



WESTERN
PACIFIC
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FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Report of the Guam-Mariana Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel Meeting

Thursday, September 8, 2022

6:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. (ChSt)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ken Borja, Guam Advisory Panel (AP) vice Chair opened the meeting at 6:36 p.m. Guam AP members in attendance included Jason Miller, Judith Amesbury, James Borja, Michael Duenas, Myles Driscoll, Tatiana Talavera, and Clay Tam (AP Chair). Matthew Orot was absent.

Others in attendance were: Felix Reyes, Joshua DeMello, Zach Yamada, Matthew Seeley, Floyd Masga (Council Staff); Danika Kleiber, Mia Iwane, and Marlowe Sabater (NMFS PIFSC); David Benavente (MINA)

2. Review of Last AP Meeting and Recommendations

Council staff gave a review of the June 9, 2022 AP recommendations, and provided an updated on the status of those recommendations

3. Guam Fishery Issues and Activities

A. Pacific Remote Island Coalition Expansion Request

At its 191st Meeting, the Council discussed a proposal by the Pacific Remote Island Coalition (PRIC) to expand and rename the Pacific Remote Island and Marine National Monument (PRIMNM). Council staff will present a review of this proposal to the AP.

Council staff reported that Governor Lourdes Leon Guerrero's staff expressed hesitation on supporting Hawaii Governor David Ige's position to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. Governor Leon Guerrero supports the protection and preservation of the marine environment, but opposed the expansion of the PRIMNM. In formulating her position, she considered the positions offered by Congresswoman Amata of American Samoa and the possible impacts on Pacific island based fisheries.

The AP Vice Chair requested that the Governor's office provide updates on their position of the proposal. Staff said Chelsa Muna-Brecht, Council member and cabinet member, point of contact to communicate with as well as select officials within the Government of Guam. With the Governor's position on the PRI expansion, there may be an opportunity for her to consider signing on to the HLA BET quota agreement.

B. Aquaculture Amendment

Zach Yamada, Council staff, presented the alternatives for managing aquaculture in the Western Pacific region. He provided an overview and background on past Council actions and presented the alternatives that the Council will consider for final action. Alternatives included 1) no action; 2) a limited entry aquaculture program with limited gear types, commercial and research permits for 10 and 3 years respectively, and limited allowable species and marine

aquaculture systems; and 3) an expanded limited entry aquaculture program with extended commercial and research permit terms for 20 and 10 years, no prohibition on marine aquaculture systems and allowable to culture all native species respective to the island regions.

The AP asked if there is a way for the public to make a decision and if this is regionalized. Does Guam and CNMI have a say in the process since Guam has invasive species and restricted areas. Council staff said that this action would place the management framework to require project operators to consult with the community. He said that under alternatives 2 and 3, both alternatives would not allow the culture of invasive species specific to the different island regions.

The Vice-Chair said this is more attune with oysters and others, but with fishing between shipping lanes, military closures, and rough waters, there is little room in the Micronesia area. With the alternatives which will allow us to have a say, we would like the most restrictive option.

Staff said that clarification will be provided. He was unable at this time to confirm if this will allow GMOs and any potential developments. He said that the framework allows the Council to use the bottom up approach. And there is no current aquaculture management in the western pacific.

An AP member agreed with what was said. Several years ago in a Council meeting in Saipan, an aquaculture group presented using the same concept as what was being done in Kona with amberjack but there were no updates provided to date.

Another AP member said the Council has been talking about managing aquaculture. But due to COVID, folks started looking for other industries. The only aquaculture Guam has is near shore.

The AP member said if a decision has to be made at this time, they prefer Alternative 2, based on the restrictions noted. Opening up to this type of fishing will result in low fish prices and that will hurt fishermen. Another member said that potential operations will have to consider the effects of storms, wind and current in the region. They said they were hesitant with the potential for fish escapes that may mingle with local species. The Vice-Chair added they want to make it fair for anyone who wants to come in and develop aquaculture in Guam. The AP Chair asked whether the AP or the local community will be able to weigh in later in the application process. Applicants might want to use GMO or hybridized species that we may not know the impacts of.

