

# COMMUNITY-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS BEGINS IN MARIANAS

## NORTHERN ISLANDS

On April 22, 2015, Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council staff met with Northern Islands community members at the Garapan Community Center in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), to begin the planning process for a community-based fishery management plan (CBFMP). Jerome Aldan, mayor of the Northern Islands



*Northern Islands community members identify natural resources at a community-based fishery management planning workshop at the Garapan Community Center in Saipan, CNMI in April 2015.*

requested the Council's assistance in developing the CBFMP in November 2014 after seeing a presentation of the Malessos (Merizo), Guam CBFMP.

The first phase of the planning process involved a multiple-day workshop focused on community efforts to define goals

and determine priorities in the management of marine resources. Participants targeted repatriation to their ancestral lands, resource planning for sustained subsistence and economic development as their top priorities.

It was determined that the management process would start with the island of Pagan as it is currently being accessed by the community and the Northern Mayor's office. Anatahan, Sarigan, Alamagan and Agrihan would follow as islands that once had permanent settlements. All of the islands have archeological sites and known cultural uses and values. Community members identified resources and cultural sites on each of the islands.

The community was very dynamic and had strong participation in the planning process. Their knowledge of the resources in the Northern Islands is extensive and deep, and had been submitted for consideration in the expansion of the Mariana Islands Training and Testing (MITT) draft environmental impact statement (EIS). While the military's draft involved numerous surveys of flora and fauna, not using the ecological knowledge that exists in the community about Pagan and Farallon de Mendinilla while developing an EIS for this area is a failure in the implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

As a small community seeking resettlement and repatriation to their ancestral lands, another major objective was to ensure the Northern Islands community's continued presence in the area. The distance from the main islands and difficulty of access protects the area; however, military expansion in the area is a major threat.

There are approximately 300 Northern Islands community members living in Saipan. In 1981, residents of the Northern Islands relocated to Saipan prior to the eruption of the volcano on the island of Pagan. Resettlement of these islands has been difficult for the community because of the lack of economic, legal and political power needed to access the islands. Being part of the homestead program would give the community access to homesteading opportunities available to other CNMI citizens.

The Northern Islands is a large area rich in resources, a strong culture and history, and numerous unique habitats. It has great potential for economic development in tourism and reef fisheries. Geothermal and geological resources may also be available for development. Small agricultural production may contribute to a diversified economy. There is a strong need for planning for the entire community and a strong willingness to continue with this planning process. The second phase of the CBFMP, which involves strategizing and the development of an action plan, is scheduled for August 2015.

## YIGO

In response to a request from Mayor Rudy Matanane, the Council held a workshop on April 23, 2015, to address the Yigo community's desire to increase access to and management of their marine resources.

Yigo is the northernmost municipality and the largest village on Guam with an area of 35 square miles and a population of 20,539 (2010 Census). Andersen Air Force Base constitutes roughly half of Yigo.

This initial workshop was the first of two phases in the development of the CBFMP in Yigo. Participants were introduced to both the concepts and challenges of community-based resource management. Cultural and natural resources were identified, but it was clear that the community will be doing more thinking about resources in the interim between this introductory workshop and the second and final phase. Completion of the two phases will provide enough information to develop the Yigo CBFMP, which defines the community process that would enable the community to manage their marine resources.

The community concluded that the study area would include the entire island of Guam but will need to arrive at a consensus on a more specific management area as well as whether or not to include the Andersen Air Force Base.

In the second workshop, scheduled for August 2015, the community will identify and rank community resources and areas of conflict as well as strategize and develop recommendations to address these issues. ➡



*Yigo mayor Rudy Matanane addresses community members at a November 2014 meeting where the Council introduced the community-based fishery management planning process.*