



WESTERN
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MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

**Report of the Meeting of the
Guam Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committee**

Tuesday, March 4, 2025

8:30 a.m. to 11:50 noon (ChST)

Hilton Guam Resort and Spa

Micronesian Room

202 Hilton Road

Tumon Bay, Guam

1. Welcome and Introductions

Judith Guthertz, Council vice Chair and Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committee (REAC) Chair, opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m., ChST. REAC members in attendance included: Lola Leon Guerrero (BSP), Jay Gutierrez (DAWR), Michelle Lastimoza (EPA), Jennifer Taijeron (GVB), Rory Respicio (PAG), Francisco Perez (Council member), Chelsea Muña (DoAg and Council member), Brian Maffucci (USCG), Brett Taylor (UOG)

Others in attendance included Felix Reyes, Joshua DeMello, Mark Mitsuyasu (Council staff); Clay Tam and Alex Min (Pacific Islands Fisheries Group); Eric Cruz and Justin Hospital (NMFS PIFSC); Audrey Toves (NCFAC/Guam Charter Fisher), Jesse Rosario and Michael Gawel (Guam AP), Michael Duenas (DAWR and Guam AP)

2. Opening Remarks

The Honorable Lourdes Leon Guerrero, Governor of the Territory of Guam, provided opening remarks at the meeting. The Governor said the REAC is a crucial organization that promotes great ideas and solutions and recognizes the challenges that face Guam not just at the local level but the federal level; one of the biggest concerns as governors in the Pacific is how waters are controlled/monitored; how full access to waters be maintained. The Governors get concerned and vocal when policies are created carving out water areas like monuments and hindering access without input. This matter is known to the federal government. American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam has jointly written letters to let them know that these waters are very valuable to the territories. Creating federal policies without territorial input is not acceptable and have reneged on issues in some instances but there are resources working with the administration, including the Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Commerce, and others want to hear from the islands. Opportunities must be taken to have voices heard. And REAC is one of them. Fisheries is under the Department of Commerce. It is not good when notification is issued by the department that the island is a critical habitat without coming out and mapping or talking to the communities. Calls have been made to the Secretary of Commerce with the concerns of the islands and has resulted in their backing away a little and started getting the territories involved. The Fish and Wildlife Service on Guam is taking a different approach now and are looking at the Marianas as a whole archipelago. They have

expressed wanting to work with the islands. Chelsa Muña is going to be a member of that team on how to look at conservation and preserving resources and how to live by an archipelago approach. Feedback is requested. The work the REAC does do not fall on deaf ears. Work must continue as a whole unit with many partners, including the U.S. Coast Guard, which is key. One united voice is much stronger. REAC has the Governor's administration's support to go to White House and talk to the Trump administration. That is how they can focus on territories. They don't know about the islands so they must be educated. The Governor thanked the REAC members for allowing her the opportunity to make opening remarks and for focusing on Guam's critical ocean resources.

3. About the Guam Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committee

Mark Mitsuyasu, Council Staff, provided an overview of the Guam REAC and explained the purpose and function within the Council process. In managing fisheries throughout the region, the Council has evolved from managing by species to a more holistic approach through ecosystem-based management plans. These fishery ecosystem plans are archipelagic-based and look beyond just fish to have a broader perspective on ecosystem relationships. The REAC allows for the Council to hear from the agencies that are a part of the fishery ecosystem and hear from the community as well.

4. Report on the 2023 REAC Recommendations

Felix Reyes, Council Staff, provided a report of the last REAC meeting held in March 2023. The REAC requested the Council ask Joint Region Marianas to provide a report on local capacity building as well as include fishery representatives on the military coordination council.

The Guam REAC made the following recommendations in 2023 to the Council:

- Communicate to Joint Region Marianas the importance of hiring local graduates instead of importing personnel and request a report on how many local people have been hired over the last five years to support the military expansion;
- Request Governor to include fishing community issues and mitigation solutions on the CMCC agenda.

