



Marianas Trench Marine National Monument

Planning Update Number 4, September 2014



Christmas Tree Worm at Maug, Mariana Arc of Fire NWR (Volcanic Unit). Photo: Kaylyn McCoy/NOAA

Preparing the Monument Management Plan

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are in the process of preparing a Monument Management Plan and environmental assessment (MMP/EA) for the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument (Monument). The Monument encompasses approximately 61 million acres of unique submarine geologic features and waters of the Mariana Archipelago in the western Pacific Ocean. The draft MMP/EA is expected to be available for public review this winter.

Visitor Center Working Group Public Listening Sessions Scheduled

Since beginning the planning process, we have gathered comments from the public, cooperating agencies, and the Mariana Trench Monument Advisory Council (MTMAC) to formulate draft action plans and strategies for the management of the Monument.

In September 2013, the MTMAC established a working group to develop recommendations regarding the type, purpose, location, and potential funding sources for the Marianas Trench Monument Visitor Center. This visitor center working group will conduct a series of community “listening sessions” to solicit input from the public during the month of September. Please share your ideas on a future visitor center by attending one of these public meetings.

Listening Session Schedule

Tinian

Date: September 16, 2014
Time: 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Location: The Fleming Hotel

Saipan

Date: September 17, 2014
Time: 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Location: American Memorial Park

Rota

Date: September 22, 2014
Time: 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Location: Mayor of the Municipality of Rota, Conference Room

Fishing in the Monument

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), with input from the public and in consultation with the Service, adopted non-commercial fishing regulations for the Islands Unit of the Monument, effective July 2013. The Refuges (Trench and Volcanic Units) do not include the overlying waters. These waters carry the same fishing regulations as other federal waters around the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and Guam. The formal regulations were published in the Federal Register and Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 665.

Here is a synopsis of the new fishing regulations for the Islands Unit:

Commercial fishing is prohibited. Conducting commercial fishing outside the Islands Unit and non-commercial fishing within the Islands Unit during the same trip is prohibited.

Recreational fishing is only allowed if the owner and operator of the boat you are fishing from have a valid Monument fishing permit. Both the owner and operator of a vessel must hold either a non-commercial fishing permit or recreational charter fishing permit. Permits will only be issued to a resident or a charter business of Guam or the CNMI.

The operator of any fishing vessel must maintain an accurate and complete record of catch, effort, and other data on report forms provided by NMFS. The vessel operator must submit an original log sheet for each day of fishing to the NMFS within 30 days of the end of each fishing trip. Permits are issued by the NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) and on-line at:

www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD_permits_index.html

For questions regarding permits or logbooks, please contact PIRO permits at:

telephone (808) 725-5190 or
email PIRO-permits@noaa.gov

Customary Exchange

An important cultural tradition across the Pacific is fishing to share and to give. This non-commercial “customary exchange” brings people and communities together in social harmony.

Customary exchange is the non-market exchange of marine resources between fishermen and community residents, including family and friends of community residents, for goods, and/or services for cultural, social, or religious reasons. It may include cost recovery through monetary reimbursements and other means for actual trip expenses, including but not limited to ice, bait, fuel, or food, that may be necessary to participate in fisheries in the western Pacific.

Fishermen who harvest fishery resources in the Islands Unit under a non-commercial fishing permit may engage in customary exchange which helps to preserve traditional, indigenous, and cultural fishing practices, on a sustainable basis. However, customary exchange by fishermen fishing under a recreational charter permit is not allowed.



*Groupers - *Seloptia powelli*, *Epinephelus retouti*, *Cephalopholis sexmaculata*. Photo: NOAA*

A Compliance Guide to Fishing in the Monuments (including Rose Atoll & Pacific Remote Islands MNMs) can be found online at: www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/pdfs/Compliance_Guide_Monuments_Fishing_8-1-13.pdf

Research in the Islands Unit

Scientists from NOAA's Coral Reef Ecosystem Division traveled to the Islands Unit aboard the NOAA ship *Hi'ialakai* this spring. Scientists and partners completed broad-scale towed-diver surveys and conducted fish surveys and benthic surveys. A second trip took place in July on the *Oscar Elton Sette*. For this trip, research included bottomfish sampling, documentation of shark depredation and interaction with bottomfish, reef-fish sampling, intertidal-shallow water benthic surveys and water quality sampling around the islands of Farallon de Pajaros (Uracas), Maug, and Asuncion.

Blog postings on this research can be found at: <http://pifscblog.wordpress.com>

Next MTMAC Meeting to be held on Tinian

The MTMAC will hold its next meeting on September 16, 2014, in San Jose, Tinian, MP. The current officers of the MTMAC are:

Chairman	Benigno M. Sablan	(CNMI)
Vice Chairman	Frank Rabauliman	(CNMI)
Secretary	Roy Tsutsui	(U.S. Navy)

The other council members include Mr. Arnold Palacios (CNMI) and Lt. Commander Joshua Blocker (U.S. Coast Guard). Agenda items will include discussion of monument goals (below) and management strategies. The public will have the opportunity to observe the proceedings and to provide comments at the end of the session each day.



CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife Bio-sampling team: front right: Trey Dunn. Then left side from front to back is Mike Tenorio, Jesse Guerrero, John Castro and Coxswain: Ray Storms.

Draft Monument Management Plan Goals

1. Conserve and protect the marine ecosystems around the islands of Farallon de Pajaros (Uracas), Maug, and Asuncion; 21 of the Mariana Ridge undersea volcanoes and thermal vents; and the geologic features and life forms in the Mariana Trench.
2. Provide for traditional access by indigenous persons for culturally significant subsistence, cultural and religious uses.
3. Develop education, interpretation, and outreach programs to enhance understanding and appreciation of Monument resources and efforts to conserve them.
4. Assess and promote scientific exploration and research opportunities and adopt measures to ensure that the Monument's ecosystem, marine resources or species, and features of scientific interest are not degraded.
5. Assess and provide opportunities for tourism, recreation, and economic ventures that are compatible with the Monument's ecosystem.
6. Contribute to the recovery and protection of all native species with special consideration for threatened and endangered species, and species of management concern.

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4

If you would like to be added to or removed from the Monument Management Plan mailing list, or if you prefer to receive future updates via electronic mail or hard copy, please contact us at (808) 792-9558 with your full name and address.

Additional information about the Monument is available on our websites:
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/mariana_trench_marine_national_monument/
http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/MNM/mnm_index.html



Front edge of lava flow, Mariana Arc of Fire NWR (Volcanic Unit). Photo: NOAA