

9:30am- 10:00am: Welcome & Opening Remarks

- CNMI Office of Planning and Development Acting Director Christopher A. Concepcion:

“Hafa Adai, Tirow, and good morning everyone, and thank you for being here today for the CNMI Zero Waste Visioning Kick-off Meeting. Thank you to our Honorable Governor Arnold Palacios, Lt. Governor David Apatang, the Honorable Mayors of Saipan and Tinian, and EPA Regional Administrator Martha Guzman for gracing us with your presence today.

With support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Inter-island Solid Waste Management Taskforce spearheads projects and initiatives that move the CNMI towards achieving several Sustainable Development Goals.

These past three years, the Taskforce has taken meaningful strides towards achieving SDG #12: we’ve built the capacity of the CNMI’s solid waste management team, secured permits for and began work on critical solid waste projects and facilities, and recently completed waste characterization studies on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. The data collected will inform the Taskforce’s next steps to achieve SDG #12.

Over the coming months, the Inter-island Solid Waste Management Taskforce will be working with all of you as we lay the groundwork for achieving “Zero Waste” in the CNMI and developing the Comprehensive Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan. Finalizing this plan and integrating “Zero Waste” practices into it are key pieces in achieving our goals for the CNMI.

Si Yu’us Ma’ase, and thank you again for joining us today.”

- Governor Arnold I. Palacios:

“Hafa Adai, Tirow, and Good Morning to everyone gathered here for the Zero Waste Kick Off Proclamation. Caring for our environment is very important to our islands, which is why achieving Zero Waste and implementing sustainable solid waste management practices in the CNMI is vital to not only the beauty of our islands, but to the quality of life of our people.

Through efforts like the Zero Waste initiative, we can maximize the limited amount of precious land that is utilized for landfills in the CNMI. As part of this effort, I would like to recognize our Inter-island Solid Waste Management Taskforce for leading the CNMI towards achieving the U.N. Sustainable Development Goal #12: Responsible Consumption and Production, which is also one of the critical goals for the CNMI.

This goal states that “By 2030, 50% of the recyclable waste stream will be diverted from CNMI landfills or RCRA-compliant waste management facilities on Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and the Northern Islands with diverted waste composted, reused, or sold to support sustainable waste management systems.”

The development of the Comprehensive Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan and the incorporation of Zero Waste practices into the plan wouldn’t be possible without the partnership and collaboration between the CNMI government and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9.

Achieving Zero Waste is not something we can accomplish alone and also requires commitment for the future. Because of this, I would like to call upon all stakeholders to consider environmental sustainability and expanding environmental stewardship initiatives in the future.

Together, we can all do our part in achieving the Zero Waste goal to not only benefit our islands, but also to enhance the quality of life for people who call our beautiful Commonwealth home. Si Yu'us Ma'ase, Ghilisow, and Thank You.”

- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Pacific Southwest Regional Administrator Martha Guzman:**
 - Applaud partners from the Office of Planning and Development, the Department of Public Works, and the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality for making this possible
 - EPA manages \$56M in disaster relief grants funded by the federal Additional Supplemental Appropriation for Disaster Relief Act (ASADRA) specifically for solid waste recovery from Typhoon Yutu
 - Review role as Regional Administrator
 - Personal connection to natural disasters (e.g., aftermath of catastrophic wildfires and earthquakes in CA).
 - Express thanks to everyone working on disaster cleanup, and recovery as well as planning and implementing disaster-resilient rebuilding and Smart Growth
 - EPA commitment to CNMI government through:
 - Providing technical assistance and training
 - Serving as a convener to facilitate collaboration – like this event
 - Providing grant funding under ASADRA, EPA Program funding, and historic levels of new funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act
 - Conducting an efficient and thorough review of the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan and approving it as quickly as possible.
 - Islands and communities across the world, including Guam, parts of the Philippines, San Francisco, and many others, have successful Zero Waste programs
 - Zero Waste focuses on
 - Reducing Waste -- for example, to reduce plastic pollution and marine debris -- Hawaii and California have banned single-use plastic shopping bags, and many communities have banned Styrofoam
 - Reuse
 - Recycling and composting

- Applaud the CNMI's ASADRA actions
 - Fantastic job by Office of Planning and Development convening partners on Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and EPA for monthly Inter-Island Solid Waste Management Task Force meetings with over 50 dedicated team members
 - Acknowledge outstanding ASADRA work to repair the Marpi Landfill and plan for safe waste management and 100% renewable energy operations
 - CNMI Waste Characterization – used ASADRA funding to conduct waste characterizations on Saipan, Tinian & Rota in February and March.
 - Sorted and weighed tons of solid waste
 - Critical to understanding what's in the waste, to set priorities

