BET) quota transfer options. Under the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the territories are not provided a quota to allow for the development of a fishery. Under US fishery law, a quota was put in place for the territories to allow a certain portion to be transferable in order to provide additional fishery development opportunities for the territory. To date, only the Hawaii Longline Association has been negotiating to utilize part of the territories' quota and Guam has not taken advantage of it. These negotiations are the main way to transfer quota. However, in the MSA, there is a provision called Pacific Insular Area Fisheries Agreement (PIAFA) that would allow the territory to work with the Department of State to allow foreign countries access to fishery resources. This has not been done in the territories yet and the ability to utilize the quota for this is unknown. However, the negotiations would be much more difficult than the current process with HLA and would involve many different parties.

The AP vice Chair noted that if the governor's office does not want to go the HLA route, then they should be presented with the alternatives. It may not be tomorrow but in the future that the government can take advantage of those other opportunities. With Guam's EEZ and the presence of military training, there is a need to protect Guam's fisheries. The funding lost over the past few years has been great and could have gone to Guam's fisheries so maybe there are other avenues to get funding to do this.

An AP member was concerned that there needed to be a way to relate to the Governor on the BET quota and was concerned the Governor feels fisheries are not important. The vice Chair noted that the Council members are appointed by the Governor so they should serve as a point of contact to communicate these issues.

The AP agreed and requested the Council provide them with assistance to present all the options for the bigeye tuna quota to the Guam Governor.

6. Guam Fishermen Observations Update

Council staff noted the initiative started by the Council's Advisory Panel Chair to incorporate traditional and fishermen knowledge regarding the fishery resources into science and management. This effort includes recording fishermen's observations regarding changes in fishing and the ecosystem observed by fishermen on the water. Physical, biological, oceanographic, economic, or socio-cultural changes play an important role in determining WHY fish catch and effort may be increasing or decreasing. It is important to note these changes so that when stock assessments are developed, the data can be explained by these observations. The Council is currently working on incorporating these observations into its Annual SAFE Reports and the AP Chair encourages the Guam AP to document their observations for inclusion into these sections.

The vice Chair added that adding fishermen's observations to the science and research helps and this effort documents fishermen's knowledge now rather than later. As an example, he also noted that at a recent spearfishing derby, fishers noticed that the waters around Guam were murky and may be attributed to heavy rains and on-going construction projects.

An AP member noted an increase in boating activity in recent months. Another AP member said that last year at this time, bottomfish and trolling was good. This month it has been bad. The water became rough in spite of the forecast. He added that within 30 seconds of stopping at Rota banks, sharks were there, and he documented over 100 shark sightings in the last six outings. Earlier in the year, when the boat slowed, the fish could be landed. Now, sharks are around and hitting the troll-pro camera and lures. He said that during the Shut Up and Fish tournament, a shark hit the short corner for the first time and noted that sharks are starting to be more aggressive with the lures and they are starting to see the effects on catch.

7. Report on Mariana Archipelago-Guam FEP AP Plan Activities

Council staff reviewed the 2019-2022 Marianas FEP AP Action Plan and noted updates to the plan. He said that much of the plan had been relegated to education and outreach due to the inability of the AP to meet in person or participated due to the ongoing pandemic.

The vice Chair suggested that SSC members be asked to provide reports to the AP. He would like the SSC to communicate and consult with the AP on what they think prior to SSC meetings to help inform their recommendations.

A. Catch It, Log It Update and Report

Darrin Pangelinan, Catch It, Log It (CILI) contractor, presented an update on the project's activities and results to date in Guam. He reported on the numbers of registered fishers, postings and catches as well as on vendors who are participating in the program. The project also experienced challenges with fisher recruitment, weather impacts to fishing, and technical issues with CILI. Frequently Asked Questions were created and distributed to provide outreach on the project and the use of social media provided an additional approach. His target was over 100 fishers and ten vendors with an active 20% participation. However, he was met with some challenges as many did not feel the need to report and that their privacy was being invaded. The younger fishers tended to understand CILI and its goals so much of the data in the app came from those under 50 years old. While Deep bottomfish was the primary target of CILI, other

fishing methods were captured. To date, more than 14,000 pounds from all three fishing methods have been recorded from 109 users, 25% of which are actively using CILI.