Staff said that Alternative 2 has a shorter permit period, it would limit the type of potential offshore aquaculture. Developers will be looking at opportunity areas using feasibility studies around island areas.

C. Young Fishermen's Development Act

Joshua DeMello, Council staff, reported that the bipartisan **Young Fishermen's Development Act** ([H.R.1240](#), [S.496](#)) established a national grant program to support initiatives to educate, train, and mentor young and beginning fishermen.

The bill established a program that allows fishing associations, universities, tribal organizations, and others to compete for grant funding to train young commercial fishermen in sustainable fishing and business practices. It solidified and united current piecemeal training efforts into a cohesive, national initiative to advance this critical mission. The program's \$2 million annual budget is funded through fines paid by fishermen who have violated fishing rules. The grants cannot be used to purchase fishing permits, quota, or other harvesting rights.

“NOAA - The office shall make competitive matching grants to support local and regional training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for young fishermen, including programs, workshops, and services related to (1) seamanship, navigation, electronics, and safety; (2) vessel and engine care, maintenance, and repair; and (3) sustainable fishing practices. Grant recipients must be a collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of public or private entities. Grants may not be used to purchase a fishing license, permit, quota, or other harvesting right.”

Staff reported that Guam's Sea Grant recently became a Sea Grant college. The AP said that Guam should impose on its director Austin Shelton and associate director Fran Castro and have them go out and try to get the funds. There is only \$2m available. The more we can put funds into the region the better.

The Vice-Chair said the AP should communicate with the University of Guam (UOG) Sea Grant to encourage participation and help fishermen to apply for those funds. An AP member said that he was on the Guam Sea Grant Advisory Board and noted that they may not have the fishing community's best interest in mind.

D. 2021 BMUS Guam August Meetings

Council staff, Matthew Seeley, presented a status update on the territorial bottomfish management unit species (BMUS) revision, as well as an update on the Guam Council family meeting held in August 2022.

The Vice-Chair said that more discussion was necessary on the length-based status determination criteria (SDC) being proposed through the BMUS revision. There is a need to understand what data needs to be collected and the method to collect that data. Additionally, monitoring efforts will need to be improved if this proposed method is the preferred option after initial action. The vice-chair said that location and length may not be accurate or always representative of the average due to fisher preference for specific locations, depth and fishing seasons.

Staff noted that the current plan is to offer a suite of SDC, which allows for flexibility in the assessments when identifying the best scientific information available.

E. Report on Council Equity and Environmental Justice Guam Meetings

NMFS PIFSC staff Mia Iwane and Danika Kleiber reported the outcomes of meetings on EEJ in Guam during late August 2022. While in Guam, they met with the organizers of the spearfishing derby and the Greg D. Perez Derby. They had discussions with Council members, and researchers, including Eric Cruz and Cliff Kyota from UOG 4-H. Most of their meetings were small since they were unable to organize public meetings. Their discussions were focused

on the NMFS National EEJ Strategy as their deadline for comments was on August 31, 2022. Their plan is to travel to the Pacific Island territories when they start to develop the regional implementation plans in the summer of 2023. This will be more specific for the PI region and include details relevant to Guam. Notes from the trip are being compiled and the travel reports will be shared with the AP. A thematic report will be anonymized before sharing.

Kleiber said that before their travel to Guam, an organization team was created and included Eric Cruz and the Guam Council staff, to discuss logistics. In Guam, there was talk of increased communication between NOAA and stakeholders, including scientists. They also realized a need to maintain continuity. After returning to Honolulu, they discussed important matters not part of their program (i.e. sanctuaries) that was brought up in their meetings. As social scientists, they listened carefully for well-being indicators. In Guam for example, this included the percentage of land area held by the military and the underserved communities identified by the stakeholders.

The Vice-Chair expressed appreciation for the team for coming out and for sharing information on EEJ and for listening to their views on many matters, including the national strategy. It is valuable to have the EEJ team share information gathered while on the islands.

