



David M. Apatang
Governor

Dennis James "DJ" C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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GOV2025-433

Eugenio Pineiro Soler
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Hafa Adai and Tirow Administrator Soler,

We would like to reiterate and express our strong support for the requests made by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council to restore the cultural use of green sea turtles in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Specifically, we respectfully request that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) work with the CNMI Administration to explore possible changes to the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) that would allow for the sustainable cultural take of green sea turtles in the U.S. Western Pacific region. We also request that NMFS initiate a status review under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of the green sea turtle distinct population segments (DPS) in the Territories of Guam, American Samoa, and the CNMI to evaluate whether the current listing status should be revised.

The Indigenous population of the CNMI has a longstanding interest in sustainably harvesting green sea turtles as a means of maintaining cultural identity and traditional practices. We stand ready to work collaboratively with federal agencies to implement or update management plans that are consistent with the shared interests of the CNMI and the U.S. government, ensuring both cultural preservation and responsible conservation.

Please communicate any questions or concerns you may have to my Secretary for the CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources, Mr. Sylvan Igisomar, at so.igisomar@cnmi.gov. We appreciate your attention and look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,


DAVID M. APATANG
Governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Cc: Hon. Howard Lutnick, Secretary of Commerce
Hon. Doug Burgum, Secretary of the Interior
Hon. Representative Kimberlyn King-Hinds, US Delegate CNMI
Governor Lou Leon Guerrero, Guan
Governor Pulaali'i Tuiteleapaga Iuli Nikolao Pula, American Samoa
Sylvan Igisomar, Secretary, CNMI Dept. of Lands & Natural Resources
Ms. Kitty Simonds, Executive Director, WPRFMC