



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Pacific Islands Refuges and Monuments Office  
300 Ala Moana Blvd Room 5-231  
PO Box 50167  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850



Mr. John Gourley, Chair  
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council  
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Mr. Gourley:

The Pacific Islands Refuges and Monuments Office (PIRAMO), and on behalf of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration, Ecological Services, and Migratory Bird Programs, would like to report to you and the rest of the Council the following activities related to USFWS managed lands and waters in the Western and Central Pacific Region from March 16, 2023 to June 15, 2023.

## ***Marianas Trench MNM:***

- Due to Typhoon Mawar recovery needs, interviews for the new Saipan-based **MTMNM Superintendent** position have been delayed a month. Dr. Toni Mizerek remains the FWS Superintendent.
- 5 primary and 5 alternate **MTMAC nominees** are currently undergoing Executive Branch-level background investigation prior to appointment.
- **Monument Management Plan** finalization is pending review by MTMAC after formal appointments. Agencies continue to follow the 11 action plans described in the DMMP, as updated under the "working" Management Plan awaiting final FONSI.
- **Programmatic EA** for BIFROST and other telecommunications cables in the Mariana Trench NWR scheduled for a 30-day public review and comment June 19 to July 17.
- Ranger Younis continues to promote environmental education and community engagement in CNMI with presentations in support of marine life and marine habitat protection throughout the Marianas. Ranger Jihan and Professor Alan Jamieson discussed the Mariana Snailfish, deep-sea exploration, and public outreach for the MTMNM on the half-hour FWS podcast, **Fish of the Week**, on June 19.
- JAMSTEC was permitted to dive in the deep-sea hydrothermal vents of the NW Eifuku and Daikoku seamounts in March for hydrothermal liquid/supercritical CO<sub>2</sub> fluids and pools study.
- Researchers from the Japan Coast Guard and JAMSTEC have a permit for the Mariana Trench NWR in November to test the hypothesis that the rocks exposed in the Southern Mariana region record the process of subduction initiation. This will be achieved by collecting rock samples and analyzing geophysical data covering approximately 350 km east-west of the landward slope of the southern Mariana Trench.
- Japan's Fishery Agency, Institute of Cetacean Research, has withdrawn its application to survey *"the abundance of large whale species in the western North Pacific Ocean for*

*appropriate management and/or conservation of stocks."* The whaling/research vessel will **not** enter the marine national monuments and U.S. EEZ's of the CNMI, Wake Atoll, or Hawaiian Islands. It will conduct its activities **outside** the MNMs.

- After a brief pause, Ahiyā seamount resumed eruptive activity May 23.

***Pacific Remote Islands MNM:***

- In April 2023, FWS carried out a pilot study to evaluate the feasibility of crown-of-thorns (COTS) starfish control work at Palmyra Atoll NWR. COTS are native to Palmyra, but currently occur at much higher than normal densities and seem to be negatively impacting corals and fish habitat. If population control is feasible, it could provide a management tool to reduce COTs numbers to "normal levels" to conserve corals and fish habitat at Palmyra.

***Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration:***

- Assessing Typhoon Mawar impacts to boating access facilities in Guam and CNMI. Early assessments did not indicate that these have been impacted but waiting for more details.

***Ecological Services:***

- Dan Polhemus presented a talk to the Council's Hawaii Advisory Committee in May on climate variables and projections for the next 3 months, specifically the pending change from La Nina to El Nino.

Sincerely,

Brian Peck  
USFWS WesPac Council Representative  
Superintendent/Manager  
Rose Atoll Marine National Monument  
and National Wildlife Refuge