F. Smart FAD Project Update

Mariana Islands Nature Alliance's (MINA) David Benavente provided a status update on the smart FADs in the Marianas, including Guam. With the departure of TNC former staff Javier Cuetos-Bueno, the fate of smart FADs/echosounder buoys reverted to MINA. One echosounder buoy was deployed off Guam in October 2021 but was detached in February 2022. The sounder provided biomass data for tunas. TNC transferred eight echosounder buoys to DAWR, and they are awaiting the deployment of FADs so they can be tethered to them and deployed. Last year, a pilot project was initiated in Guam and the CNMI. Only Guam responded with one smart FADs deployed. The echosounders collected fish biomass and environmental data. He further reported that DAWR will be handling the data going forward. An App will be developed with the goal of having an interface for fishermen to log in. It is supposed to be real-time for the most part. There is a slight lag but in most cases it is.

The Vice-Chair asked if fishermen will be able to access the information based on real time. Benavente said it will be real time for the most part. There is a slight lag but in most cases it will. An AP member asked if there was a way to look back at old data to get an idea of where the fish showed up so fishermen could look at archives to see activities and plan ahead. Benavente said the interface would show the time blocks when fish show up. The overall goal will be to have the graphic show types of fish, percentage and weight. For most of the programs, the Apps run real-time and will show for a certain amount of time then save the data. They have been working with a contractor in the Philippines to enhance the process. They are working on creating an archive of data that would be used to create and allow fishers to see activities. All the processes are dependent on the number of FADs. In the CNMI there are currently three stations.

The Vice-Chair said he would like to see a separate site to access that could include the moon phases and be able to see the whole year with important data. Benavente said FAD placements where it shows there are no hits could mean it is in the wrong location. Information

like this will be good for fishers and researchers since it is connected to a FAD, and will almost act like a wave buoy, able to determine the trajectory and other information.

An AP member asked if the proposed FADs will include the same generation of echosounders as deployed by TNC and DAWR in Guam. He said that the data was not made available in real-time as it would transmit a batch of information at a predetermined time. If these are newer units, then that could be beneficial. They asked how many systems CNMI would have to deploy. The AP asked if MINA could help with some of the Guam FADs. Regarding the duration, if not many are deployed and the grant closes, what will happen. Benavente said there are enough units for all the FADs in Guam. There are enough funds for seven or eight units. The swap idea was outside of his scope and was unable to discuss the matter. He said that their focus was to deploy FADs around CNMI. As for the grant, he said that they could request for an extension at no cost. This would give DFW/DAWR more time to get the FADs out. He also said that they are only an extension, however, Dalia Hernandez-Ortiz will be able to answer more questions since she is the principal investigator.

G. Catchit Logit Updates

Council staff provided a status update on the CILI App and events. He reported that between January 1, 2022, to September 7, 2022, there were a total of 24 fishing trips reported from 6 fishers who caught 978 pounds of fish. Of the 678 pounds, 368 pounds were caught through bottomfishing, 568 pounds through trolling, and 41 pounds through spearfishing.

The Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center's Fisheries Research and Monitoring Division developed a multifaceted approach to improving the data used in stock assessments of federal-managed MUS. The one-size-fits-all approach is not applicable. This new approach covers commercial and non-commercial fisheries using the creel surveys and self-reporting system, moving towards electronic reporting (ER) and using artificial intelligence (AI) in the data collection toolbox. The multifaceted approach is comprised of four phases which include the Sellit Logit transition phase to migrate the historical commercial receipt book data; the Catchit Logit transition phase that would implement electronic self-reporting (ER) to support mandatory or voluntary data collection; the creel transition to ER phase that would create dashboards and other survey support tools; and finally the image recognition AI phase that would test recognition AI to identify species, count fish and estimate fish lengths. FRMD will also focus their efforts on the review of the creel survey expansion algorithm and survey design, stock assessment data workshops, and design-based life history biosampling.

H. AP Discussion

There was no AP discussion.

