

Eskaleran Pulan Chamorro

Refaluwasch Pápáál Maram



Western Pacific Regional
Fishery Management Council
WPCOUNCIL.ORG

January 20, 2026 - February 7, 2027

Fish Are Food: A Way of Life

For generations, fish has been more than just food for the people of the CNMI – it has been the foundation of health, culture and community. Unlike fast food, fresh local seafood nourishes the body with high-quality protein, omega-3s and vital nutrients that support heart and brain health. Early islanders were strong and healthy because of their seafood-rich diet.

From the rich flavor of *katsu* (skipjack tuna) to the distinct taste of *atulai* (bigeye scad), *i'e* (juvenile jack) and *mafute'* (emperor) the sweet *māhongang* (spiny lobster) and colorful *palakse'* (juvenile parrotfish) and *lāggua* (parrotfish), these local favorites showcase the islands' bounty and the skill of fishers, who have passed traditional practices through generations.

Seafood safety keeps this tradition alive. Knowing when, where and how fish are harvested ensures freshness and family well-being. Choosing local, safe and sustainable seafood honors the ocean, our traditions and their role in daily island life.



(above) *Mafute'*, prepared for smoking, ready to be enjoyed with family.

PHOTO: George Moses



(left) From the *tāsi* (ocean) to the table, *māhongang* is a staple in many homes.

PHOTO: Marilyn Taitano

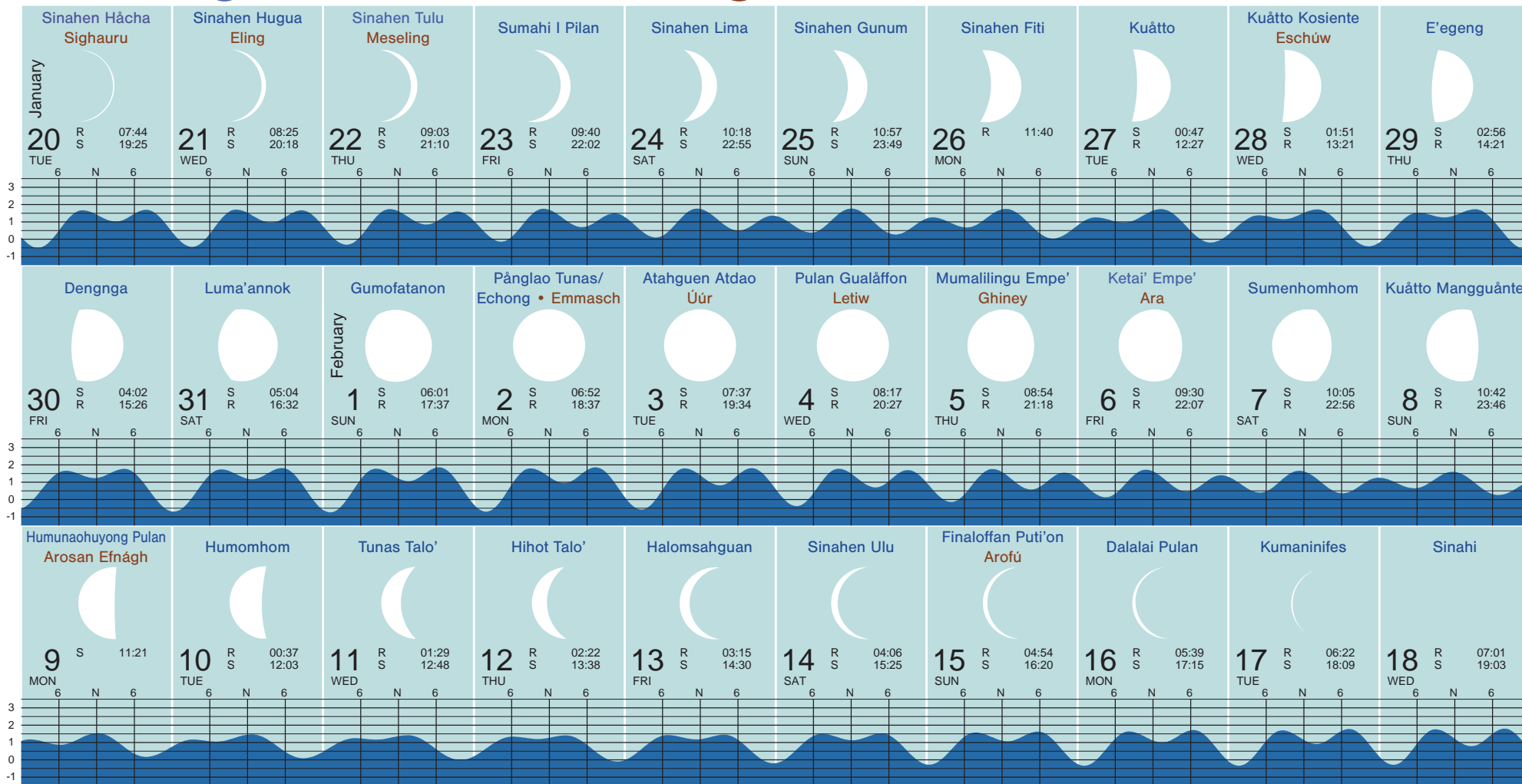
Chamorro

Refaluwasch

Tumaiguini Mááisichigh

2026

January 20 - February 18



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
Regional Fishery
Management Council



Young *talåyerus* (cast net fishers) learning the skill of throwing during a Talåya Club event at Micro Beach, Garapan, Saipan. PHOTO: Ando Agulto

- 1 **RISPETA I NATURE** yan i sanhalum na lugât-mu.
- 2 **ALIGÃO ABISU** gi manmâolik gi generational knowledge gi guinahan tânu'.
- 3 **NA'ANNUK REGARD** gi para tiempun manmañâda' yan i nuebu nai manmañângu na guihan
- 4 **MUNGGA MUNA'LÂSTIMA.** Chuli' atyu ha' i hâfa un nisisita.
- 5 **NASÂFU' I TAOTÂO,** propiedât yan guinaha siha.
- 6 **OSGI** i lai yan i areklamentun pumeska siha.
- 7 **USA I PROPIU** na ramenta yan manera siha.
- 8 **HOKKA I BASULÂ-MU.**
- 9 **NA'FAÑAGI** ni kininne'-mu.

Prinudusi ni Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council yan i Department of Lands and Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife.
 Trinanslâda as: Siñora Bernie Sablan - Chamorro Translator, Chamorro/Carolinian Language Policy Commission (CCLPC), Department of Community and Cultural Affairs (DCCA).

*Kodigun
Konduktun
Deskadot*

Traditional Practices and Sustainability

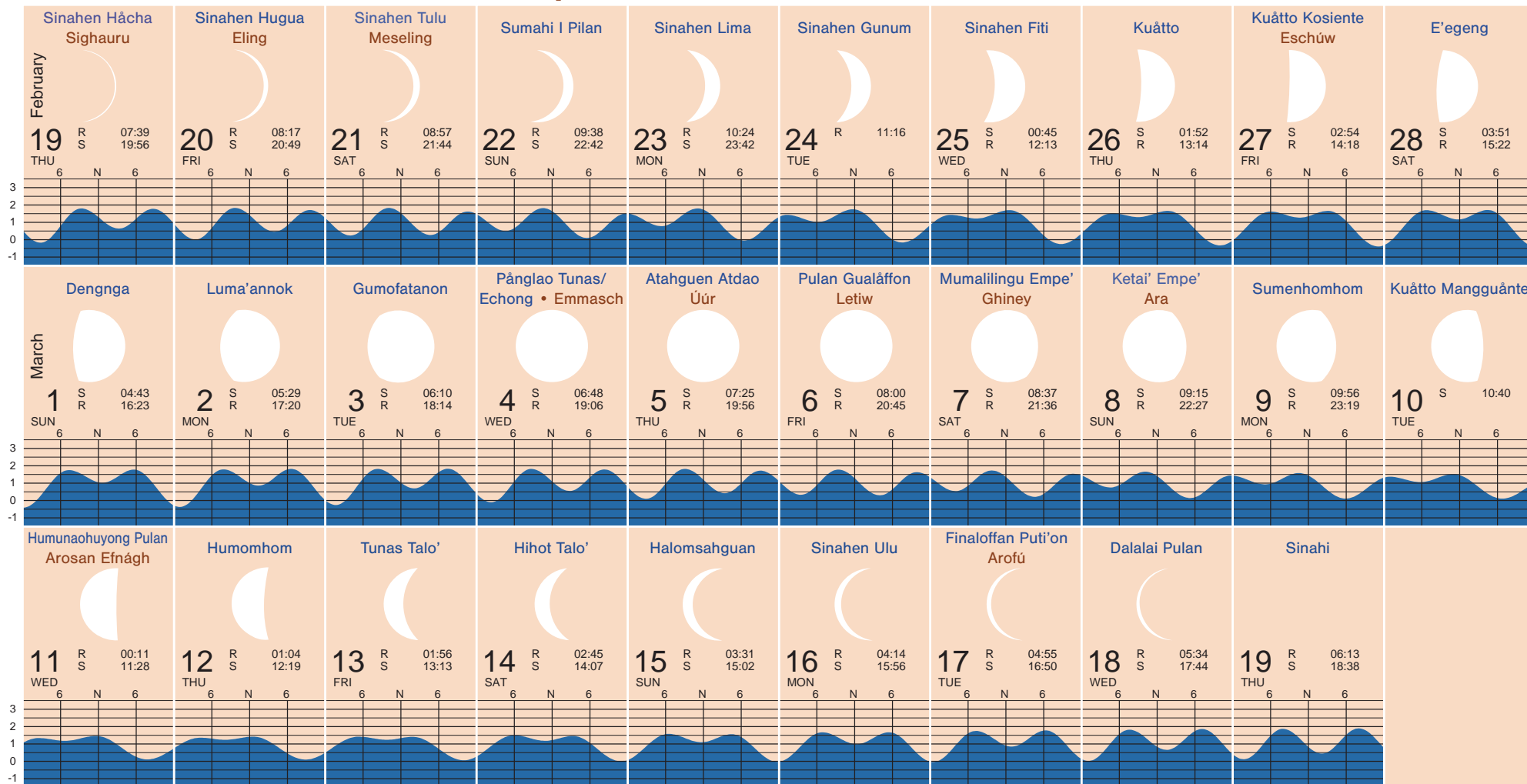
On each of the Northern Mariana Islands, fishing is more than a way to gather food – it is a practice rooted in respect for the ocean and its rhythms. From the use of *fisga* (spear), *talåya* (cast net), *chenchulu'* (surround net) and *tekken* (gill net), generations of indigenous knowledge teach us to take only what is needed, ensuring that fish populations remain healthy for the seasons ahead. Every catch is valued, and waste is minimized, honoring both the resource and the effort it takes to harvest it.

