

AGENCY REPORT

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Department of Land and Natural Resources,
Division of Fish and Wildlife
September 1, 2022 – November 31, 2022
193rd Council Meeting

This report describes the activities undertaken by the Department of Land and Natural Resources regarding fisheries and conservation during the periods of **September 1st, 2022 and November 31st, 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. This report covers 09/01/2022 - 11/10/2022.

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

Boat-based Creel Survey

- Between the months of September to November, 8 interviews were conducted. Of those interviews, 1 was trolling, 0 were bottomfishing, 2 were spearfishing and 5 were hook and line for Atulai.
- Due to being understaffed it is difficult to meet survey days when scheduled.
- Two survey days have also been voided due to bad weather and were not able to be made up as it occurred at the end of the month
- A new person was hired under the WPacFIN Data Technician position and has just started on our team as of 10/24/2022.

Shore-based Creel Survey

- Between the months of September to November, 21 interviews have been conducted and all 21 interviews were hook and line fishing.
- Due to being understaffed it is difficult to meet survey days when scheduled and data entry has fallen behind. There are currently no data techs under WSFR and there are 4 vacancies which we recently started interviewing for.

Commercial Receipt System

- Receipts have been collected from participating vendors, hotels, and restaurants up to the month of October.
- Between September to October, an estimated 452.35 lbs of bottom fish, 1,056.25 lbs of reef fish, 7,312.34 lbs of pelagic fish, 34.50 lbs of invertebrates and 1,095.50 lbs of miscellaneous fish were sold.

- Miscellaneous fish data consists of 100% Atulai (Bigeye Scad).
- Due to being understaffed, data collection and entry has fallen behind but should get back on track shortly as new hires start to come in.

Marine Resource Assessment

- Scuba training services are being acquired for professional staff.
- Continued development of electronic FishID flashcard sets for DFW staff to practice fish identification skills.
- Developed a standard operating procedure (SOP) for this year's scheduled underwater visual census (UVC) of Saipan's southern lagoon.
- Conducted several pilot surveys to test survey methodology and staff competency. Adjusted SOP and UVC methodology based on results of pilot surveys.

Fish Life History Program

In 2013, DFW staff began life history data collection of the Blue-Barred Parrotfish *Scarus ghobban*. A total of 887 *S. ghobban* were sampled from commercial fish markets and DFW staff. Majority of samples (>70%) were purchased at commercial fish markets on Saipan from 2013 to 2016. Gonad and otolith samples were extracted and stored for later processing. All gonad samples were sent to the John Burns Medical School at the University of Hawaii for histology in 2022. DFW staff is currently conducting histological analysis of *S. ghobban* to determine reproductive status. DFW staff is also in the process of sectioning otolith samples for age determination.

CNMI Fisheries Relief Program

Updates on the 2nd CNMI Fisheries relief program

- As of August 19th,
 - i. Saipan - 1,149 out of 1,500 applications were received.
 - ii. Tinian - 347 out of 500 applications were received.
 - iii. Rota - 307 out of 500 applications were received.

Sustainable Fishing Funds Update

- SSF-IX Garapan Fishing Base Revetment project is delayed due to compliance issues with regulatory requirements.

Mandatory Licensing and Reporting Update

- Comments have been received on the latest draft and staff are working on incorporating those comments into the plan.
- Updates are also being made on the commercial fishing application, sales forms, and harvest forms.

Boating Access Update

Saipan Marina and Docks

- The marina manager continues to work closely with the Public Assistance Office (PAO) on Project Worksheet #88.
- Completed the installation of 10 Surveillance Cameras.
- Work on the replacement of Gate #2 Gangway is underway.
- Operations and facilities maintenance work continues for the Smiling Cove Marina.

Tinian Marina

- Continued the ground maintenance services for the Tinian marina facility.
- The BA program manager is working closely with PAO on Project Worksheet 104. The ITB was announced for the upgrades to the Tinian Marina parking lot, construction of restroom facilities, and other infrastructure improvements. A vendor was selected and a notice to proceed was issued on October 31, 2022.
- An ITB was also announced for the Tinian docking replacement project, and the vendor selection process is pending.

Rota Marina

- Continued the ground maintenance services for the Rota West Harbor Marina facility.