



PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Sylvia Spalding (808) 383-1069 or Sylvia.Spalding@noaa.gov
For Immediate Release

Education Memorandum of Understanding Signed to Build Territory, Commonwealth Fishery Management Capacity

HONOLULU (WPRFMC) – 12 September 2014 – A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) aimed at building the capacity of the US Pacific Island territories to manage their fisheries and fishery-related resources has been signed by more than a dozen higher education institutions and federal and local fishery management agencies and organizations in American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and Hawaii.

Signatories include the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, University of Hawaii (UH) at Hilo, UH Manoa's Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology, Hawaii Pacific University, American Samoa Community College, University of Guam, Northern Marianas College, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, Guam Department of Agriculture, CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office, NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center and US Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program.

The partners will work together to achieve four goals with implementation to begin with the 2015 academic year.

Identify and recruit students from the Territories/Commonwealth who are interested in a career in fishery science and/or management. These students must also commit to being employed at a fishery-related local agency in the Territories/Commonwealth. Employees in the local fishery agencies who need or desire to enhance their education and training in fishery science/management will also be identified and recruited.

Assist the identified students/employees to be successful in undergraduate and/or graduate educational endeavors. This assistance includes a) supporting and improving course articulation of fishery-related academic programs and courses among the above education institutions; b) helping to address tuition and other education-related financial needs through existing financial assistance and established federal education programs and by exploring the development of a fellowship/scholarship program that requires a commitment from the student recipient to work in a fisheries-related agency in the Territories or Commonwealth; and c) ensuring effective, ongoing advising and mentoring from both the college/university and the home Territory/Commonwealth.

Support and encourage the development of curricula, permanent courses, programs and faculty positions for fisheries at the undergraduate and/or graduate level; online fishery trainings; and internships.

Assist, support and encourage local fishery-related agencies to employ these students in the Territories/Commonwealth.

The MOU was drafted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council's Education Committee, as directed by the Council at its 159th meeting in March 2014. The Education Steering Committee will meet in October to work on an implementation plan.



U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Memorandum of Understanding

This memorandum of understanding (MOU) summarizes the aspirations shared by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO), NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program, University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UHH), University of Hawai'i at Manoa (UHM) Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB), Hawai'i Pacific University (HPU), American Samoa Community College (ASCC), University of Guam (UOG), Northern Marianas College (NMC), American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (AS DMWR), Guam Department of Agriculture (DOA), and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR).

At its 156th meeting, in March 2013 in American Samoa, the WPRFMC recommended that a committee be formed to explore expanding the concept of the Marine Science Undergraduate Fellowship Program to include not only American Samoa but also Guam and the CNMI. This recommendation was concerned with building the capacity of the Territories and Commonwealth to manage their fisheries and fishery-related resources. The Marine Science Undergraduate Fellowship Program is a partnership among the WPRFMC, the American Samoa Coral Reef Advisory Group (CRAG) and UHH that began in 2010. The program provides financial support for an American Samoa undergraduate student to obtain a UHH marine science degree. As part of this agreement, CRAG provides the fellowship recipient with an internship position in American Samoa DMWR or other marine science focused program in American Samoa during UHH summer breaks.

As a result of this recommendation, the WPRFMC created an Education Committee consisting of representatives of the parties to this MOU. After deliberations over several months, the Committee arrived at the following findings:

1. It would significantly benefit the Territories/Commonwealth and the Western Pacific Region if residents from their own islands were educated and employed to serve in the local fishery-related agencies. People who were raised in the islands have an intimate understanding of the traditional and unique cultures and societies and the integral part that fisheries plays in them. They have a vested ancestral interest and cultural commitment to ensure the health of the fishery resources and their use to sustain local communities. They are also more likely to remain as long-term residents and employees in the islands, unlike employees who are recruited from outside. One of the seven Guiding Principles of the WPRFMC, which has authority through the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act over the fisheries seaward of the state waters surrounding the US Pacific Island Territories/Commonwealth, is to "recognize the importance of island cultures and traditional fishing practices in managing fishery resources and foster opportunities for participation."
2. The capacity for the American Samoa, Guam and CNMI to manage their fisheries and related resources has been impeded by several factors:
 - a) Local fishery agencies currently rely on employees recruited from outside the US Pacific Islands who tend to leave after a few years.
 - b) The number of island residents with appropriate college undergraduate or graduate degrees, experience and training to secure these positions is minimal.
 - c) Local fishery agencies currently have employees who could use and desire to obtain further education (e.g., to attain a bachelor's or graduate degree) and training.
 - d) American Samoa and the CNMI have only community colleges, and the UOG on Guam does not have a bachelor's degree program in marine science.
3. For degree programs not offered in their home islands, the preference of many students from the Territories/Commonwealth is to attend a college/university in Hawai'i rather than one on the mainland. Hawai'i's culture, climate and environment are close to that of the other US Pacific Islands, and there are communities from the Territories/Commonwealth established in Hawai'i.
4. In spite of the above, students from American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI face academic and cultural challenges in Hawai'i. Their educational success depends on such factors as course articulation, mentoring, and opportunities for work-study and other financial support. As there is a history of students from the Territories/Commonwealth attending colleges/universities in Hawai'i, a suite of student support services already exist to assist them at these institutions.
5. In addition, the fishery curricula and programs at Hawai'i colleges/universities are evolving and are in development. They do not yet have a robust fishery science/management focus, particularly in regards to Pacific Island fishery species and ecosystems, stock assessments, a comprehensive review of fishery management tools, and fishery-related social, cultural and economic concerns.
6. Internship(s) at the WPRFMC, NMFS PIFSC, NMFS PIRO, UHH, UHM HIMB, HPU or local Territory/Commonwealth fishery-related agencies could help, in part, to rectify this problem to ensure students are prepared to effectively meet the fishery science and management needs of local agencies, and there are examples that prove the success of such internships.