- EPA Region 9 Zero Waste Training and Tours
 - In April 2022, a 27-member CNMI delegation representing Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and the Northern Islands came to San Francisco for Zero Waste Training and Tours
 - After Zero Waste classroom training, the delegation toured Reuse, Recycling, Composting, and Anaerobic Digestion facilities

- Thanks also to the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality for their environmental leadership and for developing new permit programs for recycling and composting facilities

- EPA Waste Reduction Funding:
 - CNMI will get at least \$300,000 under the new Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Program (SWIFR) program, funded by BIL
 - EPA Climate Funding
 - The Inflation Reduction Act authorized nearly \$5 billion to support Climate Pollution Reduction Grants nationally
 - The CNMI will receive \$500,000 for climate action planning this year, followed by competitive implementation grants. The Climate Pollution Reduction grant guidance specifically allows projects focusing on Waste Reduction and Materials Management – because reducing waste cuts greenhouse gas emissions
 - EPA estimates that nationally or recycling and composting efforts result in reducing greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to taking about 44 million cars off the road for a year

- Thank the Governor for the Zero Waste Proclamation that will be signed at the event; thanks & Close

- **Mayor of Saipan Ramon B. Camacho:**

“Hafa Adai, Tirow, and Good Morning everyone. Thank you for inviting me here today and for the opportunity to give brief remarks. First, let me affirm that as Mayor of our beautiful island and an avid farmer in our community, I am fully committed to the mission of the Zero Waste program. I continuously witness and understand the adverse effects of poor waste management, and my office is taking action to reduce waste generation and increase waste diversion from our very limited landfill.

One specific activity that I want to highlight is our efforts to convert green waste collected from our island wide beautification projects into a reusable material for plants. The collected green waste is transported to facility to undergo wood chipping and eventually turned into mulch. As you may be aware, mulch is commonly used as a planter’s tool to retain moisture in the soil and thus requiring less water consumption. This is not only free for the community to acquire but the compound benefits to the environment is remarkable.

Another activity executed by my team is transferring junk cars out of our villages and into the recycling centers. We are seeing a significant increase in these requests and have been transporting as many as 24 cars per day. This is a lot, but we remain determined to make a difference in our community.

I recognize that as Mayor, I am tasked with a big responsibility to keep our island clean and safe. I continue to rally my team to keep them motivated and up to par with the expectations of the community. Again, thank you for having me here today and I look forward to working together with all our stakeholders.”

- **Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan Edwin P. Aldan:**

“Hafa adai, Tirow, and a warm good morning to all of you. Governor Palacios, Lt. Governor Apatang, OPD Director Chris Concepcion along with other OPD officials and staff who coordinated this CNMI Zero Waste Kick Off meeting. Thank you for the invitation to join you all today.

A warm welcome and Hafa adai to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 Director Ms. Martha Guzman, as well as the numerous EPA staff who traveled all this way to visit the CNMI. It is always a pleasure and a privilege of welcoming special visitors to our beautiful islands. I hope that during your trip, you all get a glimpse and an understanding of how it is here in the CNMI.

When we mention zero-waste or waste management, particularly, in the CNMI, we must understand that in small communities like ours, it is a very new approach compared to our current waste management system. For many of us, who are a part of the implementation process, with respect to these efforts, the "new" approach turns into calculating approaches to creating an effective, sustainable, and suitable method that everyone can adapt to. Most but not many can comprehend and understand the complexity of the issues that we face when it comes to our waste management issues.

One important factor is our geological disadvantage being in the pacific, incurring the added cost of shipping our recyclables to a RCRA compliant facility or any recycling facility, and second the adequate financial resources to push this movement forward. The challenges we face with solid waste management requires our immediate action because it threatens the safety and health of our communities. With efforts to further implement any sort of solid waste management approaches, it will require finalizing the CNMI Solid Waste Comprehensive Plan, engaging community participation,

educating the public on proper solid-waste management practices, and finally partnering with organizations, agencies, even schools to promote proper waste management practices. The overall goal is to create an efficient, sustainable and reliable system that benefits everyone without negatively affecting the residents of the CNMI.

As we continue this path to making our personal contributions and commitment to the revolving and vital concerns surrounding solid waste management. On Tinian, we have been aggressively trying to address our immediate concerns with regards to waste and putting our efforts and resources into advocating for an improved waste management system that allows the Municipality to transport our recyclables to a recycling company or a RICRA certified facility abroad that is cost-effective. At the same time, we have an opportunity to assist DOD in addressing the restrictions placed on military waste, especially at a time when Tinian is beginning to witness a drastic increase of military presence because of the U.S. Air Force Divert Airfield Project and DOD's numerous trainings that take place annually.