All along the archipelago, traditional fishing methods continue to thrive. In Saipan's shallow lagoons, *talåya* would spread wide in a graceful arc. Along Tinian's rocky shores, skilled hands work handlines with patience from the cliffs. In Rota's clear reefs, spearfishers move silently beneath the waves using *pachinko* (speargun), selecting each fish with care. These methods are living links to heritage, blending sustainability, skill and deep cultural pride.

Ma'imo' Máailap

2026

February 19 - March 19



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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The late Gov. Palacios was a steadfast champion of CNMI's fishing community, promoting sustainable fisheries to support the people of the islands. March 2023 Council meeting in Saipan.

PHOTO: WPRFMC

Fishing Is the Culture

“Fishing is Culture,” as the late Governor Arnold Palacios reminded us during the 2025 proclamation signing of the first CNMI Fisher’s Recognition Week (June 1-7). This truth is woven into the ceremonies, legends and gatherings of the Mariana Islands. From feasts honoring patron saints to lively village fiestas, fish is more than food – it is a symbol of community, generosity and heritage.

During religious celebrations, special permits for *chenchulu’* or *tekken* fishing allow fishers to harvest a larger catch, ensuring enough bounty for the entire village to share. In every net cast and every dish served, fishing carries the stories and spirit of the islands.

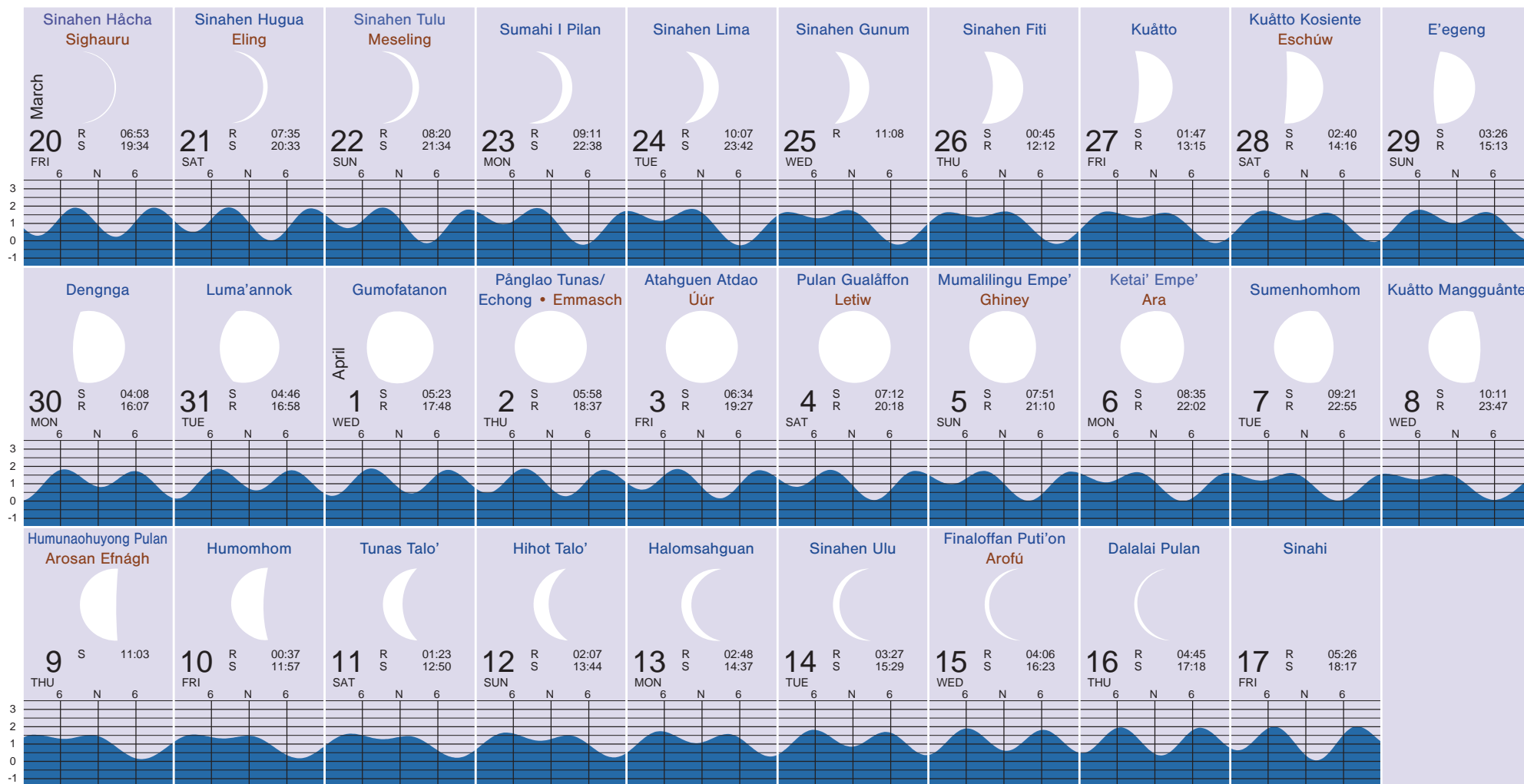


Gov. Palacios (left) and Lt. Gov. David Apatang (right) join Department of Lands and Natural Resources Secretary Sylvan Igisomar (second left) in receiving a framed copy of Senate Commemorative Resolution 24-2 from its co-authors, Sen. Corina Magofna and Sen. Ronnie Calvo. The presentation followed the proclamation of Fishers Recognition Week on May 30, 2025, at the Garapan Fishing Base.

PHOTO: CNMI Office of the Governor

Umatalaf Sééta

2026
March 20 - April 17



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
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The Fisher as Provider and Cultural Custodian

In the CNMI, the fisher is more than a harvester of seafood – they are a bridge between the ocean and the community. Their brave efforts to catch fish sustains families, feeds neighbors and upholds cultural traditions that value the sharing of catch over keeping for oneself. In communal systems, a single day's catch may be distributed across households so that no one goes without.

Kelsey Lizama shared a story passed down through generations: “My great-grandpa, Jose Lizama, would *påtte'* (share) *atulai* at the shoreline after a long day of fishing. He did not expect anything in return – he was just happy to share the wealth.”

Jesse Boy Taitano also reflected on his family's legacy: “My dad (Jesse Taitano) and my grandpa (Chu Agaga – Jesus Taitano) built my grandpa's nine-bedroom, two-story home through trolling and bottomfishing during the tourism boom in the Marianas. They were providers – not just for our family, but for the community. My mom (Marilyn Taitano) would drive around Dandan Village just to give away catches of tuna to random homes.”



