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COUNCIL

## **Notes for the Mariana Archipelago FEP Guam Advisory Panel Meeting**

Saturday, September 6, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (ChST)

Hybrid Meeting via Webex

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Dominick San Gil, Guam Advisory Panel (AP) Vice chair, opened the meeting at 10:07 a.m. (ChST), Guam AP Members in attendance Clay Tam (AP Chair), Audrey Toves, Michael Gawel, Michael Dueñas, Carl Dela Cruz, Jason Miller and James Borja. Dale Alvarez was absent.

Others in attendance include Joshua DeMello, Zach Yamada, Asuka Ishizaki, Mark Fitchett, Felix Reyes (Council Staff), Frank Perez (Council Member), Adam Ayers, Mia Iwane, Marlowe Sabater, Eric Cruz (NOAA PIFSC), and Craig Severance.

### **2. Review of the Last AP Recommendations and Meeting**

Felix Reyes, Council staff, provided a status review of the recommendations from the last AP meeting held on May 30, 2025. The AP recommended the Council explore the feasibility of developing a longline fishery (resource availability) and market (local, export, transshipment) for tropical tunas in the Marianas. The Council drafted a letter to the Director of the Guam Department of Agriculture for a follow-up. The AP recommended DAWR explore South Pacific Community (SPC) fish aggregating device (FAD) designs, including the use of biodegradable and environmentally sustainable materials, in the development of future FADs to provide longevity and potentially reduce the cost of deployment. The Council drafted a letter to the Guam Department of Agriculture/DAWR to schedule a three-way virtual meeting with the Council, DAWR and SPC to review design options. A response has not yet been received.

### **3. Council Fisheries Issues**

#### **A. SEEM Process Review Report**

Adam Ayers and Craig Severance, Social Science Planning Committee, provided an overview on the review of the social, economic, ecological and management (SEEM) uncertainties analysis for further review. The SEEM analysis is a Council process that provide the fishing community with direct input into the annual catch limit setting process that complements the P\* process which describes the scientific uncertainty in the stock assessment model. The draft report provided potential additions or alternatives to the SEEM process to focus on desired outcomes, implementation process, initiation, and participation strategies.

During the August 12 presentation of SEEM to the Guam AP's informal meeting, the AP inquired about budget resources required for input into the SEEM process.

An AP member asked if SEEM is done, who will police it, and if it will be the local government again.

Ayers said SEEM has multiple components. If the decision is to reduce the ACL, it would be just for the NOAA OLE, but not sure if local law enforcement is a part of that as well.

Council staff said the SEEM process is not a regulatory process and is part of the whole ACL spec process. The Council implements it. Council staff lead the SEEM working group.

The AP Vice Chair asked who will monitor if one goes fishing as an example. And the funding, is that a part of the process to help fund the policing?

A Council staff said the SEEM itself is part of setting the ACL which is a part of the Council's operating budget. Once the limits are set, it is a part of the usual monitoring of the limits. The catch is monitored with the CREEL survey data.

The AP Vice Chair asked if it is an honor system.

Council staff said federal limits are not an honor system. Overage gets adjusted the following year. The SEEM process itself is not regulatory.

Severance added that often, the only additional reduction in the risk factor is for management uncertainty. It is important to recall that if there is an ACL set and data show it has been exceeded, it will lead to reduction the following year. Work is being done with the working groups, with staff from the science center and local fishermen. It gives local fishermen a voice and a chance for input into research direction for the science center and the Council.

Another Council staff said that SEEM develops the product for management. As part of the quota setting process, these working groups meet and discuss these to ensure the stock is healthy. If there is no rebuilding plan, Guam fishermen come together to discuss further. The data for monitoring fishing catch is the Creel surveys unless there is a permitting system developed.

#### **4. Council IRA Project Discussions**

##### **A. Scenario Planning**

Mark Fitchett, Council staff, provided an update on the Council's IRA scenario planning project. The goal of the Scenario Planning Project is to identify and develop adaptive fishery management strategies that support resilient and productive fisheries in the region. Two scenario planning efforts will be conducted, one of the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fisheries, and another for the small-boat fisheries across the region.

Currently, the Scenario Planning project has consulted with its Steering Committees to develop materials for anticipated workshops in November 2025. Project themes that are affecting future scenarios include: 1) climate change and changes to the natural environment, including distribution of fishery resources, 2) changes in political and governance affecting fishery management, 3) markets, 4) availability and development of fishery sector labor, 5) infrastructure changes, and 6) supplies to sustaining the fisheries.

