

**Minutes
For
Marianas Trench Monument Advisory Council Conference Call**

April 3 / 4, 2013

This meeting is a follow-up to the March 5-6 telecon, to complete that agenda

1:00 p.m. HST / 9:00 a.m. ChST

Call in number: 877-937-9768

Pass Code: 8818550#

1. Introductions, confirm participants on the call:

- Chairman Sablan conducted roll call and welcomed the MTMAC
- Call to order took place at 9:15 (ChST)
- Participants confirmed:

MTMAC: Chairman Ben Sablan and Arnold Palacios (CNMI), Roy Tsutsui (DoD)

Absent: Dr. Joyner (CNMI), LCDR Morgan Roper (USCG)

Agencies: Susan White, John Calhoun, and Laura Beauregard (FWS); Midori Akamine and Lisa Croft (NMFS)

2. MTMAC Nominations:

- Letters nominating members to the MTMAC #2, including Dr. Joyner's replacement, should be sent to Susan White. The current appointments expire in September 2013.
- Governor Inos may choose to nominate a replacement for Dr. Joyner before September, considering the time it takes to vet nominees (6 months). All appointments would be for the next term, including Dr. Joyner's replacement.
 - ACTION (1): MTMAC recommends FWS send out letters asking for new nominations.

3. Approval of March 5 /6 Minutes:

- March 5 /6 conference call minutes were discussed and approved without changes.
 - ACTION (2): FWS will add the 3/5-6/2013 minutes to the official MTMAC files.
- It was agreed that the current meeting would proceed from where the last meeting ended, and that it could proceed without LCDR Morgan Roper.

4. Report out on Meeting Action Items:

- Research requests received from last quarter: FWS has not received any permit requests since the March 5-6 meeting, although 2 were received in March for activities outside of the monument in March.
 - ACTION (3): Recommend FWS email locations of the permit requests to Mr. Sablan and Mr. Palacios.
- CNMI noted news reports that two firms, Nautilus and Neptune, were doing research in the trench area and volcanic vents.
 - ACTION (4): CNMI will email the news reports to the participants on the call.

- Trench Monument Management Plan (TMMP) update - FWS
 - #3 planning update is completed and will distribute (first to the MTMAC and Congressional contacts, and then to the public). The planning update is a newsletter that discusses the public meetings held last year and provides govt responses to the public's questions. NMFS noted for the record that NOAA leadership objects to some of the content in the planning update.
 - ACTION (5): Recommend FWS create a TMMP timeline forward.

- Education & outreach – Why Do We Explore Course, Mar 22, 2013 - NMFS
 - A March 22 course was proposed, but the new date may be in July. Mr. Sablan asked that it be scheduled so he could attend, considering his travel to a conference in Palau July 10-16.
 - Possibilities being explored, eg. Working with the Department of Education to present this course during CNMI In-Service Training Day, or at the Pacific Islands symposium (a larger event planned for this summer), but all is unsure due to travel restrictions and budgets.
 - ACTION (6): Recommend NMFS check the dates of the other conferences in scheduling the proposed Course and share updated information and plans.

- Federal funding opportunity for Marianas Trench MNM
 - NMFS reported on 2 student (undergrad) fellowships in 2012 from CNMI who spent 10 weeks at Scripps Research Institute where they were mentored by the labs' professors. The program exposes undergrads to conservation management science and to students from different parts of the U.S. Students gave a report on the project they did and this year they will present at a university-wide symposium.
 - 2013, NMFS hopes to send 2 CNMI students and 2 Guam students to Scripps. Recruitment process has begun thru University of Hawaii. Interested students apply online. There are people in CNMI and Guam involved in the recruitment process. No selections made until budget is confirmed, hopefully within a month.
 - ACTION (7): Recommend NMFS keep the MTMAC informed about the recruitment process.
 - ACTION (8): Recommend NMFS share the student presentations for this summer's program.
 - DoD - these programs are very beneficial to the students but also to the public. They present an opportunity to boost education and awareness of MTMNM and the work done by the students.
 - NMFS – when budget is approved, will begin advertising the program with the CNMI-Guam public and well-established researchers who don't often get to work with students from Pacific Islands. Good for students, good for Scripps.