(above right) Jesse Taitano (Sus Agaga) with a marlin caught off Saipan. PHOTO: Jesse Boy Taitano

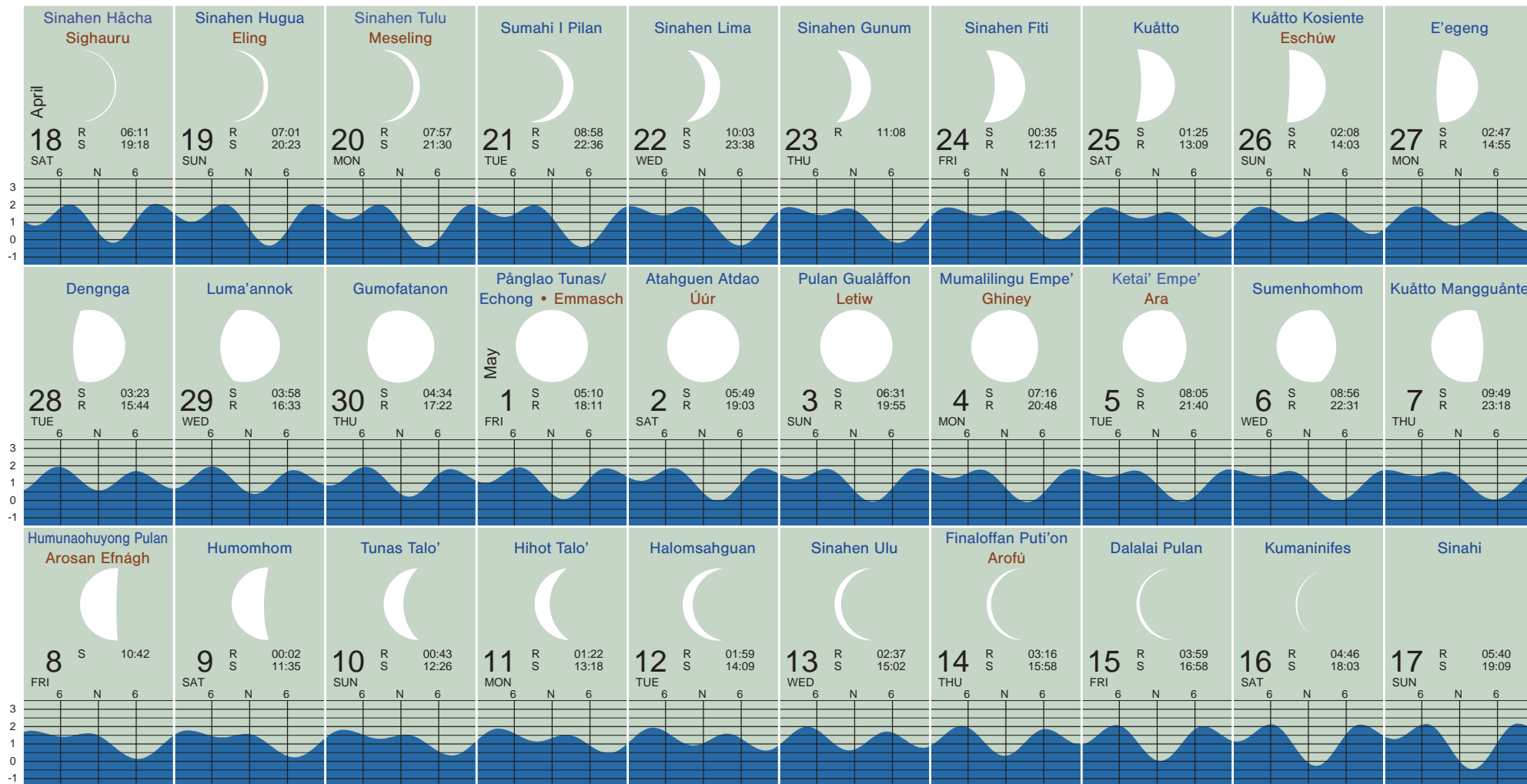
(middle) Kelsey Lizama poses with Don, a local market fisherman, after collecting data for a boat-based creel survey in the same area where her great-grandfather once shared his catch with the community. Garapan Fishing Base, Saipan. PHOTO: Angela Iriarte

(below right) Jesse Boy Taitano fishing at the old World War II tank in front of Susupe Park, Saipan. PHOTO: Angela Iriarte

Lumoho' Ghúúw

2026

April 18 - May 17

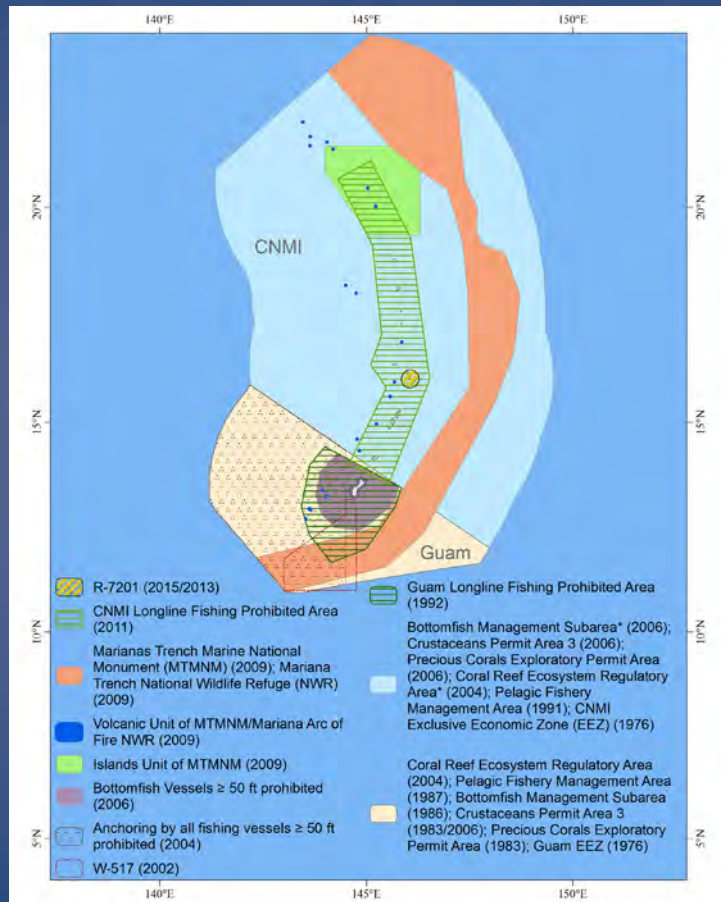


MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



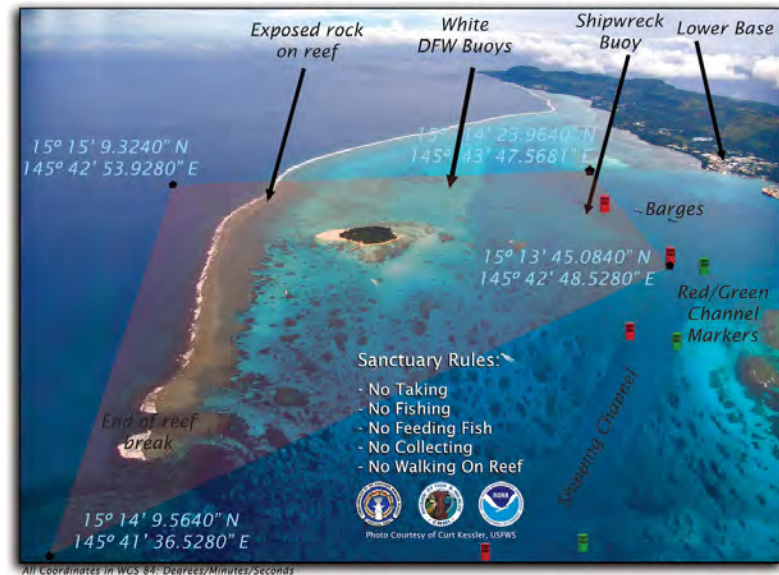
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Navigating Modern Challenges



The evolution of fishery management in the Mariana Islands - first through the Council's fishery management plans, then through presidential proclamation to establish the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument.

Mañagaha Marine Conservation Area A Fully Protected No-take Area



CNMI's Marine Protected Areas
Protecting our reefs and fish so they
can be enjoyed today and tomorrow.

Call 664-6000/30/31 to report violations.



SOURCE: CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW)

