

# Man, Land, & Sea

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*Protecting Guam from Ridge to Reef*



# Stakeholders Advance Development of Rules and Regulations for the Guam Forest System Plan

By: Christian Paul Benitez, Guam Coastal Management Program

The Government of Guam has taken another significant step toward protecting and managing the island's natural resources with the development of Rules and Regulations for the Guam Forest System Plan (GFSP). This effort, mandated under Guam Forest Legacy Act of 2012, aims to establish a comprehensive framework to conserve Guam's forests, enhance watershed health, support biodiversity, and expand opportunities for sustainable recreation and economic growth.

On September 9, 2025, more than 40 representatives from government agencies, nonprofit organizations, academia, and community groups gathered at the Hilton Guam Resort & Spa for a stakeholder meeting hosted by the Bureau of Statistics and Plans, Guam Coastal Management Program (GCMP), in partnership with the Guam Department of Agriculture (DOAG). Funded through a NOAA Office for Coastal Management grant, the meeting marked a pivotal stage in the process of shaping the GFSP's implementing rules and regulations.

During the opening session, Edwin Reyes, GCMP Administrator, highlighted the importance of

interagency coordination and building upon recent planning momentum to strengthen Guam's coastal and forest resource management.

Chelsa Muna, DOAG Director, welcomed attendees by underscoring the importance of collaboration in the process. *"The Guam Forest System Plan is more than a document—it's a living framework for how we protect and manage our island's forests,"* Muna said. *"The success of this plan depends on all of us—government, partners, and community members, working together to ensure that Guam's forests remain healthy and resilient."*

Christine Fejeran, DOAG Forestry and Soil Resources Division Chief, provided an overview of the GFSP's vision and the current status of the rulemaking process. *"Developing clear rules and regulations is critical to putting the Guam Forest System Plan into action,"* Fejeran explained. *"These regulations will give us the tools to close gaps in enforcement, strengthen protections for native ecosystems, and create opportunities for sustainable use of our forest resources."*

Participants engaged in working groups focused on the GFSP's four overarching goals: **Manage watersheds to protect and improve water quality of surface water, groundwater, and nearshore marine habitats; maintain and enhance biological**

**integrity of native ecosystems; support public access to the Forest System; and economic strengthening by sustainable use of forest products, and protection of key forest ecosystem services.** Each group reviewed existing laws and regulations, identified gaps, and recommended solutions to guide the drafting of new provisions.

Key themes emerged across all groups, including:

- **Stronger enforcement and coordination** – increasing staff capacity, enhancing permitting oversight, and creating a centralized electronic permitting system.
- **Modernizing laws and plans** – updating the local Endangered Species Act, stormwater regulations, invasive species laws, and forestry program species lists.
- **Public access and education** – expanding signage, trail systems, recreational opportunities, and cultural plant protections, while clarifying hunting and firearms regulations and increasing outreach.
- **Sustainable industries and ecotourism** – defining ecotourism in local law, supporting green waste and biochar initiatives, and encouraging industries that utilize invasive or non-native timber.



Christine Fejeran, DOAG Forestry and Soil Resources Division Chief, provided an overview of the Guam Forest System Plan's vision and the current status of the rulemaking process.



• **Adaptive management** – developing site-specific management plans, inventories of culturally significant plants, and expanded restoration capacity.

These recommendations, rooted in the direct input of stakeholders, will serve as the foundation for drafting and promulgating rules and regulations under the GFSP. GCMP and DOAG are committed to ensuring that the rules for the plan's implementation are both enforceable and responsive to Guam's most pressing forest management challenges.

*"Guam's forests provide clean water, biodiversity, cultural resources, and recreational opportunities," said Reyes. "The Guam Forest System Plan, strengthened through clear rules and regulations, will ensure these resources are protected and managed for generations to come."*

**Next Steps and Timeline:**

The development of the GFSP Rules and Regulations is guided by a clear set of SMART objectives to ensure progress remains on track:

1. Stakeholder Planning Meetings – Completed on September 9, 2025, successfully convening multiple stakeholders to identify priorities and regulatory needs.
2. Draft Rules and Regulations Completion – A comprehensive draft of new or amended rules will be developed by June 30, 2026.
3. Economic Impact Statement – To meet the requirements of the Administrative Adjudication Law, the Economic Impact Statement will be finalized by June 30, 2026.
4. Public Hearing – Required notices and at least one public hearing will be conducted by July 31, 2026 to gather community feedback.
5. Submission to Executive Branch – The draft



*Watershed Management and Water Quality Group Discussions were facilitated by GCMP Senior Planner, Esther Taitague.*

rules and regulations will be submitted to the Office of the Governor and the Office of the Attorney General for review and approval by August 31, 2026.

6. Legislative Submission and Passage – The final step will be submission to the Guam Legislature for review and passage by September 30, 2026, ensuring the rules are adopted before the close of the 38th Guam Legislature's term.

These milestones reflect Guam's commitment to not only drafting strong regulations but also ensuring that they are transparent, enforceable, and aligned with both environmental protection and community needs. Together, they set the course for transforming the Guam Forest System Plan into a legally enforceable framework that will safeguard Guam's forests for the future.



*Group discussion on Biological Integrity and Native Ecosystems was facilitated by Camille Quichocho, Biologist, Guam Coastal Management Program.*



# Thousands Unite to Protect Guam's Shores During the 31st Guam International Coastal Cleanup

By: Steven Dierking, Guam Coastal Management Program

Guam once again proved the power of community as approximately 2,500 volunteers gathered on Saturday, September 20, 2025, to take part in the island's largest single-day environmental event, the 31st Guam International Coastal Cleanup.