Muña commented on the first recommendation regarding hiring local capacity for the military expansion stating DoAg have recruited straight from the school before kids graduate. This is an opportunity for the agencies to engage as well and see who is actually interested. There are likely more than 10 local graduates hired by the U.S. Navy. Regarding the CMCC meeting, the summary of mitigation items she presented at the meeting has been well received to the fishing community input as well

5. Regulatory Review and Community Consultation

a. Fishery Monitoring and Management Regime

i. Federal Fishery Management

1. Marianas FEP Overview

Joshua DeMello, Council staff, provided an overview of the Mariana Archipelago fishery ecosystem plan (FEP). In 2009, the Council transitioned from fishery management plans to FEPs

to look at the ecosystem dimensions and how that can be applied to communities to focus on management as an ecosystem compared to a species based system.

Council staff said the Council will be engaging with the contractor to work with some of the REAC members to put reviews together and will return after some of the reports are vetted.

2. Marianas Small Boat Economic Survey

Justin Hospital, PIFSC, reported on the survey and on the 2025 Marianas Small Boat Economic Survey to be implemented in Guam and the CNMI to understand the current economy and behavior of small boats. Surveys were done in 2011 and again in 2018. Questions asked were consistent over the survey years. In 2018, 110 survey responses were received from Guam fishers. He summarized fishing activity levels, market activities, what happens to fish after it was caught (fish flow), and to understand local food security. Hospital encouraged participation by Guam fishers to provide data that is necessary to support fishing communities.

Governor Leon Guerrero said the survey will be very helpful and asked how fish works its way to consumers. In Guam, many hotels and restaurants import fish. She noted she would like to see less fish imports and instead buy from local fishers. Does the survey ask what the government can do to help facilitate the expansion of fishing in Guam, especially with local fishermen. One thing we're working on is to have the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (GFCA/Coop) built. It will motivate fishers to go fishing. And if there is a way to bring their fish to a robust center to sell fish. The Coop or the Department of Agriculture can allow fishers to bring fish, pay them upfront, and the Government can work out the process of selling the fish. The Guam Economic Development Authority (GEDA) can work with the fishing community. What role can the UOG and GCC provide via their extension services to support fisheries. Promote to students to get into fishing. There are community college programs and extension work. The UOG Sea Grant promotes fishing. Maybe the survey can bring out that information to help and how we can use it to promote fishing.

Hospital replied that that aligns with what is reflected in the survey. The data provides opportunities and challenges

A REAC member said he participated in past surveys. The infographics were well laid out and easy to digest. He shared the survey with the South Pacific Commission (SPC) and sparked them to start their own economic surveys. This lays out how expensive small boat fisheries are and the amount of money fishers put in. Not a lot of fish is sold. A lot enter the community. He would like statistics on how that is. With pig derbies, we calculate the meat mass. He wants to know how many meals the local community is consuming from fish and from aquaculture.

Hospital said the information presentation continues to be improved and see how this information is useful to the community.

NOAA PIFSC staff Eric Cruz introduced Chaz Comia, Arc Environmental and PIFSC contractor who will implement the survey locally. He welcomed all to meet with him to discuss the surveys.

3. NMFS 2025 Marianas Archipelago Survey

Eric Cruz, NMFS PIFSC, presented on PIFSC's plans for scientific research planned for the next year in the Mariana Archipelago. The National Coral Reef Monitoring Program (NCRMP) will once again be conducted around Guam in April through June with NOAA bringing its research vessel, Oscar Sette, to Guam. The program is also known as the Reef Assessment and Monitoring Program (RAMP). The survey collects data on abundance, distribution, diversity, and condition of fish, corals, invertebrates. The goal is to have continued monitoring on a large scale. There are eight surveys in the Marianas every 3 years. NOAA also recently released a data visualization tool.