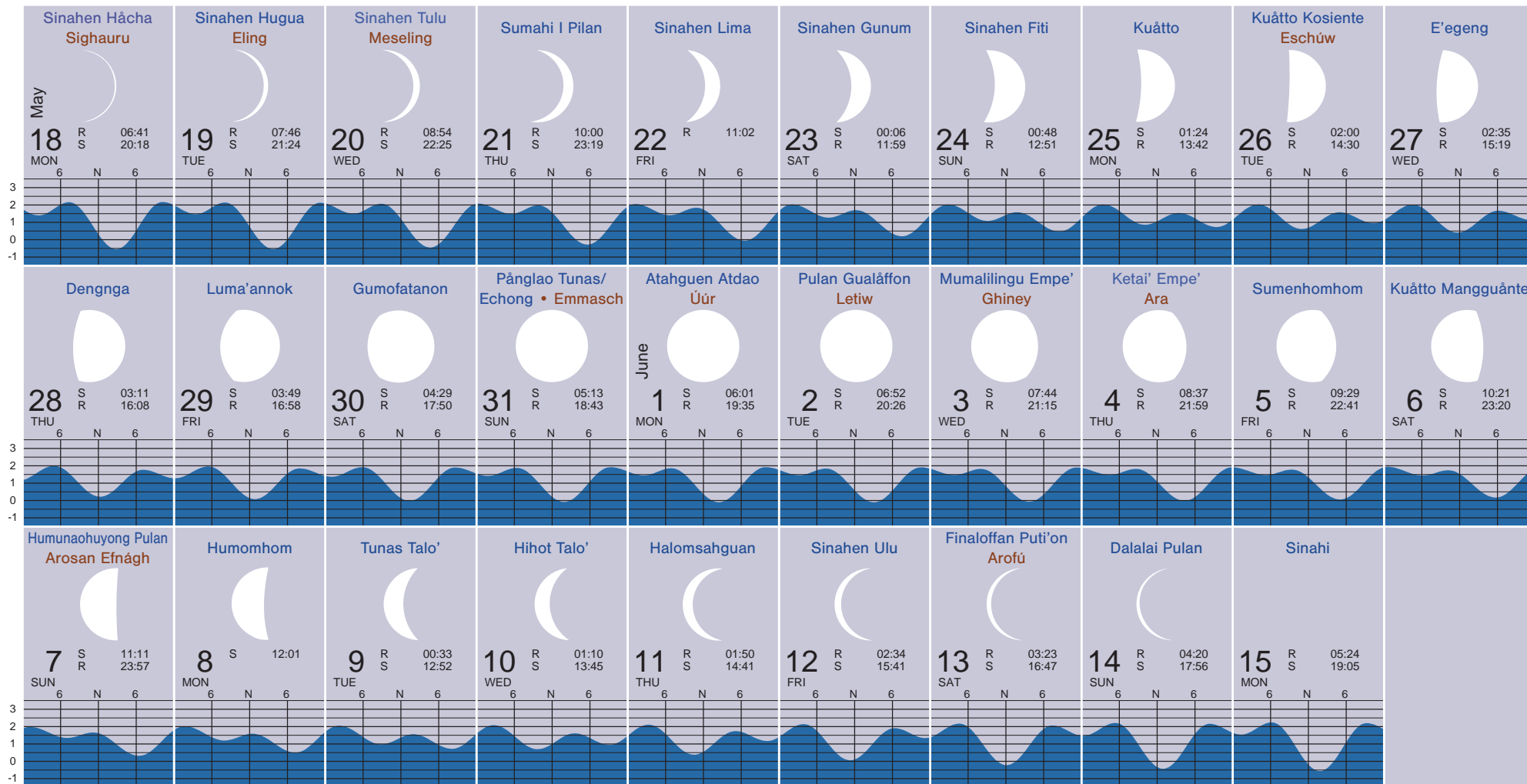
Today's fishers must navigate more than tides, currents and weather. In the Mariana Islands, changing regulations, marine protected areas and the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument continue to shape how people use and care for the ocean. While these efforts aim to safeguard biodiversity, the Council maintains that responsible fishing practices and effective fisheries management – not prohibiting access – are key to sustaining both the environment and the fishing ways of islanders.

Coupled with rising fuel costs and shifting market prices, fishers face new pressures that test their resilience. Adapting to these challenges requires balance: protecting ocean resources while ensuring that fishing remains a vital and sustainable part of island life.

Makmãmao Alimaté

2026

May 18 - June 15



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Fish and Food Security

On remote islands, food security begins with the ocean. In the Mariana Islands, locally caught fish provide fresh, nutritious meals imported foods cannot match. Lower-quality imports may fill shelves, but they lack the flavor, health benefits and cultural meaning of a fish caught that same morning. Local stories tell of communities overcoming shortages by relying on the skill and dedication of their fishers, proving that a healthy local fishery is a lifeline in uncertain times.



Laurina Sebaklim spearfishing off the east coast of Saipan.
PHOTO: Amber Pangelinan



Traven Quitugua (left) and Mii Tekopua on their way to sell their catch to a local market after a successful dive.

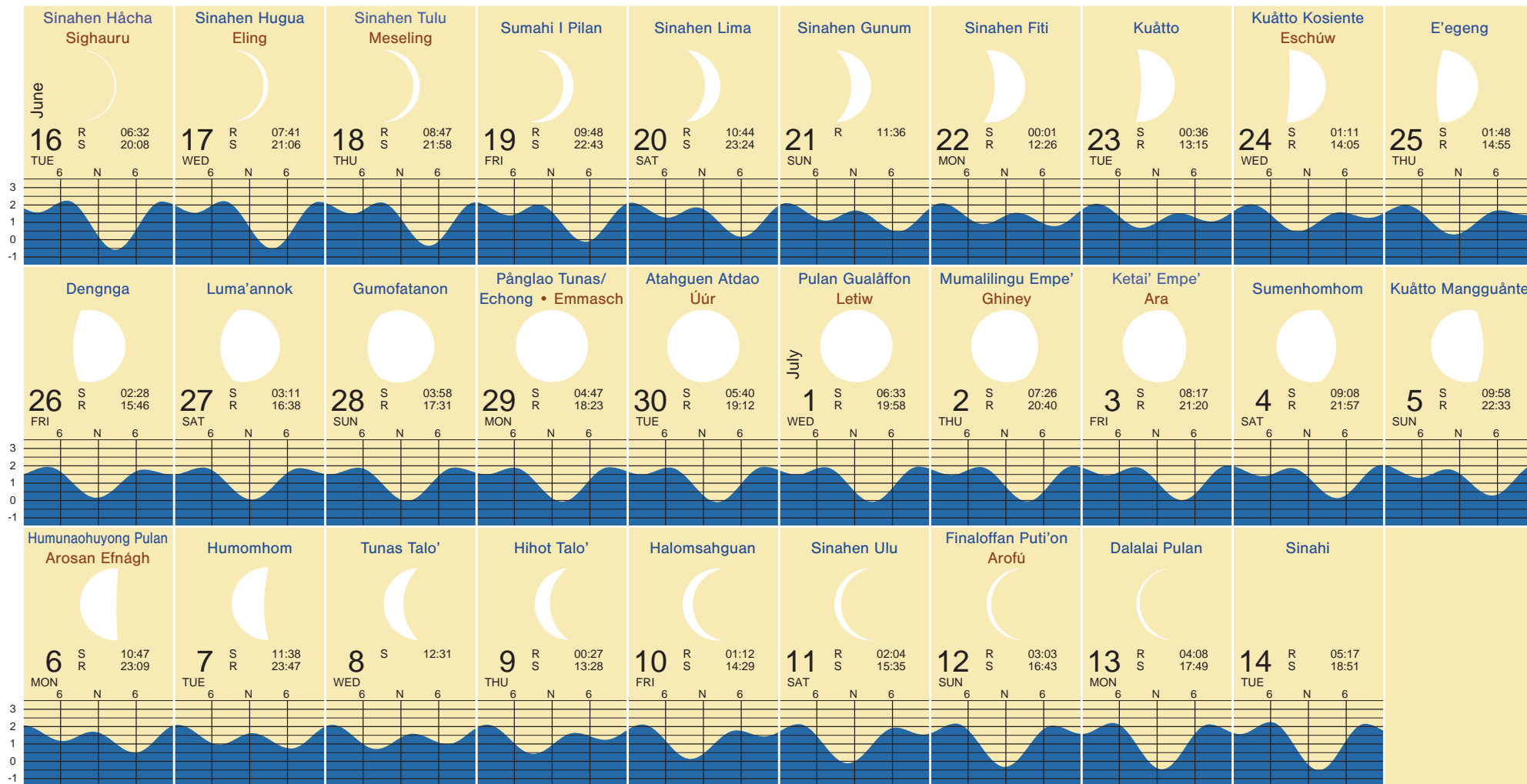
PHOTO: Mareko Tekopua

During events like super typhoons and the COVID-19 pandemic, food imports become uncertain and local communities rely on subsistence fishing. When the islands face these challenges, the people look to the sea for sustenance.

A fisherman feeds a family.
A community. A culture.

Mananaf Uul

2026
June 16 - July 14



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Fish are Money

Beyond tradition and sustenance, fish are a vital part of the CNMI's economy. Commercial and small-scale fisheries generate income, support jobs and strengthen tourism. Charter operations attract visitors from around the world eager to experience the thrill of fighting tuna, bottomfish or even a huge marlin. Every fish sold at market or served to a guest reflects the hard work of local fishers and the ripple effect their catch has through the community.

In the mid 1990s and early 2000s, tourism was the backbone of the CNMI economy, but it has since dropped drastically, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Even so, our marine resources remain strong – offering a chance for youth to lead the next wave of sustainable fishing and stewardship. As tourism recovers, rebuilding fisheries and reconnecting young people with local seafood supply chains can strengthen restaurants, resorts and markets alike.



