



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center
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Edwin Reyes
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Re: Consistency determination for the proposed fisheries life history research during research cruise SE-18-03 in the waters surrounding Guam

Dear Mr. Reyes:

The Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, Fisheries Research and Monitoring Division is preparing to conduct a cruise aboard NOAA Ship Oscar Elton Sette (Sette) in the waters surrounding Guam. The cruise (SE-18-03) titled *Fisheries Life History* will conduct fisheries life history research primarily in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and spend one day conducting research around Guam. This cruise is anticipated to start on May 31 and conclude on June 24, 2018. We have determined that the proposed research activities are consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the approved Guam Coastal Zone Management Program. This consistency determination is submitted in compliance with the Federal consistency requirements of the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1456(c)(1)(C)) and implementing regulations (15 CFR Part 930).

Description of Proposed Activity

The Fisheries Life History cruise will occur in the near-shore waters of Saipan, Uracas, Maug, Asuncion, Pagan, Anatahan, Guguan, Sarigan, Farallon de Medinilla and Guam. The cruise can generally be grouped into four major activities: (1) Spearfishing from small boats deployed off the Sette for a total of eight harvested and three non-harvested reef fish species to be used in stock assessments and life history research (otoliths, or "ear bones" will be collected from each fish for analysis); in the waters around Guam only five shallow water species would be targeted; (2) Demersal line fishing directly off the Sette and from small boats for deepwater grouper, eteline snapper, and mesophotic depth lutjanid, lethrinid, and epinephelid complex species for life history research (a total of five deep water species would be targeted); (3) Assessment of near-island gradients of phytoplankton biomass by collecting in situ information on oceanographic conditions along longitudinal gradients from each island visited; and (4) Collection of near-reef water samples from small boats that will be used for environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis to assess potential

biodiversity gradients of harvested species along the archipelago. A complete description of the planned activities is included in our permit application to the CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife (enclosed). All spearfishing and line fishing activities will target fish species that are highly abundant throughout the Mariana Islands, and no more than 30 specimens per shallow water species (5 species x 30 whole specimens = 150 total) and 10 specimens per deepwater species (5 species x 10 whole specimens = 50 total) will be collected in the waters around Guam. There will be no use of illegal fishing gear or activities within local marine protected areas, and none of the targeted species are locally or federally protected. Also, all small boat operators will be federally-certified coxswains who have undergone and passed the NOAA Motorboat Certification Course, the NOAA Component course, and the Advanced Coxswain Training course.

Expected Coastal Effects

In reaching our determination, we considered many coastal uses and resources, including:

- Public access;
- Recreational resources (providing coastal recreational opportunities accessible to the public);
- Fishing;
- Historic or cultural resources (protecting and preserving historic resources in the coastal zone management area);
- Scenic and open space resources and enjoyment (protecting and preserving the quality of coastal scenic and open space);
- Marinas and floodplain management;
- Coastal ecosystems, including resource creation and restoration (protecting valuable coastal ecosystems);
- Biological and physical resources (air, tidal and non-tidal wetlands, ocean waters, estuaries, rivers, streams, lakes, aquifers, submerged aquatic vegetation, land, plants, trees, minerals, fish, shellfish, invertebrates, amphibians, birds, mammals, reptiles, and coastal resources of national significance);
- Economic uses (providing public or private facilities and improvements important to the jurisdiction's economy);
- Coastal hazards (reducing hazards to life and property from tsunami, storm waves, flooding, erosion, subsidence, and climate change); and
- Managing development.

The activities associated with the Fisheries Life History cruise will not adversely affect these coastal uses or resources because our research activities are temporary and short-term in nature, infrequently conducted in these nearshore waters (once every three years), and carried out by professional scientists. Specifically, the research would not be conducted on land and would not involve the construction of any permanent structures; therefore it would not affect development, coastal hazards, economic uses, marinas, floodplains, public access, and use of scenic and open space resources. The research activities involve fishing by line and/or spear and operation of small boats powered by outboard motors are not expected to reduce or diminish the functional capacity of the coastal ecosystem or impact commercial or recreational fisheries because the area from which the fish will be extracted is large in size (135,458 km²) and a relatively small amount of fish is proposed for removal from the ecosystem. For example, 50 total deep water specimens which are

all part of the Guam bottomfish multi-species stock complex¹ (5 species x 10 samples) would be removed from the waters around Guam totaling no more than 150 pounds (lbs) of fish or .002 percent of the 2017-2018 total allowable catch (TAC). Approximately 150 total shallow water specimens would be removed from the waters around Guam. Two of the five species, a surgeonfish (*Acanthurus lineatus*) and a wrasse (*Thalassoma lutescens*) are regulated and have associated TACs (classified by taxonomic family): surgeonfish (*Acanthuridae* - 97,600 lbs) and wrasses (*Labridae* - 25,200 lbs). The average estimated weight for these two species is one pound per specimen; 60 total specimens (30 each) are proposed for collection around Guam, which is approximately .0003 percent of the surgeonfish TAC and .001 percent of the wrasses TAC. The removal of these low percentage levels (.001%, .002%, .0003%,) of the TAC given the abundance of the fish populations is not expected to adversely affect the stocks. These fish collections would also provide useful scientific data that will assist with local coastal zone management issues including providing a better understanding of shallow water coral reef fisheries and reef fish life history.

Consistency Evaluation

The policies and objectives of Guam's Coastal Zone Management Program, as set forth in Guam Land-Use Policies, Exec. Order 78-37 (Nov. 15, 1978), promote the sustainable development and use of marine and coastal resources. As discussed above, the proposed activity will not cause adverse effects to Guam's coastal zone management area. The underlying objective of the proposed activity is to improve our understanding of ocean ecosystems. This objective is in line with the policies and objectives of Guam's Coastal Zone Management Program. Thus, we have determined that the proposed action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of Guam's Coastal Zone Management Program.

As provided at 15 CFR Parts 930.39 and 930.41, we request your concurrence within 60 days of receipt of this letter. If we do not hear from you in 60 days we will presume your concurrence.

Please don't hesitate to contact Hoku Johnson (hoku.johnson@noaa.gov) or my staff with any questions regarding this request.

Respectfully,



Michael P. Seki, Ph.D.
Director

Enclosures:
DFW Permit Application (SE-18-03)

¹ http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD_regs_3.html#Guam