

Watershed Working Group
August 15, 2017
8:30-10:00am
BECQ Main Conference Room

Next WWG meeting is scheduled for November 15th.

Attendees:

William Gilmore (CUC), Austin Piteg, Wayne Dawe, Delfin Camacho, and Daniel Kaipat (MINA), Marlyn Naputi and Lorraine Reyes (DFW – Wildlife), Fred De Torres (NMC), Ike Cabrera (USDA Soil and Water Conservation District), Joe Kaipat and Benjamin Mihkel (DEQ - Safe Drinking Water), Jihan Buniag and Katie Graziano (DCRM Coral Reef Initiative), Julius Reyes (DCRM Enforcement), Merrill Ayuyu, Valerie Hofschneider, and James Benavente (DEQ – Wastewater and Erosion Control), Derek Chambers, Robbie Greene, and Kathy Yuknavage (BECQ).

Presentations:

Individual Wastewater Disposal Systems (aka septic systems) – PDF attached to email.

James Benavente, Engineer with BECQ Wastewater Engineering and Erosion Control

Questions:

Are there grants for septic systems? No, but Northern Marianas Housing Corporation can provide low interest loans. NRCS may also provide financial assistance.

Is there a connection between red flags and failing septic systems?

Yes it's possible. There was a survey of septic systems, in Dan Dan and Kagman. Failed systems might contribute to red flags depending on the location.

What about 'non modern' wastewater treatment in the country side, like old seepage pits?

These are less common now.

CUC Wastewater Infrastructure, Priorities, Issues and Developments – PDF attached to email.

William Gilmore, Deputy Executive Director of CUC

Questions/Discussion:

How much will it cost to build Kagman area WWTP? (referring to plan to move off of septic in Kagman, as a solution to recharge the aquifer and make water more palatable). It will cost more than \$2,500,000 plus several million dollars more for collection system.

How can you get people to hook up to CUC wastewater? EPA may fund for low income, or have a multi-year payback system. This is definitely a challenge that needs to be addressed.

What's the lifespan of new infrastructure (such as the project proposed for Beach Road?)

Because of the salt and the temperature, infrastructure here lasts 40 years at most (compared to about 75 years on the mainland). CUC is devoting a lot of resources to repairing failing infrastructure. Also, there are a lot of broken lines because they lay on hard bedrock.

Are there any alternatives or improvements planned for the Sadig Tasi Outfall? (idea for compensatory mitigation for marine impacts, but can only be done if there is a "ready solution" project planned). No, CUC has not looked at it. There is some potential to use it as an outlet for a Reverse Osmosis system. But, there have been no problems with mixing rates at that site, it is always in compliance.

Round Table Updates:

DFW Wildlife – Lorraine and Marlyn are both new technicians with DFW Wildlife, they recently completed the US Army Corps wetland delineation training course. It is their first time at a WWG meeting and we are excited to have them!

BECQ Water Quality/NPS (Kathy Yuknavage)– Working on finding a solution to the unacceptable rate of Red Flags at the Grotto, working with DLNR to control users, hoping to install a gate so that tourists cannot access after hours when the bathroom is not open. DLNR has capacity to put in user fees, a survey has been developed to figure out the appropriate user fee. The situation there at the Grotto is so bad that local people cannot get access because there are so many busses of tourists. There may be a local exemption to the user fee. There is likely to be push back from night divers about the gate, but something has to be done because the water quality is so bad.

DCRM Enforcement (Julius) – Tejani just came back from an exchange program in Palau with wildlife conservation officers, to work out a system where they add \$15 per person on ticket for funding conservation projects. Tejani will have more information about what she learned at the training, which will be very relevant to the Watershed Working Group and to efforts to put user fees in place on Saipan.

USDA Soil and Water Conservation (Ike Cabrera) - Trying to finish the Kagman Watershed Project with funding from FY2017 Watershed and Flood Prevention Grant (NRCS/USDA). They should be getting 'backlog' funding to finish the final components of the Kagman Watershed Project (70 million gallon reservoir, sediment basin, pumping plant, transfer line, and pipeline). There is also interest in including Garapan as an area for a new Watershed project, for flood control in that area. However, a project must be proposed by August 28th.

MINA – Continuing the Garapan Field Surveillance project, which will wrap-up at the end of September. MINA has been collecting data on violations in the Garapan area, and volunteered to hopefully present at an upcoming WWG meeting! Also, Green Gala tickets are on sale now, Sept. 15th at Fiesta.

BECQ- GIS (Robbie Greene) Worked with the Water Quality branch last week, with LIDAR elevation data to revise watershed boundaries on Saipan based on much better data than was previously used, mostly the same but some changes (for example, the boundary of West Tapachao/ Susupe watersheds). Data will be available in the next 2 weeks, but for now there is pdf attached of the new watershed boundaries compared to the old boundaries. Also, NOAA revised sea level maps 6 months ago, the projections are more severe than previously thought, publishing new ones soon. Projections go out to 75 years. Finally, Robbie is leaving his position with BECQ, he will be moving over to the NOAA Field Office to take over as the NOAA Coral and CZM Liason (Dana Okano's old position).

Northern Marianas College (Fred De Torres) – NMC registration is open until Monday. They have a government program where people without degree can enroll (for free?) for up to 30 credits. This is a good opportunity for anyone who needs more credits to graduate, anyone who doesn't have their degree complete. The Natural Resource Management program has been quite successful, Mr. De Torres noted that he has 10 – 15 ex-students who are now hired by MINA, BECQ, etc. Some are now pursuing bachelors and masters degrees on the mainland. They are planning to pursue offering a Bachelors

Degree in NRM at NMC, which would work well in partnership with UoG's Master's program. Also, establishing an outreach and extension office for marine and coastal resources, equivalent to NMC CREES. The acronym is something like MESU (?).

NOAA (Steve McKagan) – got funding for half removal of the Lady Carolina , \$300,000 dollars already. Should have the rest in the next month or so, RFP will be published soon.

BECQ Coral Reef Initiative (Jihan Buniag) – CRI received funding from DOI – Office of Insular Affairs for CNMI Coral Reef Initiative Regional Coordination and Capacity Building Opportunities, Summer Youth Environmental Stewardship Program, Garapan Field Surveillance Project, to update the CNMI Coral Reef Management Priorities Setting Document, Saipan Lagoon Seagrass Sediment Accretion and Carbon Sequestration, and to Revise the Garapan Conservation Action Plan. Also, MINA was awarded a grant to support the Schools for Environmental Conservation Program. We are still waiting for the official announcement on NOAA funding for the coming year.

(Katie Graziano) Talakhaya revegetation project is ongoing, volunteers have been planting since mid-July. The Laolao Bay Conservation Action plan is outdated, has not been updated since 2012. I am spearheading a revision of the Laolao CAP, I will be reaching out to partners in September to plan for a series of meetings in October. I will keep the WWG involved and updated.