(above) Dillan Cruz, owner and founder of Liquid Culture Charters, shows off his catch of the day. PHOTO: Clifton Norita



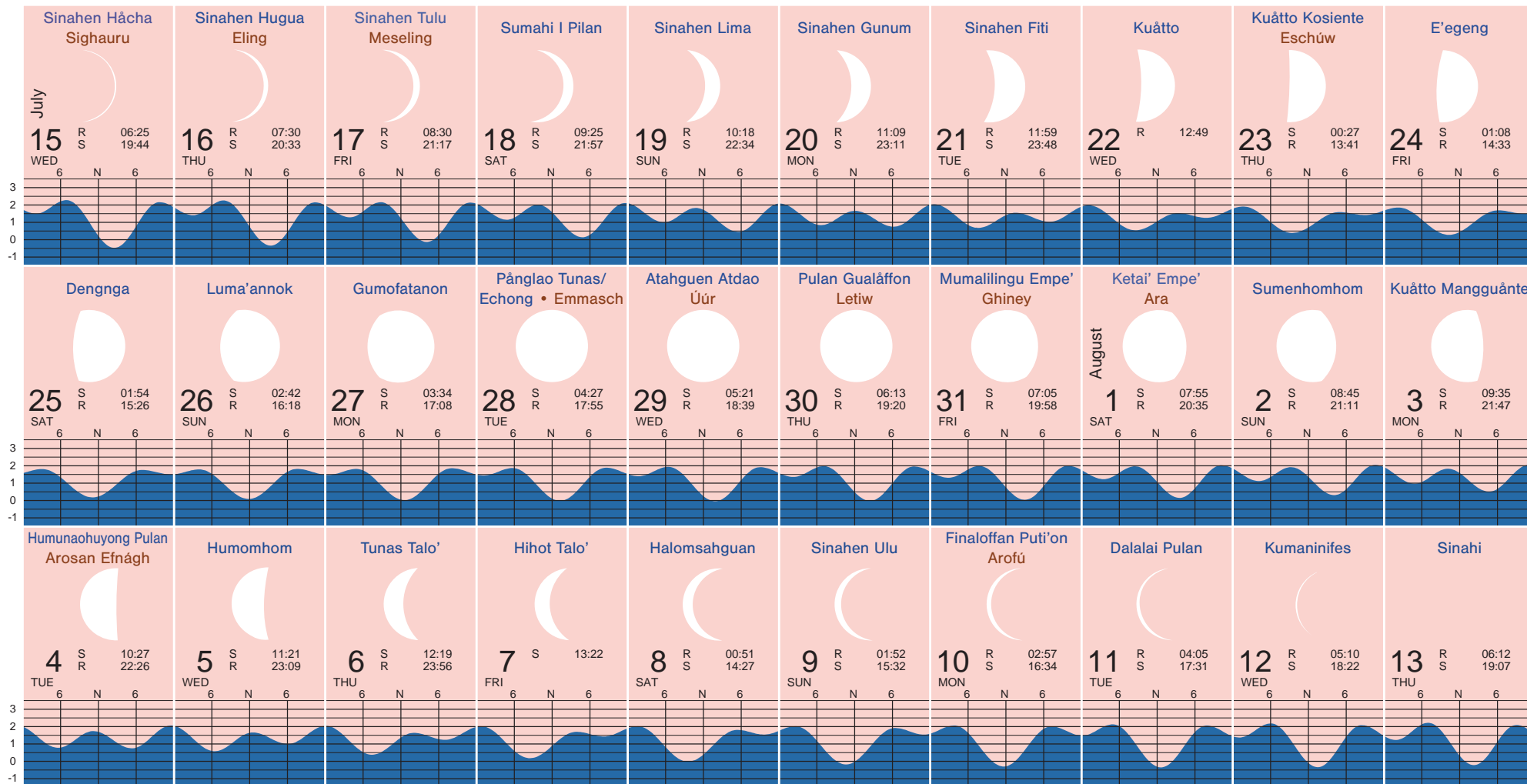
Zack Dela Cruz, a CNMI DFW staff member, aboard F/V Ocean Star, a local bottomfishing charter on Saipan. During charter surveys, DFW collects data by accompanying vessels as they take tourists fishing. Trips often end with sashimi or a barbecue of the day's catch, and staff assists guests by baiting hooks and removing fish to begin the data collection process.

PHOTO: Kelsey Lizama

Semu Wuun

2026

July 15 - August 13



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Pacific Fisheries and U.S. Sovereignty

The CNMI's waters are more than a local resource, they are part of the United States' broader presence in the Pacific. Fisheries in the Marianas contribute to the national food supply, economic activity and maritime security. The strategic location of the Mariana Islands makes its surrounding ocean an asset in maintaining U.S. sovereignty, ensuring that both the resource and the rights to it remain under local and national stewardship.

As part of the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ), these waters are managed through the Council, NOAA and the U.S. Coast Guard – a partnership that supports conservation, sustainable fishing and enforcement against illegal activity. Yet federal designations and monument boundaries sometimes overlap with traditional fishing grounds, requiring local fishers to balance stewardship with continued access to deep-sea resources that sustain their families.



2026 • 50 Years of U.S. Fisheries Stewardship

In 1976, the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) created the regional fishery management councils, including the WPRFMC. In 2026, we celebrate 50 years of this landmark law guiding sustainable, science-based management of U.S. Pacific fisheries.

(above) Local skipjack tuna fishermen in the Mariana Islands on a military vessel in May 1945.

SOURCE: Navy Civil Affairs RG 38, No. 173, “Tuna Fishing,” Northern Marianas Humanities Council

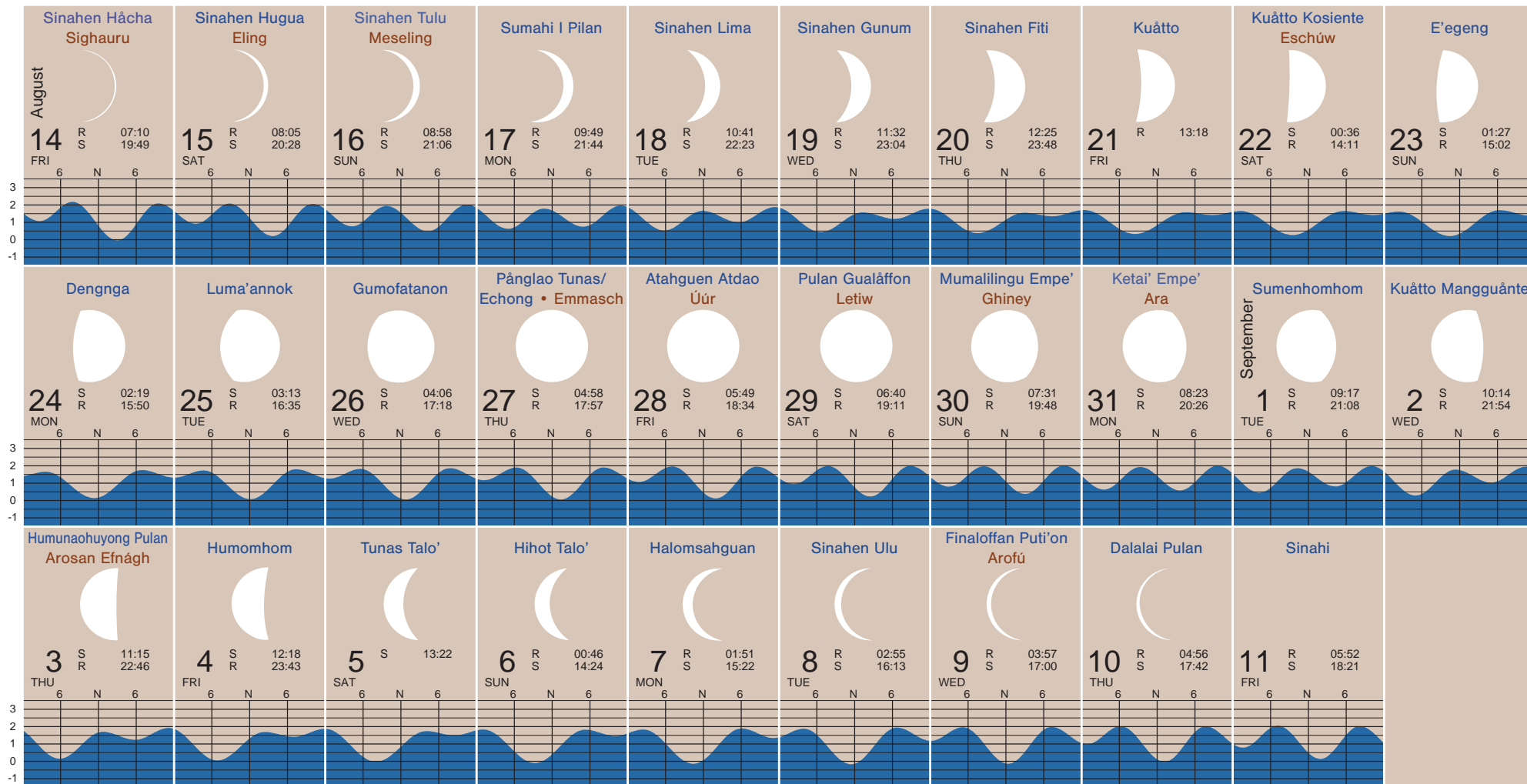
(left) “The success of the USCGC Frederick Hatch’s patrol demonstrates our dedication to promoting regional security and cooperation in this strategic environment.” Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia, May 2023. PHOTO: USCG



Tenhos Maan

2026

August 14 - September 11



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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The Global Ocean and Local Rights

In today's interconnected world, decisions made at international fisheries meetings reach all the way to the Marianas. For the CNMI, global and even regional agreements on tuna management, conservation measures and trade influence how local fishers operate within shared Pacific waters. Even without a commercial longline fleet, these policies affect access to migratory species, the availability of seafood in local markets and the broader economy of the islands.