ii. Territorial Fishery Management

1. Guam Territorial Fishery Management Plan

Duenas shared the progress made and the next steps with the Guam FMP. He detailed what the FMP is composed of and its function. Duenas noted he ran the Coop for some time and understands the marketing side of the fishery. He realized there is agreement with a need to work together to perpetuate what all are doing. This is the driving effort behind the FMP. Some key components: Stock Assessments, Growth Rates, Management Measures, Catch Limits, Gear Restrictions, Economic considerations, Monitoring and Enforcement, Stakeholder involvement, and Collaborative decision making. The FMP process for Guam started on January 27, 2021. FMP ensures sustainability in fishing and balances ecosystems and economics.. Input was solicited from the community and within DAWR. Four community meetings were held and made sure fishers had a voice. DAWR also hosted stakeholder engagement meetings that included the Guam Visitors Bureau. No time limit was imposed so all are heard in the open forum approach. The FMP that is rolling out will incorporate the concerns from the community and will inform on better marketing for locally caught fish, incentives for fishermen, and more.

Leilani Sablan, UOG Seagrant, provided the technical aspects of the FMP. The last REAC was presented with stock assessment information so the plan is to look at taking the science and translating it into management. In 2024, scientists, fishers, managers were brought together and brainstormed management strategies for species in Guam. Their discussion echoes what was already heard from the 2021 townhall meetings facilitated by DAWR. Size limits are needed to lead our reefs toward a more sustainable future. The community recognized our reefs have declined. Size limits, licensing and MPAs are all a part of the process. We now plan to draft a spatial format, bottoms up approach. We are now on the home stretch with community meetings seeking inputs to finalize the plan. DAWR and the Sea Grant team sat down for two days working the plan. Ten species are being considered for species regulations. These species are decreasing in size supported by science and the fishing community. On mandatory fishing licenses, it hoped this is supported by the community during the townhall meetings. DAWR will put forth management measures, and talk about indicators and adaptive management to make sure the fish community and the fisher community are lined up. In the next couple of months, we hope to finalize the FMP. In April, we will work with DAWR on spatial regulations. Protected regulations will be discussed on what that will look like. In May, we will start community meetings, mirroring the townhall meetings in the south, central and north. By the end of September, the plan will hopefully be drafted.

b. Climate Change Impacts on Fisheries, Communities and Resources

i. Agency/Organization Initiatives to address Climate Impacts

Mark Mitsuyasu provided an overview of the community engagement that the Council is going to do in the next two years. He explained what the projects are that will be conducted.

ii. Community-based Resource Management Plans Update

Mark Mitsuyasu shared the details of the 2013 Malessa CBRMP. The Council also worked with Yigo Village and the Mayor of the Northern Islands. He noted the objective is to work with communities who participate in fisheries to better align goals and see where the Council can help.

iii. FISHMAPs

Joshua DeMello, Council staff, shared information on the community consultation fish maps. The process looked at bottomfish and gears used using traditional knowledge for policy makers and for having fishers a seat at the table. In Guam, there were the spearfishing maps already submitted to BOEM so they can talk to fishers about where potential impacts may be for offshore windmills and other resource mining.

The Chair asked for a couple of examples that were done.

DeMello said Google Maps and Google Earth were used. Fishmaps can be used by BOEM, including who the fishermen are in the area.

iv. Future Scenarios for Guam Small-Boat Fisheries

Mark Mitsuyasu reported the small boat fisheries may be looked at later in the year or into 2026.