An AP member said it sounds like resources have been committed for Hawaii. The process for this is a good idea. If we want to employ this in Guam, with things like tariffs - so much of our seafood is imported so the tariffs may have an impact. Or have companies invest in Guam to avoid the tariffs.

## **B. Regulatory Review**

Joshua DeMello, Council staff, provided an update on the Council's IRA Regulatory Review project. The Regulatory Review Project aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of existing regulations and associated management systems (including reporting and monitoring) within the state/territories and the federal fishery regulations to determine how responsive the regulatory framework is towards climate change. The review outcomes will identify gaps in management, inefficient regulations, and potential regulatory conflicts that would inhibit the community's ability to adapt to evolving conditions. This project continues efforts toward ecosystem-based fishery management as climate change creates greater uncertainty by ensuring FEP flexibility to anticipate and address changes to the fishery. By systematically evaluating and enhancing our regulatory framework, this project will streamline regulations, improve efficiency, and develop a coordinated approach to federally managed fisheries. Outcomes from the regulatory review will be used to support revisions and improvements to fishery regulations, Fishery Ecosystem Plans and Annual SAFE reports.

The goal of this project is to have a coordinated regulatory approach to fisheries shared between state/territorial and federal jurisdictions under the Council's Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs) that is responsive to a changing climate and supports underserved communities. The contractor for the Regulatory Review project kicked off discussions in late July/early August and is currently working with the steering committee to develop a action plan and timeline.

Guam has a large vessel permit program. Is it still needed? The contractor will provide an initial analysis later in 2025. They will go to each of the island areas to gather input from the community. The timeline may be early 2026 to return to the Marianasa. At the last community engagements held in February 2025, we noticed that there may be some items that may need improvement for regulatory review.

Regarding large vessels fishing around Guam, an AP member said there had been quite a number of vessels washed up ashore, including buoys with nets that are drifting.

These may be signs illegal fishing may still be happening and monitoring should still continue.

An AP member asked who the contractor was.

DeMello said it was Lynker. They sub-contracted some of the work to the Parnin Group from the east coast.

### **C. Protected Species**

Asuka Ishizaki, Council staff, provided an update on the Council's IRA project focused on Protected Species. The Council will convene two workshops to improve understanding of how climate and ecosystem drivers may impact protected species interaction rates in our region's fisheries, explore potential scenarios in which climate change impacts protected species interactions in fisheries, and identify potential strategies and frameworks for addressing those impacts. The project will primarily focus on the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fisheries, for which significant components of their management under the Council's Pelagic FEP are associated with monitoring and reducing impacts to a broad range of protected species including sea turtles, seabirds, marine mammals, sharks and rays. The first workshop is tentatively scheduled for October 2025, and the second workshop is anticipated to occur in early 2026.

### **D. Community Consultation/Vocation Training**

Zach Yamada, Council staff, presented on the Community Consultation and Capacity Building. The contractor PIFG is developing the schedules for meetings in Guam around late September 2025. The AP will be requested to spread the word on the meetings. Some things to consider include that in the face of changing climates, what are the impacts seen in the fishery, including shark depredation. The second round of meetings will be to continue the concerns and figure out what is the path forward and conversations to feed into the three prior projects.

The second part is Vocational Training, focused on building the fishing industry. The Application process started in June, with over 40 applications received. Of these, six were selected. The training will start on September 10 and will be for two weeks on different fishing techniques, fisheries management and landscape, and financial planning.

Tam said this is the start of the project. They will talk with participants when they visit the islands and plan for a better project going forward and see the success of the project. There is no shortage of demand, but the budget is small.

An AP member acknowledged the program and gave thanks. The Guam recipient represents a new generation for the fishing community in Guam. He will be a sponge and absorb the training and apply it for the future of Guam and the community.

The AP Vice Chair gave thanks for having the young vocational training and asked when Izzic is done with the training, if he can make a presentation to the AP to get feedback on his experience and use information to prepare for the next training. His participation could motivate other fishers and the youth into fisheries.

An AP member agreed with the presentation idea, suggesting that Izzic may have a different aspect of Guam's fisheries to share in the future, which would be interesting to hear.

Tam said it is a good idea. Fisheries have been on a decline, especially for the new generations. The information to be shared with training participants does not exist in the territories. Opportunities that will open for others will be great. The captain who will lead the program has been a pioneer in the fishing industry and a forefather to Hawaii fisheries. All participants are encouraged to talk to the captain. Support from the territorial communities is essential. Creating legacies and moving on to the next level is important. More of the younger generation can be invited to participate in the future.