Through participation in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and collaboration with the Council, the CNMI ensures that island perspectives are represented in regional discussions. These efforts help maintain a balance between conserving ocean resources and supporting fishing as a vital part of island life.

(above) These mahi-mahi reflect the Council's regional efforts to sustain healthy pelagic fisheries vital to island communities.

PHOTO: Dillan Cruz

(right) The CNMI once supported a small pole-and-line tuna fishery around Saipan and Tinian, where local fishers caught skipjack and other pelagic species for community markets and export. Though the fishery ended due to limited infrastructure, high fuel costs and market shifts, the CNMI remains open to responsible cooperative tuna harvests within its EEZ that support local economic development and sustainable use.

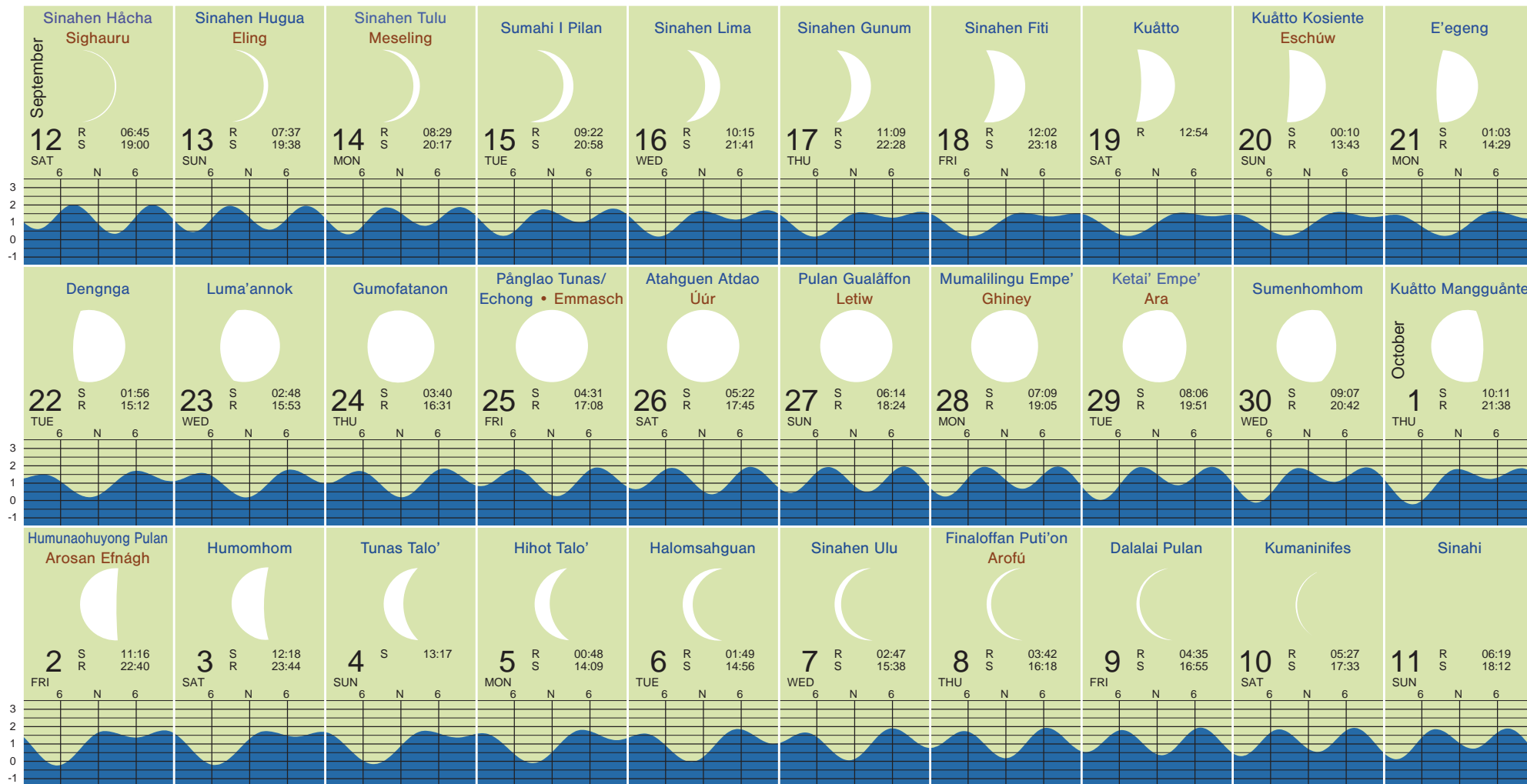
PHOTO: Jesse Boy Taitano



Lumåmlam Sarobwél

2026

September 12 - October 11



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
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Tasi to Table (TTT) high school participants learn traditional seafaring knowledge that once shaped our islands' highly skilled fishers. PHOTO: TTT

(below) Participants of the 2025 Metaw Initiative, a two-day spearfishing safety workshop that strengthens community knowledge and safe fishing practices in the CNMI. "Metaw, meaning deep sea or open ocean in Refaluwasch, because Spearfishing Dive and Rescue Training is just a mouthful."
- Dena Kamano, DFW Aquatic Education Program Public Information Officer. PHOTO: Dena Kamano



Stewardship Through Indigenous Knowledge

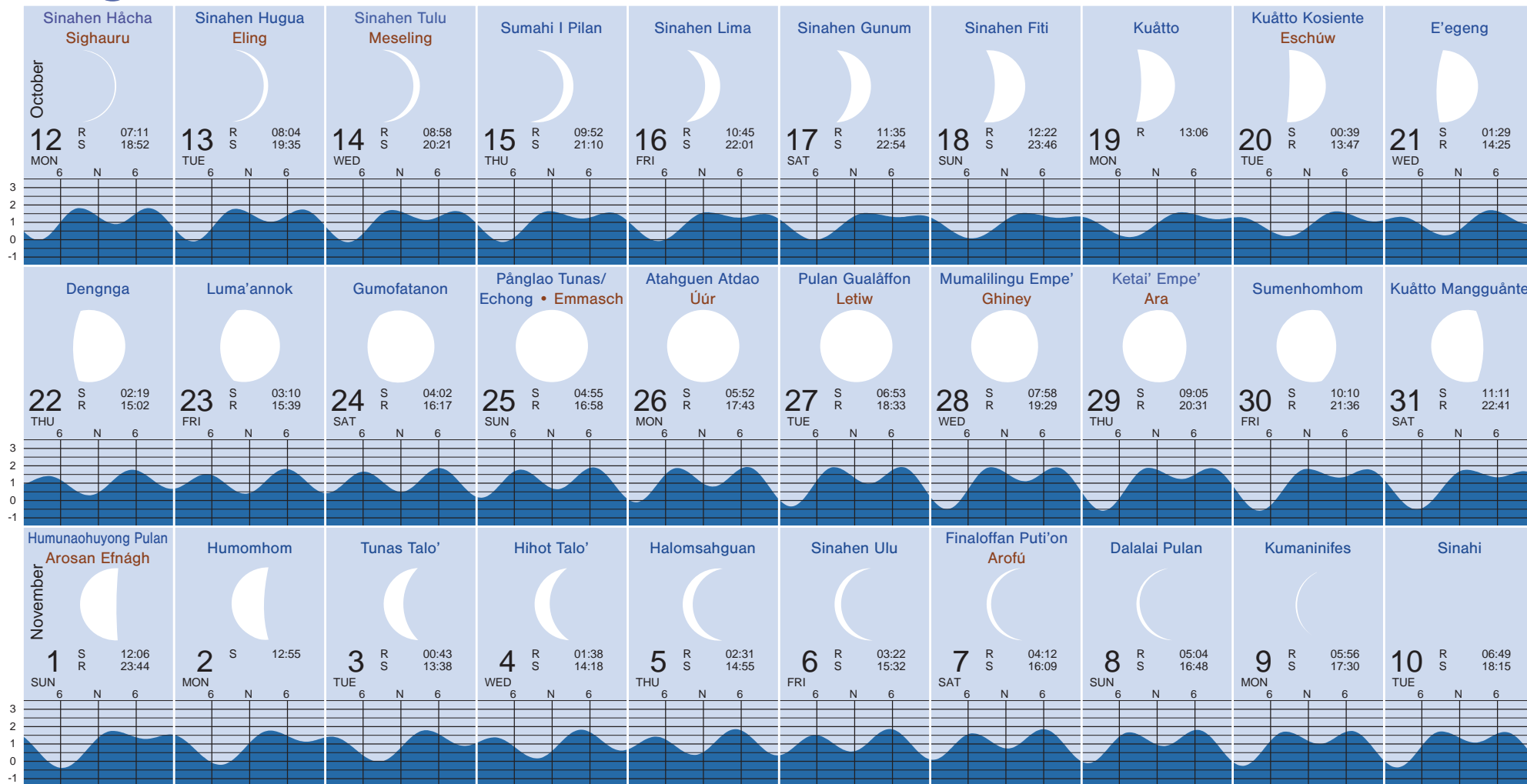
Long before modern resource management plans, the people of the CNMI relied on traditional ecological knowledge to care for their waters. Seasonal closures, sacred sites and village-led rules protected fish stocks and ensured that future generations could harvest from the same reefs. Today, cultural practitioners and the

manāmkō (village elders/leaders) continue to advocate for community-based fisheries management – proving that stewardship rooted in tradition is as relevant now as it was centuries ago.