8. Fishery Issues and Activities

There is concern with fishermen that military vessels are going back and forth and roll right up on to the fishing grounds and are scaring the fish away. An AP member observed a submarine around the southern banks from Galvez to Santa Rosa and claimed to have picked up the pings on the troll pro. During a recent fishing derby, military exercises were blamed for a bad fishing day. AP members said there needs to be a compromise between the fishermen and the military in order to coexist. The added economic impact of increased fuel at already high fuel prices to travel further or around military closures hurts catch, effort, and feeding the community. The AP would like to see more communication with the military.

An AP member was concerned about radiation and water quality because of the Fukushima incident in Japan and the previous nuclear testing in Micronesia. Council staff said the discussion on radioactivity and contamination was discussed during the Council's previous Fishing Industry Advisory Committee (FIAC) meeting, including discussion on the Runit Dome and nuclear testing radiation. The FIAC made a recommendation to the Council and a letter was sent to the Department of Interior who responded that they are providing funding for monitoring with the Marshall Islands. Council staff also noted that Japan is working on studying the effects of the Fukushima radiation and the potential release of water from the nuclear power plant into the water. They plan to release contaminated water into holding tanks and will grow fish there to monitor the effects of the contamination on the fish. Japan is more dependent on seafood than anywhere else in the world so it is likely that they are taking precautions.

9. Public Comment

Javier Cuetos-Bueno introduced himself to the AP as a fisheries scientist with The Nature Conservancy and previously worked at the UOG Marine Lab. He noted that he is eager to support Guam's fishing community through partnership efforts to promote local pelagic fishing to enhance food and economic security. Following discussions with DAWR, he said that he will soon be testing new technologies to enhance Guam FADs with echosounders to provide live location and productivity information to both fishers and managers. This will improve FAD management and fishing efficiency and profitability. The hope is to develop the technologies or framework that could then be easily replicated in other jurisdictions.

An AP member asked if the new technology is able to differentiate between sharks and tunas as well as the differences between sharks and marlin.

Cuetos-Bueno said the sounders can tell the difference between different species of tunas but not sharks yet. He hopes the tuna information will help but the technology is not yet ready for the development of algorithms for those species.

10. Discussion and Recommendations

The Guam Advisory Panel made the following recommendations:

Regarding proposed MSA changes:

- The Guam AP was concerned that they are data poor and that any of the increase in mandates would have an even bigger impact on the data poor territorial fisheries.

Regarding research priorities:

- The Guam AP recommends the Council ensure that bottomfish is included in the priorities

Regarding Guam fishery issues:

- The Guam AP requests the Council assist Guam Council Members in providing Gov Guam a presentation on Guam's fisheries and the options for the tuna quota and laying out other options.
- The Guam AP requests the Council assist the AP in identifying a military liaison for the fishing community to talk about coordinating efforts between fishers (and tournaments) and military activities, especially during local fishing tournaments. Further the AP request the Council work with the military to issue a map of the sea and land area, highlighted where the coordinates are for the trainings beyond the notice to mariners issued by the US Navy.

11. Other Business

A. Community Funding Opportunities and Unfunded Projects

On March 11, 2021, President Joe Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. This is a \$1.9 trillion economic relief stimulus package that allocated \$3 billion to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to invest in infrastructure innovation and workforce training to create good-paying American jobs and strengthen the nation's global economic competitiveness. This investment will include commercial and recreational fishing, aquaculture, and the businesses and communities that depend on them. Similar to the EDA's program, the Council expects that there will be more funding opportunities that will come down the line. Members of the Advisory Panel should consider working on compiling a list of fishery development projects to compete for these funding opportunities.

B. AP Membership

The Guam AP vice Chair said Michael Dueñas is no longer on the Council and would make a great fit as he is already up to date on all of the issues. There is an open alternate seat and the AP should encourage him to apply for the position.

Meeting adjourned at: 8:16 pm