An AP member expressed thanks to PIFG and Tam. The curriculum is spot on and will positively impact fisheries development and advanced fishing techniques in Guam. Now that fishing has become more difficult, this program comes at the right time and hopes Izzic's training will permeate in the community.

## **5. AP Strategic Planning for 2025**

Reyes provided an update on the Guam AP plan. The AP continues to work with the Council's military working group monitors military activities that impact the community and fisheries as part of the military expansion. Planning remains for the 2026 Guam Fisher's Proclamation Week to be tied into a marine or fisheries event. No date has been set yet. Planning continues with DAWR to select a territorial fish for outreach, potentially supported by the Council and DAWR's outreach program. This may involve school voting on the selection, followed by collaboration with the Guam Visitors Bureau to utilize the selected fish in marketing Guam's marine resources. The AP continues to support the development of the 2026 Lunar Calendar with photos and content. And during the past school year, several AP members went into the classroom as part of the Council's Speaker's Bureau program. No schedule has been set yet for the current school year. The AP helped with the circulation of the flyer for the first Cocos Lagoon Boat-based Mafuti Mentored Kid's Derby and resulted in a very successful event. About 14 boats and 30 youth participated.

An AP member said it was a mentored derby with adults teaching the youth as a first introduction to set parameters and rules and provide structure for the kids. It was well thought out. The event was hosted by DAWR and the Malesso Mayor's Office. He thanked Council member Frank Perez for initiating the project. It was evident that there is a skill set out there. Kids need to learn from their parents and adults. Fishing families knew techniques and fishing spots. All had fun. There is a need to brainstorm other events like this and foster it. Greg D. Perez Foundation provided funding.

## **6. Other Business**

The AP Vice Chair asked the members and staff if there were any other business to discuss.

An AP member said there is funding available for farmers. Micro grants to huge grants, including crop loss grants for farmers are available. There are also subsidies for the territories that offset the cost of shipments. Fishers should have the equivalent of a USDA.

All fishers provide meals and food security whether fish is brought to market, kept, given away or given to family and friends. Fishers need to fight for that level of funding that farmers get and keep this conversation going, locally and federally including with GEDA.

An AP member said there is a need to keep monitoring the military development in Guam, including the closing of the Surface Danger Zones to fishing as an example. There is a need to be on top of these and see how they affect Guam's fisheries.

An AP member said she was on the NOAA ship Oscar Sette. Life history was a part of their program. She learned fish eyeballs can determine radiation and any chemical exposures. She added a survey was issued about increased military activity around FDM and requested a follow up on that status. There is a whale habitat around Saipan. She asked if there was an assessment done on the environment and ecosystem and what the impacts will be due to increased activities. Fishers might get sick if they catch and consume affected fish. Regarding the open burn and blasting area in Guam, she asked if EPA has followed up since the last assessment on any mitigation measures for areas where they can explode munitions. She added the US Marines movement to Guam has been slow but still in the plans.

The Vice Chair said that up to 30,000 Marines will be on Guam by 2031. Regarding military training, it used to be once monthly and now it's every week. There has been a lot of military movement around Guam's waters.

An AP member added that even if fishing derby dates are shared with the military, it does not matter. The Notice to Mariners on military exercises will still be issued. He added that sometimes the military will close the whole port area and access so fishermen have no place to return to due to the closure.

The Vice Chair said he experienced the same while fishing at White Tuna where a helicopter came and hovered above them. It was scary. The waters around Guam are being used not just by the U.S. military, but also by Australia and others.

An AP member requested to include all discussions regarding the military be added to discussions with the Council's military working group and provide an update on their status. 90% of vessels at the Agaña Marina do not move so there is a continuing need to work with the Port Authority of Guam to look at stipulations on their leases.

An AP member said research around the Marianas is ongoing this year, including Oscar Setti and Nautilus. The Nautilus is finding new sea mounts and plans to return next year. It will be good to know of their capabilities.

An AP member said there is a nice exhibit at the Guam Museum on traditional matters that will run through October 3, 2025.

An AP member said DAWR's Lanie Duenas worked on the exhibit with the theme: Gineftao (Generosity) and focuses on understanding the ocean, and reclaiming the ocean story through the Chamoru wisdom and ocean literacy.

**7. Public Comment**

Eric Cruz said a NOAA vessel will be transiting through Guam during September 11-19. NOAA ship passing through. On the research vessel Nautilus, he will work with DAWR on FAD deployment when they return to Guam.

**8. Discussion and Recommendations**

The Guam AP had no recommendations.

The meeting ended at 11: 40 a.m., ChST