

AGENCY REPORT

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Department of Land and Natural Resources,

Division of Fish and Wildlife

March 22<sup>nd</sup>. – 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022190<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting

This report describes the activities undertaken by the Department of Land and Natural Resources regarding fisheries and conservation during the periods of **January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022– March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022**. 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. One data technician has been recruited and is being familiarized with the creel program. Programmatic support is provided through the efforts of the Data Officer who has been the Acting Manager for a year now. DFW is in the process of recruiting a Data Analyst for the Fishery Data Section.

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

**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 January to February, 14 interviews were conducted. Of those interviews, 7 were trolling, 5 were bottomfishing, 0 was spearfishing and 2 was hook and line.

**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 January to February, 25 interviews were conducted. Of those interviews, 1 were cast net, 22 were hook and line fishing, 2 were spearfishing.

**Commercial Receipt System**

- Receipts have been collected from participating vendors, hotels, and restaurants up to the month of March.
- Between January 1<sup>st</sup> to March 2<sup>nd</sup>, an estimated 2,535.65lbs of bottom fish, 2,671.36lbs of reef fish, 19,840.76lbs of pelagic fish, and 236lbs of miscellaneous fish were sold.

**Fish Habitat Survey and Monitoring**

- 11 temperature data loggers were deployed inside and outside of the Saipan lagoon

- Data collected will provide temperature information from north to south of the lagoon.
- Salinity, conductivity, and pH data were also collected for each deployment site.

### **Fish Life History Program**

- Additional fish gonad sample will be shipped to Hawaii for histology

### **Rulemaking and Legislation**

Updates on Mandatory data recording and reporting.

- Revisions to the draft Mandatory Data Recording and Reporting Implementation Plan has been made and will be forwarded to appropriate parties for final review.

### **CNMI CARES Act**

Updates on the 2<sup>nd</sup> CARES act program

- Revisions have been completed on the CNMI spend plan to be consistent with the Consolidated Appropriations Act, the CARES Act, and NOAA's guidance.
- The revised CNMI spend plan was submitted to Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

### **Boating Access**

Saipan Marina and Docks

- Operations and maintenance work continues for the Smiling Cove Marina.

Tinian Marina

- Ground maintenance services are ongoing for the Tinian marina facility.

Rota Marina

- Rota West Harbor Marina rehabilitation project has been completed
- Rota West Harbor Marina Rules and Regulation is still being developed.
- Ground maintenance services are ongoing for the Rota marina facility.

### **DLNR Sea Turtle Program**

- Beach surveys continue, but no nests were found during this period.
- The outreach specialist has left and we are looking for a replacement.
- Advertising continues to run, but few new ads have been created

### **DFW FAD Program**

- 6 FAD systems are currently active within CNMI waters. DFW is in the process of procuring materials and services to replace missing and service active FAD systems.
- DFW participated in a meeting with fishermen to discuss the DFW FAD program and consider options to reconfigure site locations around the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

- DFW plans to meet with fishermen from each island to gather information on potential sites for relocation.

### **Resource Protection and Enforcement**

#### Permitting

- 88 Cast-net permits have been since the beginning of the year.
- No Net Exemptions permits have been issued during this reporting period.

#### Patrol Dockside/Beach

- Dockside vessel inspections are performed at launching ramps around the island of Saipan. Shoreline inspections are conducted regularly by DFW enforcement personnel. At-Sea Vessel Patrols are not being conducted as enforcement vessels are inoperable.

#### Citations

- No citations have been issued during this reporting period