As with any project, all it requires is the adequate funding or financial assistance that will allow us to push forth these efforts. It is Tinian's hope that eventually, aside from applying for small municipal grants under the environmental justice grants, U.S. EPA could consider granting our municipalities access to the ASUDRA funds before the completion of the CNMI's Solid Waste Management Comprehensive plan for the sole purpose of seeing our pilot projects come to fruition. If indeed we are successful, Tinian will be the perfect place to continue multiple solid waste pilot projects, as we have begun in kick-starting our efforts towards a more sustainable approach. Moreover, the population and size of Tinian, including the uniqueness of our island, makes it easier and an option for these types of pilot projects to commence.

All in all, having a proper solid waste management system, limits the negative impact on our natural resources and contributes to the global cause of protecting mother earth and battling severe climate change conditions is affecting the entire world.

To close, I thank you again for the opportunity that you've extended and allowing me to speak today. Enjoy the rest of your morning/afternoon! Un dangkulu na si yu'us ma'ase yan Ghilisow."

10:00am- 10:15am: CNMI Zero Waste Week Proclamation Signing

[Link to the proclamation text found here.](#)

10:15am- 10:45am: Zero Waste Kick-off presentation by CNMI Office of Planning and Development Solid Waste Team and contractor Gershman, Brickner, and Bratton (GBB), Inc.

- Team OPD

OPD Solid Waste Project Coordinator for Saipan Michael Johnson kicked off the presentation with an overview of the Inter-island Solid Waste Management Taskforce (ISWMT) and one of the CNMI's

primary action items under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #12: Responsible Consumption and Production.

The ISWMT is comprised of the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality (BECQ); Department of Public Works (DPW); OPD; Mayor's Office of Saipan, Tinian and Aguiguan, Rota, and the Northern Islands; and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Together, the ISWMT seeks to achieve SDG #12 in the CNMI. One of the key action items towards this goal is, by 2030, to divert 50% of the CNMI's waste streams away from the landfill to be recycled, reused, or sold.

OPD Solid Waste Project Coordinator for Tinian William Cing presented on the various solid waste projects and initiatives that are happening on Tinian that support achieving Zero Waste in the CNMI. In his presentation, Cing highlighted work between the Office of the Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan (MOTA), DPW, and OPD such as the cleanup of the Super Typhoon Yutu debris site on Tinian, the ongoing Tinian Zero Waste Pilot Project and Feasibility Study, the recently completed waste characterization study on Tinian, and the ongoing dump closure feasibility study.

Furthermore, Cing shared that BECQ issued permits to Tinian's transfer station and recycling center and composting facility. With the issuance of these permits in June 2022, Mayor Edwin P. Aldan soon after launched an initiative where government offices on Tinian separate and collect recyclables to be dropped off at the newly permitted transfer station.

To date, Cing shared that DPW on Tinian has received 12,237 pounds of cardboard that has since been processed and baled, 832 pounds of tires, 433 pounds of aluminum cans, 123 pounds of plastic bottles, and 63 pounds of tin cans.

OPD Solid Waste Project Coordinator for Rota Noreen Sablan presented on recent outreach activities, Office of the Mayor of Rota-hosted community flea market, and several initiatives and solid waste grant applications that are in the pipeline for Rota.

On November 16, 2022 OPD and DPW on Rota did a presentation on the 3 Rs (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) and Zero Waste for the 4th, 5th, and 6th graders of Sinapalo Elementary School. The presentation was part of the CNMI's celebration of CNMI Recycles Week last year. Sablan also talked about the ongoing community flea market, which serves as a way for the Rota community to reuse and sell unwanted items instead of throwing them away at the landfill.

Sablan also spoke about efforts to look into ways to remove abandoned and derelict vessels (ADVs) from Rota's shores, and one option currently being assessed by OPD to remove these ADVs is through the

[Moana Taka Partnership.](#)

Finally, Sablan shared that OPD recently worked with the Office of the Mayor of Rota to submit an application for a Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grant that is being managed by the EPA. Should Rota be selected for this grant, the SWIFR funding will be used to build a recycling and education center on Rota.

- **GBB**

GBB's Morgan McCarthy began GBB's portion of the presentation by going over three key concepts that will guide the upcoming CNMI Zero Waste Visioning Workshops and the development of the CNMI Comprehensive Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan over the coming months: Solid Waste Management, Zero Waste, and the CNMI Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP).