Faguålo' Itch

2026

October 12 - November 10



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
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Youth and the Future of Fishing

The CNMI offers a wide range of hands-on programs and trainings that inspire local youth to connect with the ocean and learn about sustainable fishing practices. From community-based initiatives like the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance (MINA), Talåya Club and Tasi to Table, to workshops led by Lino & Associates and internships with DFW and the Division of Coastal Resources Management, these opportunities equip young islanders with skills in responsible fishing, marine conservation, sea safety and coastal stewardship. Together, they help shape a knowledgeable and passionate generation ready to protect our islands' natural resources for years to come.



(above) MINA volunteers during a beach clean-up at Micro Beach, Saipan. MINA is a community-based, nonprofit organization formed by a group whose dedication and compassion for the environment felt the need to promote and advocate for the protection and restoration of our natural resources in the Northern Mariana Islands.

PHOTO: MINA

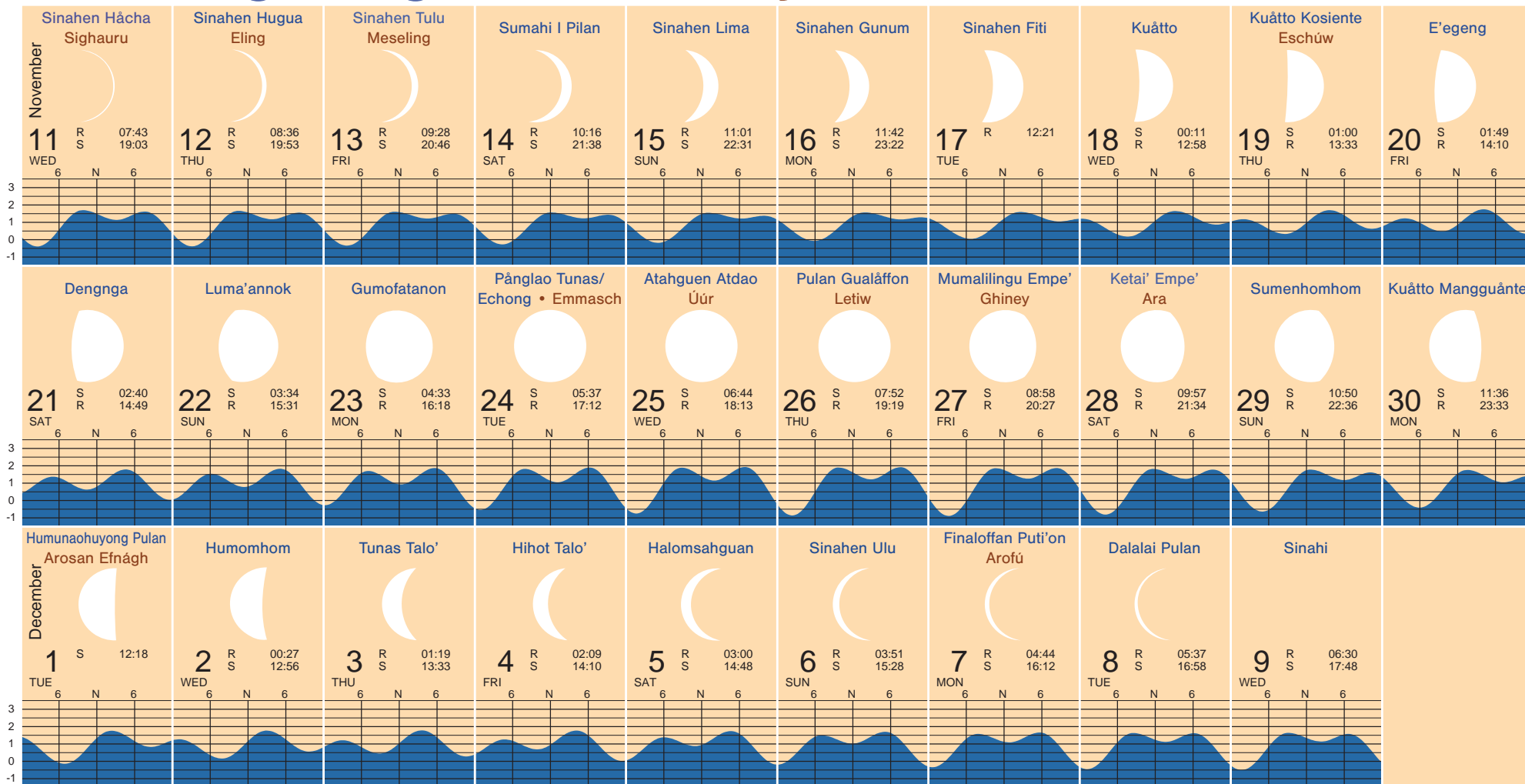


(left) “We believe in resource-conscious communities, which is why we teach our participants to LET IT GO, LET IT GROW!”
- Talåya Club. PHOTO: Ando Agulto

Sumongsong ➡ Aremwoy

2026

November 11 - December 9



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
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DFW Data Analyst Jude Lizama records catch information during the 7th Annual ISLA Mafuti Derby held August 23, 2025, helping raise community awareness of local monitoring efforts. PHOTO: Floyd Masga

Policy, Participation, and Conservation

Fisheries governance is strongest when the community's voice is heard. Public participation – through Council meetings, comment periods and local advisory sessions – helps shape the rules that guide fishing in the CNMI. Decisions on catch limits, seasonal closures and protected areas work best when grounded in both science and the firsthand knowledge of island fishers, community leaders and residents.

Ways to Get Involved:

- ❖ **Attend Council or Public Meetings** – held in person and online, with time for public comments.
- ❖ **Join Community Consultations** – the Council and DFW visit villages to gather input.
- ❖ **Apply for the Advisory Panel (AP)** – the AP provides advice to the Council on issues affecting CNMI's fisheries.

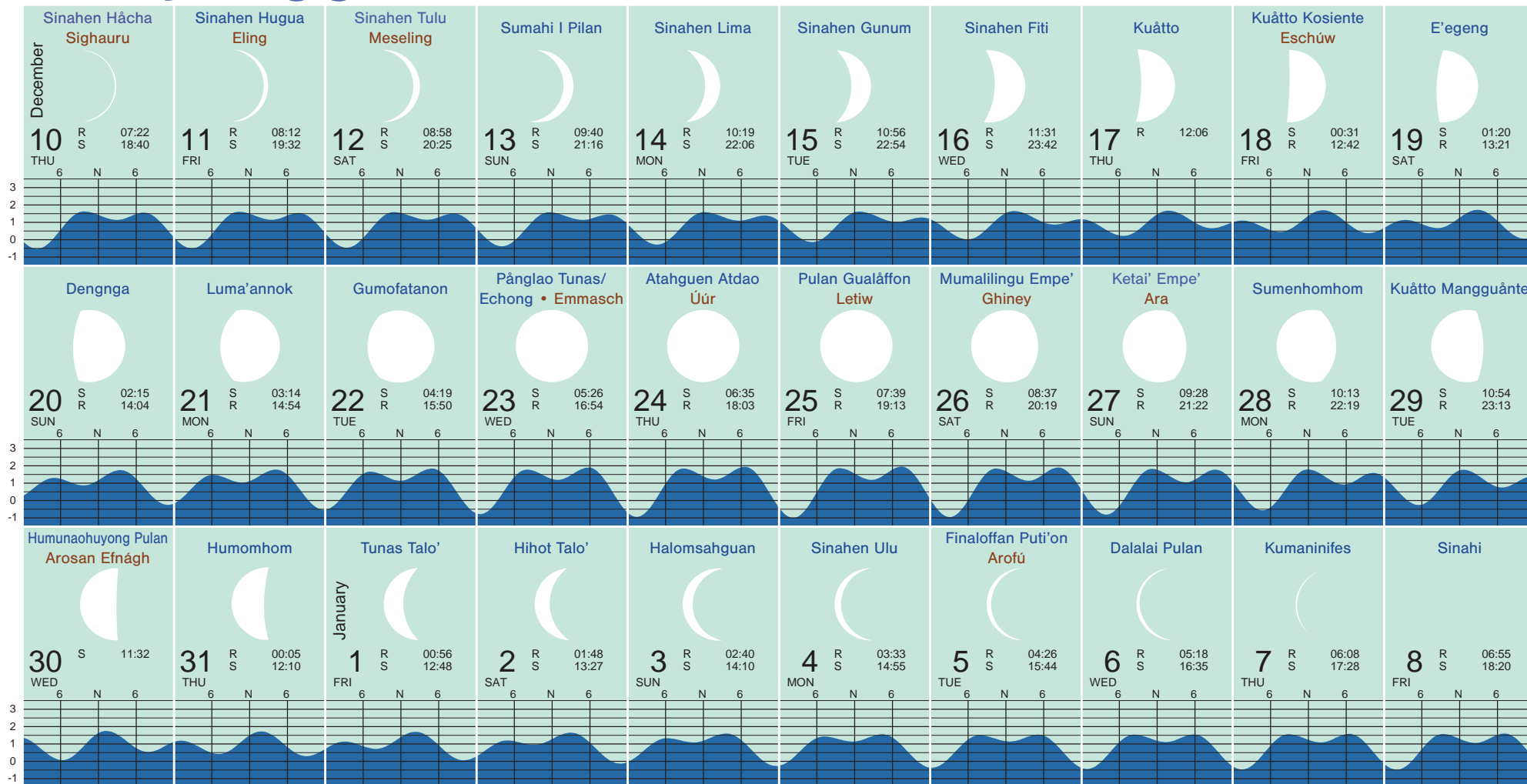
Meeting details are posted at www.wpcouncil.org/meetings-calendars and shared through local media. By taking part, community members help ensure that conservation supports both the ocean and the Mariana Islands' fishing heritage.