4. 2022 AP Activities

A. AP Outreach and Education

Council staff shared with the AP the Council's outreach and education efforts in Guam over the last quarter. He reported that the Greg D. Perez International Fishing Tournament was held over the weekend of August 20-21, 2022, with both Agaña and Agat marinas used. Council staff supported the event as a weighmaster for the Agat derby station, a presentation table with

Council branded material and a canvas bag for each of the 15 placeholders containing selected Council branded items.

He said that they are working on the development of the 2023-2024 Guam Lunar Calendar. The theme for the calendar was “Monitoring Fisheries/Fishery Observation and Natural Cues that Lead into Management.”

There were no questions or comments from the AP.

5. Feedback from the Fleet

A. Guam Fishermen Observations

The Vice Chair asked AP members to share their fishing observations regarding the ecosystem, fish, ocean, weather anomalies, and more for the period starting June 2022.

An AP member said he had not been catching many fish. Another AP member said he experienced little catch as well. Between August to September 2022, the new moon brought out many the night hook and line atulai fishermen.

The Vice-Chair said there is a marked increase in atulai, but between recent heavy rains and hot sun, there was not much fish being caught. There had been calm waters but no skipjack tuna caught, and few fishing birds were observed. There has been weird weather with strong winds, but I hope fishing will improve when winds and favorable currents combine.

Staff added to the discussion and said he recently went fishing and caught a large bonita, and a small mahimahi and wahoo. He said at the Greg D. Perez International Fishing Tournament held recently, a 1.1 pound mahimahi was brought in for weighing. But a 3.2 pound mahimahi still placed and came in third place for its category.

On the Guam Marine Conservation Plan, the Vice-Chair said the plan is not being funded because there had been no fines assessed; SFF is not providing funds because Guam is not getting tuna quota agreements. The Council should look at other ways to fund the MCP.

B. Advisory Panel Issues

On the Guam Marine Conservation Plan, the Vice-Chair said the plan is not being funded because there had been no fines assessed; SFF is not providing funds because Guam is not getting tuna quota agreements. The Council should look at other ways to fund the MCP.

6. Public Comment

There were no requests for public comment.

7. Discussion and Recommendations

Regarding Aquaculture Management in the Western Pacific

- The Guam AP recommended the Council select Alternative 2 on the expanded aquaculture management framework for Guam and the Western Pacific, following options to amend the FEPs to allow aquaculture development in the territory’s EEZ.

Regarding the Young Fishermen's Development Act

- The Guam AP recommends the Council encourage Guam Sea Grant to work on getting YFDA funding and assist the fishing community in applying for and receiving YFDA funding

Regarding funding the Guam Marine Conservation Plan

- The Guam AP recommends the Council explore other ways to fund Guam's MCP or funding through SFF for Guam.

8. Other Business

An AP member said he visited the vendor Coral Reef and saw the new FAD systems. They have not yet put any of the reflection plates below the buoys, but they seem a lot easier to deploy. It will still need rope and chains but there is more deployment options with the new systems.

An AP member who works at DAWR shared Coral Reef, the vendor contracted to procure FAD buoys, received the two buoy sets recently. One is for 500 fathoms and the other for 1,000 fathoms. Both are the new polyethylene buoys using lighter rope and gear. Both will also be anchored to the seafloor using a 500 pound danforth system. It may be possible for smaller vessels to deploy these new light systems. Two of the purchase orders drafted for the current fiscal year did not go through with the processing. One was to acquire additional FAD sets. The other was to deploy the buoys. DAWR will try to submit procurement documents as early as possible so the new sets are deployed. A meeting with Chelsa Muña-Brecht, director of the Department of Agriculture to discuss the FAD deployment schedule with the US Coast Guard. He said that they have three FADs ready to be deployed. The procurement documents were submitted in June 2022 and had very little time to be processed before the end of the fiscal year. The procurement includes two new and one old. DAWR may have another system in stock to total four. The Vice-Chair suggested DAWR could start with the procurement document submission as early as October 1, 2022, the beginning of the fiscal year.

Meeting ended: 8:45 pm, ChSt