

03-001344-C

**COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

**Juan N. Babauta**  
Governor

**Diego T. Benavente**  
Lieutenant Governor

MAR 3 2003

Mr. Donald L. Evans  
Secretary of Commerce  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Herbert Hoover Bldg. Room 5858  
14<sup>th</sup> St. and Constitution Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Evans:

As you know, on December 11, 2002 President Bush declared the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands a major disaster area due to damages resulting from Super Typhoon Pongsona on December 8, 2002. The authorization of federal relief and recovery assistance for the affected island of Rota is most welcomed.

Due to the limitations imposed by the eligibility criteria for some federal relief programs, I am also requesting the federal assistance be provided under the terms of Section 312 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act, and other Acts of Congress, including the Inter-jurisdictional Fisheries Act.

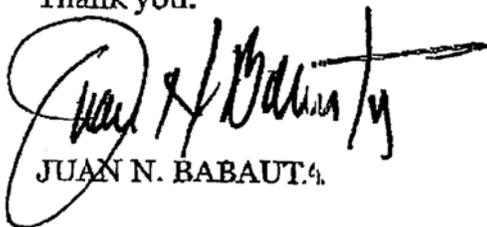
The enclosed Assessment Report prepared by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council and my staff reveals that Rota's fishing community and associated industries suffered devastating damages resulting from Super Typhoon Pongsona. In particular, damages to shore side facilities were estimated as exceeding \$212,000, with another \$95,000 incurred in damages to and losses to merchandise. In addition, fishery participants reported over \$800,000 in damages to their vessels and related equipment. Finally, losses to industry revenues since the super typhoon were estimated to exceed \$290,000.

Consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the complete report is being submitted for your review and consideration in extending

financial support to assist our fishery participants and other community members who sustained damages caused by Super Typhoon Pongsona.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to discuss this urgent request.

Thank you.



JUAN N. BABAUT

- cc: The Honorable George W. Bush
- The Honorable Daniel Inouye
- The Honorable Daniel Akaka
- The Honorable Neil Abercrombie
- The Honorable Ed Case
- The Honorable Pedro A. Tenorio
- The Honorable Madeline Bordallo
- The Honorable E.F. Hunking Faleomavaega

**Jack T. Ogumoro**

**From:** Lucinda Knapman [Lucinda.Knapman@noaa.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 19, 2003 7:16 AM  
**To:** kindu@saipan.com  
**Subject:** WP congressional addresses

Hi Jack,

Marcia mentioned you needed the addresses of the WP congressional delegation: it is listed below. Also, I cannot remember if I e-mailed you re: the upcoming newsletter. We would like all the island coordinators to submit an article highlighting something of interest that is happening in your area. It does not have to be long, about a page would be great, and if you have any pictures to go with it that would be helpful. If you have any questions, please let me know! We are starting to write the other articles, so would you be able to submit it by April 1st?

Thanks!

Talk to you soon,  
Cindy

addresses:

ABERCROMBIE, Neil  
 Representative  
 1502 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
 Washington, D.C. 20515-1101

AKAKA, Daniel K.

US Senator

✓ SH-141 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
 Washington, D.C. 20510-1103

INOUYE, Daniel K.

US Senator

✓ SH- 722 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
 Washington, D.C. 20510-1102

CASE, Ed

Representative

128 Cannon House Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20515-1102

Faleomavaega, Eni F. Hunkin

Delegate from American Samoa

2422 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
 Washington, D.C. 20515-5201

Bordallo, Madeleine

Delegate from the Territory of Guam

427 Cannon House Office Bldg.  
 Washington, DC 20515

Tenorio, Pedro Agulto

Delegate from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Office of the Resident Representative to the United States

2121 R Street NW  
 Washington DC 20008

Bush, George W.