6. Guam Fishery Issues

a. Report on Military Activities in Guam

Mark Cruz, Joint Region Marianas representative, provided an update on the status of the Joint Taskforce and legacy command regarding Guam's military expansion and how the construct works, including how coordination is done with the government. Joint Taskforce Micronesia started June 14, 2024. The authority is now more focused in Guam with a geographical command for Indo-Pacific Command. The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Republic of Palau (ROP), and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) are now under the Joint Task Force Micronesia (JTFM). There are technically three cities under the JRM. Exercise areas for military training maps are used to avoid popular fishing areas off Guam. At the CMCC meetings, both the JRM and the JTFM Admirals show up. In ROP, only the JR Micronesia Admiral shows up. Every three months, the Admirals meet with the CNMI governor. Every 60 days, the CMCC has a formal agenda. EIS is done every seven years and conducted in the Guam and CNMI waterways. DoD directs that these be conducted regularly. Notice of Intent will be out this summer and the draft EIS after 11 months. The Record of Decision will be out in 2027. No changes in Guam. All will be at sea. In the CNMI, there are plans for a live firing range. The public has been made aware of this proposed action. Funding from DoD to repair the Tinian breakwater and for planned improvements have been made available, including ongoing projects such as the divert runway at Tinian West. The Air Force requirement is to put a parallel runway in Tinian and has been clearing the historic runways, working with the CNMI Historic

Preservation Office since it is a national historic landmark. There are ongoing negotiations with the National Park Service on how the runaways are to be surfaced.

The Chair asked if there are any policies that will show changes of the military expansion.

Cruz said there is nothing at this time.

The Chair said she is concerned about any potential slow down and hopes there is proper communication between the military and our government. Regarding military activities on Guam, we thought we would like to have a military working group to find ways to communicate the community's interest. 3-4 meetings have been held. We recognize the governor is the personality and conduit for all dialogue with the military.

i. Status of Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz Firing Ranges

N/A

ii. Report from Council Military Working Group

Judith Guthertz, REAC Chair articulated on the military buildup working group's mitigation list to request for the DoD to fund as an offset to the expected military expansion and increase in population and impacts to fisheries. She noted this is recognized as a wishlist and that there may be other sources for funding. This list will be transmitted to the Governor via DoAg's Muña to dialogue with the military. These things mean a lot to the people. We don't want our fishers to be discouraged from fishing for family and other things. These projects will assist other entities within the Government of Guam such as the Port Authority of Guam, Department of Parks and Recreation, and more.

b. BOEM

Zach Yamada, Council staff, presented the BOEM Call for Information on Offshore Energy and the timeline from the original initiation of BOEM to look at Guam as an alternative energy option using offshore windmills to today where there is a halt to the project due to funding cuts.

A REAC member said that as a fisherman, the fishermen's perspective on offshore windmills should be included. Already Guam's fishermen were displaced in the north and south, including the CNMI. Already a portion of Guam's southern EEZ was taken away for the FSM.

The Chair said we are very concerned about this project. The concerns of our fishermen must be addressed. If not, you will find significant opposition. Talk to our fishers and those interested in this topic to get their input and their concerns.

7. Public Comments

Rory Respicio, PAG General Manager and REAC member said he and the PAG's Harbor Master sat attentively to the REAC and took a lot of notes, including the interest in the Port's Master Plan. At the Agat Marina, we opened up a 52 dock slip (Dock B). At the Port's seawall, fishing was not allowed. When he took over, he lifted the restriction and removed fishing permits. No one should tell fishermen whether or not waters at the Port are safe or not. At the Agana Marina, we are working closely with the Governor, including with the Coop. We are now more

recreational and are working with the Department of Parks and Recreation. The PAG is working with the Guam Energy Office to light up with LED lights along the Port seawall for recreational users. Anything we can do to support fishers on an economic and fisheries standpoint we are ready. We will stand up to the marina users group. We want to institutionalize the process to better the experience. The marina user fee is another item we plan to look at to make sure we operate in an environment where there is opportunity for all. We can channel these via the Council's buildup working group regarding opportunities such as access to the Glass Breakwater which is now under construction. Including Magandas. We will work with the Admiral together on the Glass Breakwater access for fishing and surfing.

Glen San Nicolas, Guam EPA asked if Fena Lake is open to fishing or not. And if it is secured or not secured. He asked for the identity of the in-water species as a source for recreation for our people.

8. Discussion and Recommendations

The Guam Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committee:

- Supports the ongoing work by the Council's Military Working Group and endorses the group substantiating the findings of the group and recommends a Council review prior to submitting it to the Governor.

9. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.