Next, McCarthy detailed a graphic that illustrates the Zero Waste hierarchy of solid waste management methods, ordered from least environmentally preferable to most environmentally preferable. McCarthy shared that achieving Zero Waste is an aspirational goal— Zero Waste is guided by principles within the previously mentioned hierarchy, and can be customized to fit each community. McCarthy briefly covered the concept of a circular economy, which can serve as a road map to accomplish Zero Waste.

Next, GBB's Conchita Taitano presented on the work that went towards Guam's successful development and implementation of its Zero Waste Master Plan, which included workshops and meetings with a variety of stakeholders, identifying and fine-tuning Zero Waste priorities, and turning the outcomes of these meetings into elements incorporated into Guam's Zero Waste Master Plan.

GBB rounded out their part of the presentation by going over the timeline for the development of the CNMI Comprehensive Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan and the Tinian Zero Waste Pilot Project, sharing photos of the waste characterization studies done on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, and next steps.

As of March 30, 2023, for the Comprehensive Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan, GBB has completed its solid waste characterization weight-based data assessment for Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. The on-island stakeholder zero waste visioning sessions and the development of a CNMI high-level draft plan with updated data are in progress, and final development of the high-level plan is planned. For its Zero Waste Pilot Project on Tinian, GBB has completed its waste sort and pilot collection study, and Zero Waste planning and support is ongoing. The creation of a Zero Waste Plan for Tinian along with recommendations is planned.

For next steps, GBB went over the upcoming CNMI Zero Waste Visioning Workshops on April 18 and 19, the development of the high-level plan, a summary of the waste characterization and pilot collection studies on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, the Tinian Zero Waste Plan, and the development of Zero Waste technical memos. The floor was then opened up for a question-and-answer session between the ISWMT, GBB, and the kick-off meeting's in-person and virtual attendees.

10:45am- 11:30am Question-and-Answer Session

- A question was asked seeking clarification on the “50%” figure within the action item under SDG #12— does this “50%” reduction encompass all of the CNMI’s municipal solid waste, or just recyclables?
 - o *This 50% encompasses the CNMI’s recyclable waste stream, ex. aluminum cans, cardboard, plastic bottles, etc. The goal for 2030 is to reduce the number of recyclables that get thrown away at the CNMI’s landfill by 50%.*

- A question was asked about where are the CNMI’s recyclables currently being shipped off to after being received and processed.
 - o *A considerable portion of the CNMI’s recyclable waste stream is green waste, and with the recently permitted facility on Tinian and the ongoing work to get a composting facility permitted on Saipan, once in operation, green waste will be composted within the CNMI.*
 - o *As for other recyclables, they are currently being shipped off-island for further processing in Asian countries. The ISWMT is currently working on tracking where the CNMI’s recyclables are going, and how they are being processed.*
 - o *Junk cars and scrap metals are received and processed by private recycling companies.*

- A comment was shared about how companies that receive recyclables for further processing prefer that the materials be reduced in volume for ease of transport and processing.
 - o *Currently, the CNMI does volume reduction at the Transfer Station in Lower Base for the tires it collects by shredding them. In the future, the ISWMT is looking into volume reduction methods for all recyclables that get shipped off for further processing.*

- A question was asked about when will receptacles for separating and collecting recyclables be given to residents on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, and if local animals are being considered as a potential recipient of the CNMI’s food waste.
 - o *Specifics on waste stream management and opportunities for next steps will be discussed further during the CNMI Zero Waste Visioning Workshops on April 18 and 19, 2023.*

- Are there concerns with evacuating oils and other chemicals in cars before junk cars are removed and processed for disposal?
 - o *Yes. Kick-off Meeting attendees representing BECQ briefly went over some of the agency's regulations and requirements surrounding the removal and processing of said hazardous materials.*
 - [BECQ Permits and Regulations](#)
 - [Harmful Substance Cleanup Regulations](#)
 - [Hazardous Waste Regulations](#)

- What is composting?
 - o *Composting is the natural process of recycling organic matter, such as leaves and food scraps, into a valuable fertilizer that can enrich soil and plants. Through getting composting facilities in the CNMI permitted and up and running, the CNMI's green waste can be turned into compost.*

- A comment was shared on the need for the CNMI to fully avail of Additional Supplemental Appropriation for Disaster Relief Act (ASADRA) funding administered to the CNMI through the EPA to support critical equipment purchases to support solid waste management processing and to lengthen the lifespan of the CNMI's landfills.
 - o *The development of the CNMI Comprehensive Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan and its approval by the EPA will pave the way for the CNMI to fully avail of ASADRA funding to support critical solid waste disaster recovery projects.*