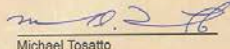
Taking the above findings into consideration, the parties to this agreement aspire to build the capacity of American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI to effectively manage their fisheries and related resources through the employment of their own people by striving to attain the following goals:

1. Identify and recruit
 - a) Students from the Territories/Commonwealth who are interested in a career in fishery science and/or management and who will commit to being employed at a fishery-related local agency in the Territories/Commonwealth, and
 - b) Employees in the local fishery agencies who need or desire to enhance their education and training in fishery science/management.
2. Assist such students/employees to be successful in their undergraduate and/or graduate educational endeavors by
 - a) Supporting and improving articulation of fishery-related academic courses among ASCC, HPU, NMC, UHH, UHM and UOG.
 - b) Helping to address tuition and other education-related financial needs for students/employees to earn a four-year undergraduate or graduate degree through existing financial assistance and established federal education programs and exploring the development of a fellowship/scholarship program that requires a commitment from the student recipient to work in a fisheries-related agency in the Territories or Commonwealth.
 - c) Ensuring they have effective, ongoing advising and mentoring from both the college/university and their home territory/commonwealth, so as to identify and rectify educational deficiencies and address potential communication issues arising from cultural or other factor that might impede academic success.
3. Support and encourage the development of curricula, permanent courses, programs and faculty positions for fisheries at the undergraduate and/or graduate level at HPU, UHH, UHM and UOG; online fishery trainings; and internships at the WPRFMC, NMFS PIFSC, HPU, UHH, UHM HIBM or local Territory/Commonwealth fishery-related agencies.
4. Assist, support and encourage local fishery-related agencies to employ these students in the Territories/Commonwealth.

The management of this agreement will be coordinated by the members of the Education Community, which is comprised of representatives from the signatory institutions/agencies. This agreement will be in effect from the date signed below and will continue thereafter for a period of five years, at which time the agreement may be reviewed and revised or reissued as agreed upon by the parties. The agreement may be terminated by any party at any time provided that the other parties are given prior written notification of at least one semester to ensure students are accommodated. The signatories to this MOU understand and agree that this document is not legally binding or enforceable, but is rather an aspirational document expressing goals and principles. This MOU is intended to assist the parties in working toward a genuine partnership to build the capacity of the US Pacific Island Territories/Commonwealth to manage their fisheries and related resources through the employment of their own people.


 Kitty Simonds
 WPRFMC Executive Director

Date


 Michael Tosatto
 NMFS PIRO Regional Administrator

Date


 Dr. Samuel Pooley
 NMFS PIFSC Director

Date


 Edward Flinn Curren
 USFWS Pacific Islands Sport Fish
 Restoration Grants Manager

Date


 Matthew Platz
 UHH Academic Affairs Vice Chancellor

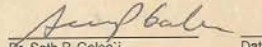
Date


 Dr. Jo-Ann Leong
 UHM HIBM Director

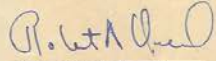
Date


 Dr. Matthew Liao-Troth
 HPU Provost

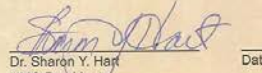
Date


 Dr. Seth P. Galea
 ASCC President

Date


 Dr. Robert A. Underwood
 UOG President

Date


 Dr. Sharon Y. Hart
 NMC President

Date


 Dr. Ruth Metagi Tofiga
 AS DMWR Director

Date


 Mariquita Taitague
 Guam DOA Director

Date


 Arnold Palacios
 CNMI DLNR Secretary

Date