The annual effort spanned more than 25 miles of shoreline across 23 sites, from Ritidian in the north to Malessó and Inaláhan in the south. Families, schools, businesses, military units, and civic organizations all joined hands to protect the island's fragile marine environment.

Volunteers collected approximately 20,000 lbs. (10 tons) of trash and debris, with the most common items including beverage cans, plastic and foam fragments, and cigarette butts. Together, their work not only beautified Guam's coasts but also prevented harmful waste from entering the ocean ecosystem.

## A Global and Local Effort

The Guam International Coastal Cleanup is

part of a worldwide movement organized by Ocean Conservancy and supported locally by the Bureau of Statistics and Plans' Guam Coastal Management Program (GCMP) in partnership with the Office of the Governor and the Lt. Governor's Islandwide Beautification Task Force (IBTF).

## Special Thanks to Site Leaders

The success of the cleanup would not have been possible without the dedicated Site Leader Volunteers who organized, motivated, and guided participants at each location. These site leaders served as the backbone of the event—coordinating logistics, distributing supplies, ensuring safety, and collecting valuable data for the global Ocean Conservancy database. Their leadership ensured that every site, from Tumon to Talofofo, was not only cleaned but also documented for long-term environmental tracking.

Organizers extended their deepest gratitude to these volunteers, recognizing that their commitment and teamwork transform the Coastal Cleanup from a one-day event

into a sustainable community tradition of stewardship.

## Youth Leading the Way

Many of the day's participants were students, who not only gained service-learning credits but also hands-on experience in stewardship. For many young people, the event was both educational and empowering, instilling a sense of responsibility for Guam's future.

## Looking Ahead

The Guam Coastal Management Program expresses their gratitude to the thousands who contributed their time and energy. The data collected during the cleanup will also be submitted to Ocean Conservancy's global database, which helps researchers track and combat marine debris worldwide.

The Guam International Coastal Cleanup continues to serve as a reminder that protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility—and that even small actions, when multiplied across a community, have the power to create lasting change.



Volunteers haul trash from the beach at Pago Bay shoreline.



A major trash cleanup during the 31st Guam International Coastal Cleanup at Tanguisson Beach.





*Ritidian Beach Cleanup Crew at the Guam National Wildlife Refuge in Yigo.*



*A group of volunteers participate in the Dadi Beach Cleanup in Apra.*



*Yona Mayor Brian Terlaje greeting and assisting cleanup volunteers at Tagachang Beach Park in Yona.*



*Volunteers are ready with buckets and grabbers at the Coastal Cleanup event.*



*A heavy load of trash being removed from the beach by a group of volunteers at Tanguisson Beach.*



*Site volunteer ready to distribute gloves, trash bags and t-shirts.*





Participants in the annual coastal cleanup take a moment to celebrate after a successful cleanup event.



Tagachang Beach volunteers came out in full force to remove trash from Guam's southern shores.



Site leader volunteers assist with check-in and supplies distribution at Ypao Beach Park.



Students earn service learning credits for participating in the Guam International Coastal Cleanup.



Tarague Beach and Scout Beach site leader, Ella Fedenko poses with volunteers at the on-base cleanup site.



Site leader Jenelyn Abinales (center) and Esther Taitague (right) at the Tagachang Beach cleanup site in Yona.





*Piles of trash collected from Dadi Beach in Apra.*



*Tristar Guam coordinates a group of cleanup volunteers at the Nimitz Beach Park in Hagat.*



*Guam Coastal Management Staff lead the Ypao Beach cleanup site in Tumon.*



*Site leaders ready to distribute supplies.*



*A job well done to all our youth volunteers.*



*Let's keep our beaches and shores free of trash, Guam! Biba Guam International Coastal Cleanup!*



**Man, Land and Sea  
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<https://bsp.guam.gov/guam-coastal-management-program/>

**Organizing  
a Beach  
Cleanup?  
We can help!**

Contact the Guam Coastal Management Program and get connected with other volunteers and supplies. Call 671-475-9647 or email [gcmp@bsp.guam.gov](mailto:gcmp@bsp.guam.gov) for more information.

\*Limited supplies available per cleanup event.



# KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

**THE GUAM BACKYARD BUOYS PROJECT**

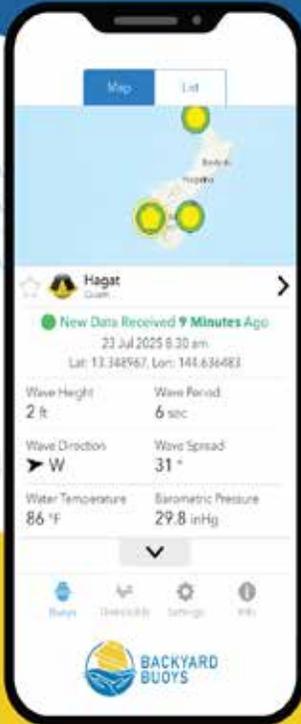
The ocean can be unpredictable.

Plan your next adventure with Backyard Buoys!

Stay informed with real-time wave and temperature data for **HAGAT AND MALESSO'**



The buoy is small, about the size of a basketball. The data it collects, such as wave height and direction, will be an asset for those who live, work, and play in and around the ocean.







Please keep a safe distance away from the buoy and absolutely no mooring to the buoy or surface float.



**SCAN HERE** 

To get the Backyard Buoys Mobile App



FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT GUAM COASTAL MANAGEMENT BIOLOGIST:  
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