- Proposed non-commercial fishing regulations and management recommendations; open for public comment until April 2, 2013 -- NMFS
 - Comment period will close on April 8 for the proposed rule. NMFS will then review public comments and decide to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the rule

- The proposed rule bans commercial fishing, but also defines and implements different programs that allow access under certain circumstances. The proposed rule is consistent with proposal and recommendation of WESPAC.
- Mariana Archipelago Ecosystem Science Implementation Workshop - planned for May/June 2013 in Saipan -- NMFS
 - NOAA is scheduling 2 research cruises to the Mariana Archipelago in 2014. NOAA is drafting science plans for the whole archipelago not just the monument.
 - NMFS - planning a 3-day workshop in Saipan sometime between May 21 - June 6, to propose research for the cruises. A committee is working with Eric Bruer (PIF science center) to finalize themes, panelists, speakers, and dates. NOAA's past consultation about research undertaken was done in conjunction with fisheries planning meetings.
 - ACTION (9): Recommend NMFS keep MTMAC apprised of the workshop planning.
 - FWS stated that the ecosystem science plan is archipelago-wide so the science needs of the monument will draw from this plan and will be incorporated into the TMMP.
- Summary of Proposed corals listing meetings held in CNMI Feb 2013 -- NMFS
 - NMFS held public hearings on the proposed coral listing and the comment period closed yesterday. NMFS will review comments and issue a decision on the proposed rule in December 2013. Any final listing decision would be effective 60 days after the decision is announced.
 - Discussion:
 - ESA only applies to U.S. and U.S. territories even though species exist worldwide. NMFS has no authority over extraterritorial species, except when they are imported to the U.S.
 - Listing could impact CNMI.
 - During the MNM planning process (Island Unit); protecting the biodiversity of the reefs was a primary issue for the public.
 - An extensive assessment of the coral reef ecosystem in the Islands Unit has not been done. The data is focused on reef health and density and is not a species-specific survey. ESA proposals and listings must use the best available scientific data. CNMI noted there may be other species in the Island Unit and NMFS should take note when making final decisions to list or not to list.
 - Under the proposed rule, 28 of 29 species in CNMI would be listed as threatened (only 1 would be listed as endangered). If species are listed, proponents of a project would be required to determine where the species are present. Before NMFS determines take limitations for threatened species, it would go back to public for a review process and engage with CNMI.
- Other information or news issues
 - ACTION (10): Recommend NMFS send Mr. Palacios information on the Tsunia Scholarship with the Coral Reef Task Force so that he can pass it along in CNMI.

- Guam Membership on MTMAC – suggestion that a discussion of adding a representative of Guam to the MTMAC be delayed until Governor Inos is briefed on the issue.
 - ACTION (11): Recommend Mr. Palacios discuss with Governor Inos, his interest in Guam MTMAC membership (meeting tomorrow afternoon).
- Proposal to add an agenda item for future meetings on a working group (NOAA, CNMI, FWS, others in community) to look at uses and alternatives for a ‘center’ or facility. CNMI agreed with the need to move forward with plans and discussions about a center because it is a significant issue for the CNMI public. FWS is considering strategies for how to do this as a collaborative, inclusive working group that is not too large to be ineffective.
 - ACTION (12): Recommend FWS share options about forming a ‘Center’ group and welcome comments.
- Acknowledging the Center is a high-interest item, the Council discussed the proposed working group’s relation to the MTMAC and agencies; bearing in mind MTMAC’s role as an advisory council to advise federal agencies and that the group could be an official sub-committee of the MTMAC. Discussion of whether the working group is 1) created and overseen by agencies, but the MTMAC is kept informed, or 2) created by agencies and overseen by MTMAC – who then reports outcomes to agencies. Pros and cons of the options were discussed.
 - ACTION (13): The planning of a ‘Center’ will be a standing MTMAC agenda item.
 - ACTION (14): Recommend after Action (12), FWS invite MTMAC members, NMFS, members of the public, partners, and others to participate. The group will be a sub-committee of the MTMAC, with the task it to discuss the possible uses and needs of a ‘center’, develop at least 3 options, and submit these to the MTMAC. The MTMAC would provide the options to agencies for consideration for the draft Monument Management Plan.
- A suggested a future agenda item – to sign interim By-Laws to make them official. It was agreed to defer discussion on this until the next slate of MTMAC members are appointed.
- Set time and date for next conference call
 - Discussion will continue of possible in-person meeting in Saipan coincident with the proposed science workshop. Uncertainty due to agency travel restrictions and budgets.
 - ACTION (15): The next conference call is tentatively scheduled for June 4 / 5 1:00 p.m. HST / 9:00 a.m. ChST.
 - ACTION (16): FWS will provide draft minutes of this meeting to Mr. Tsutsui to review and send out to the MTMAC.
- Meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m. (HST).

Prepared by: FWS and Roy Tsutsui (MTMAC Secretary)