President

1st Floor, West Wing  
 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
 Washington, DC 20500

# **Rota Fisheries Sector Rapid Damage Assessment Report March 3, 2003**

## **I. Introduction**

On December 8, 2002, Super-Typhoon Pongsona devastated the island of Rota in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). With winds gusting over 180 miles per hour, the island was completely devastated with damages believed to be in the millions. Over three thousand residents and tourists alike were without power or water after the typhoon. Fortunately, none of them died as result of this natural disaster, and within days federal relief efforts were underway to help the people and restore their island.

The Red Cross was the first to provide assistance to the residents living on the island. Following the approval of the Governor's request for the U.S. President to designate the island as a disaster area, the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) and the Small Business Administration (SBA) were activated and representatives were flown to Rota to assess the damages and to begin providing immediate and necessary assistance to the people there. Although these programs have assisted many people, there are still those who suffered damages from the typhoon but were not eligible to receive assistance under these programs. The reason is because either their incomes were too high to be eligible under FEMA or too low to be eligible under SBA. Most of the fishermen and others involved in the fishing industries believe themselves to be in this situation.

Thus, the purpose of this assessment is to bring to light the extent of the fishery sector damages resulting from Super-Typhoon Pongsona and to quantify the harm done in order to show cause for possible disaster relief funds from the federal government for the island's fishing community.

## **II. Background**

The Magnuson-Stevens Act of 1976, as amended, established the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council (Council). The purpose of the Council is to manage fisheries within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the western Pacific region, which includes the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The Magnuson-Stevens Act also provides that the Governor of an affected jurisdiction may request assistance to fishing communities in the event of a natural disaster.

Consistent with the above, the Council recommended and supported the first ever Rota Fisheries Sector Rapid Damage Assessment with the results to be forwarded to the Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to support his request for assistance.

During the 117<sup>th</sup> Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council meeting on Saipan from February 10 to 14, the Council's Onsite Coordinators from Guam and the CNMI were tasked to conduct the assessment with representatives from the Division of Fish and Wildlife within the Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DL&NR) on Saipan and Rota. On February 25, the two coordinators and the director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife on Saipan flew to Rota for a two-day visit to meet with the fishermen and others involved in the fishery industries. In Rota they joined forces with the Resident Director of DL&NR and his staff and formed an Assessment Team for the implementation of the assessment activities.

### III. Assessment Results

The Assessment Team held two public meetings with the fishermen, vendors and others involved with Rota's fisheries in the conference room of the Department of Lands and Natural Resources. The first public meeting was held at 10:00a.m., and another meeting was held at 7:00p.m. for those who were not able to attend the first meeting. A total of 52 individuals attended both meetings, with 35 participants in the morning and 17 in the evening. Each meeting lasted about an hour. Following each meeting, the team members helped the participants in filling out their assessment forms or reviewed forms that were done for completeness. On the second day some of the team members visited several fishermen and others who did not participate in either meeting. In the end, a total of 115 assessment forms were completed and submitted for our use in developing this report.

There were twenty-one questions on the assessment form but only those deemed appropriate and relevant for this report will be discussed. The dollar figures were estimates provided by the fishermen, vendors and others who participated in the assessment. The questions and their responses are as follow in the order in which they were presented:

1. **Village.** The following are the villages in Rota where the individuals involved in the assessment are residing:

|                    |    |                    |   |
|--------------------|----|--------------------|---|
| A. Sinapalo.....   | 55 | H. Gagane.....     | 1 |
| B. Songsong.....   | 38 | I. As Loreno....   | 1 |
| C. Tencio.....     | 10 | J. Talakhaya....   | 1 |
| D. Liyc.....       | 4  | K. As Nieves ...   | 1 |
| E. District 1..... | 1  | L. Kama Chile... 1 |   |
| F. Annex F.....    | 1  |                    |   |
| G. Talt.....       | 1  |                    |   |

2. **Type of Major Activity.** There are five categories of fishing related activities and sub-categories. The categories and the number of participants for each sub-category are as follows:

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| A. Subsistence Fishing.....  | 92 |
| 1. Personal consumption..... | 92 |

|    |                                    |    |
|----|------------------------------------|----|
| 2. | Sell to markets.....               | 0  |
| B. | Commercial Fishing.....            | 12 |
| 1. | Charter.....                       | 9  |
| 2. | Non-charter.....                   | 3  |
| C. | Recreational.....                  | 1  |
| D. | Shore-side support industries..... | 2  |
| A. | Retail.....                        | 1  |
| B. | Wholesale.....                     | 1  |
| C. | Tackle/gear.....                   | 0  |
| D. | Other.....                         | 0  |
| E. | Fish Farms.....                    | 8  |
| 1. | Personal consumption.....          | 4  |
| 2. | Sell to market.....                | 4  |

Please note that the fisherman and others involved in the assessment were allowed to choose only one category that best fits them, even when they were involved in other fishing activities.

3. **Primary gear used.** The following are the different types of gears for fishery related activities and the number of individuals who used these gears:

|    |                                       |    |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| A. | Trolling.....                         | 37 |
| B. | Bottom fish/Hand line.....            | 15 |
| C. | Boat based near shore reef fish.....  | 2  |
| D. | Shore based near shore reef fish..... | 52 |

Again, the participants were allowed to choose only one type of gear even when they were using more than one.

4. **Location of boat**

|    |                  |    |
|----|------------------|----|
| A. | West Harbor..... | 13 |
| B. | East Harbor..... | 1  |
| C. | Liyu Marina..... | 2  |

|    |  |           |
|----|--|-----------|
| 5. | Estimated value of damaged facility..... | \$212,650 |
| 6. | Estimated damaged of merchandise.....    | \$95,350  |
| 7. | Boat ownership.....                      | 51        |

**8. Size of boat**

|    |     |   |    |          |   |
|----|-----|---|----|----------|---|
| A. | 12' | 2 | K. | 22'      | 4 |
| B. | 13' | 2 | L. | 23'      | 1 |
| C. | 14' | 8 | M. | 24'      | 0 |
| D. | 15' | 3 | N. | 25'      | 1 |
| E. | 16' | 3 | O. | 26'      | 0 |
| F. | 17' | 7 | P. | 27'      | 0 |
| G. | 18' | 2 | Q. | 28'      | 1 |
| H. | 19' | 5 | R. | Over 30' | 2 |
| I. | 20' | 4 | S. | Unknown  | 5 |
| J. | 21' | 1 |    |          |   |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 9. Estimated value of boat damages.....               | \$481,595  |
| 10. Estimated value of equipment damages.....         | \$345,188  |
| 11. Estimated loss of income (12/8/02 - 2/28/03)..... | \$290,640. |

**IV. Conclusion**

The fishermen and vendors in the fishing industries in Rota were glad that the Council and the CNMI Government assessed the damages to the island's fishing industries resulting from Super-Typhoon Pongsona. They acknowledged that the assessment was the first ever to be done for the island and were very cooperative in the assessment activity. Most of them expressed their frustrations because they were not eligible to receive assistance for their loss under FEMA or SBA.

The Mayor of Rota welcomed the assessment activity and hopes the federal government will provide the necessary assistance to help the local fishermen and others involved in the fishing industry to recover from their damages resulting from Super-Typhoon Pongsona. He also hopes that funds from the federal government can be made available to help in the dredging and maintenance of the West and East Harbors, restoration of the coral resources, erosion control activities, and employment benefits for those individuals who are unemployed or suffered loss of income due to the typhoon.

The Assessment Team felt very pleased with the high turnout and felt that most of the fishermen and others in the fishing industry in Rota were involved in the assessment activity. Having done this first ever assessment for the fishing industries, the Assessment Team felt more confident and ready to make future assessments in the event of another disaster affecting the fishing industries in the CNMI. The mechanisms for future assessments are now in place for immediate response for purposes of soliciting assistance from both federal and local governments.