(right) A local fisherman brings in his catch to be sorted and weighed by DFW staff after a tekken session. PHOTO: Emina Kaipat



Umayanggan ➡ Tumwur

December 10, 2026 - January 8, 2027



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
Regional Fishery
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Just Keep Fishing: A Vision for the Future

The future of fishing in the CNMI rests on resilience, sustainability and unity. From seasoned fishers to youth just learning the tides, every islander plays a part in caring for the ocean that sustains us. By honoring tradition, embracing innovation and working together, the community can ensure that fishing remains a living heritage connecting past, present and future.

Investing in the next generation is key to that vision. The Council's U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship supports college students by covering tuition, fees and living costs for up to two years at the University of Guam, University of Hawai'i and Hawai'i Pacific University. Graduates commit to working with DFW, strengthening local fishery management and keeping knowledge rooted in the islands.



(above) JD Moses at two and a half years old, taking a nap on his grandfather's boat after reeling in some dinner.

PHOTO: George Moses



(left) From our shores to our future – Mel'Marie Litulumar is posing with her weekend catch. It's never too young to start learning to fish!

PHOTO: Jemel Taitano



The future of fishing is right before our eyes – two young fishers pause for a photo during the 7th Annual ISLA Mafuti Derby in August 2025.

PHOTO: Floyd Masga

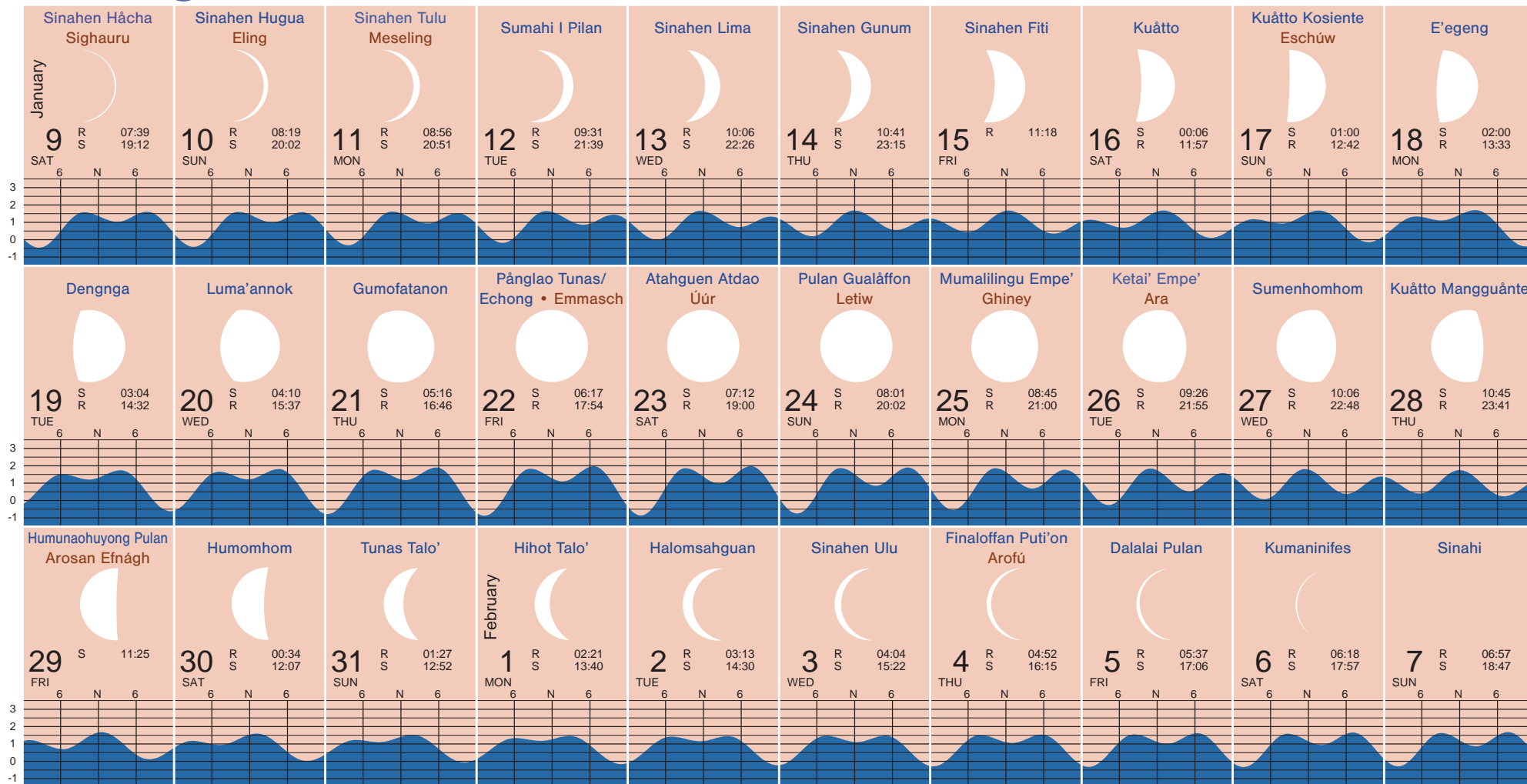
Through education, stewardship and shared purpose, the Mariana Islands can continue to thrive as a model of sustainable island life – where fishing endures not just as a livelihood, but as a way of being.

Learn more at www.wpcouncil.org.

Umagåhaf Schoow

2027

January 9 - February 7



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
Regional Fishery
Management Council

About This Calendar

The **Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council** has produced traditional lunar calendars for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) since 2007. The intent is to raise awareness about traditional ecological knowledge and enhance community involvement in fishery management. The theme for the 2026 *Eskaleran Pulan Chamorro/Refaluwasch Pápáál Maram* (Chamorro/Refaluwasch Lunar Calendar) is the importance of fish to the Pacific Islands. This calendar highlights fishing as a cultural way of life that sustains our communities, economy and sovereignty through tradition, stewardship and a shared commitment to a resilient future.

Chamorro and Refaluwasch are the indigenous people of the Mariana Archipelago. Chamorro and Refaluwasch, along with English, are the official languages of the CNMI. Words in italics in the main text are in Chamorro. The Chamorro names for the lunar months and moon phases are in blue, and the Refaluwasch names are in brown. The moon phases are for Garapan. Data to discern the first day of the lunar month are used with permission from HM Nautical Almanac Office, UKHO and the Keeper of Public Records, UK. The tide charts with moon rise and set times are in Chamorro Standard Time for Saipan and were provided by OceanFun Publishing, NZ.

Lunar month names may vary due to the traditional reliance on oral history transmitted through generations. A special *un dāngkulu na si Yu'us ma'ase* (Chamorro) and *ghilisou tumo'o'gh* (Refaluwasch) to Pedro Itibus, Cecilio Raiukiulipi, Ramon Tebuteb and the Sablan Refaluwasch family for their guidance on the lunar month names, and to all calendar contributors noted throughout.

For an electronic version of this calendar, go to www.wpcouncil.org/educational-resources/lunar-calendars.

About the Council

The **Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council** was established by Congress in 1976 to manage fisheries in the offshore waters surrounding Guam, the CNMI, American Samoa, Hawai'i and the U.S. Pacific Remote Island Areas. The fisheries in federal waters surrounding the CNMI are managed under the Mariana Archipelago and Pacific Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plans. Traditional knowledge and wide community involvement are integral parts of the ecosystem-based approach to fishery management.

- 1 **RESPECT NATURE** and your place in it.
- 2 **SEEK ADVICE** of experts with generational knowledge of the local resources.
- 3 **SHOW REGARD** to spawning seasons and juvenile fish.
- 4 **DO NOT WASTE.** Take only what is needed.
- 5 **KEEP SAFE** people, property and resources.
- 6 **OBEY** fishing laws and rules.
- 7 **USE PROPER** gear and techniques.
- 8 **PICK UP YOUR TRASH.**
- 9 **SHARE** your catch.

Produced by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, with the Department of Agriculture, Division of Aquatic & Wildlife Resources.



Fishermen Code of Conduct

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Front cover photos: (left) Tasi to Table high school participants learn traditional seafaring knowledge that once guided our islands' highly skilled fishers. (right) The future of fishing is right before our eyes – two young fishers pause for a photo during the 7th Annual ISLA Mafuti Derby in August 2025. PHOTOS: TTT and Floyd Masga