

CNMI Zero Waste Visioning Workshops Day 1

8:30am- 11:30am

Kensington Hotel Saipan Queen's Hall and on Zoom

Office of Planning and Development's Saipan Solid Waste Coordinator Mike Johnson provided opening remarks thanking and welcoming participants to the CNMI's Zero Waste Visioning Workshops.

Visioning Ground Rules & Meeting Purpose

Following an overview of the agendas for Days 1 and 2 and introductions, facilitators of the visioning workshops Morgan McCarthy and Conchita Taitano of GBB, Inc. went over visioning ground rules and the purpose of the workshops. The ground rules included reminders to silence all phones and other electronic devices, be courteous and respectful to all, and be respectful of time limits on comments.

As for the purpose of the workshops, the facilitators made clear that they (the Inter-island Solid Waste Management Taskforce and GBB, Inc.) are seeking stakeholder input on "Zero Waste" options for consideration to be incorporated into the Comprehensive Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan.

Zero Waste Presentation

To begin the presentation, McCarthy and Taitano primed workshop attendees with three key concepts to keep in mind when putting together their "Zero Waste" visions later in the day: solid waste management, "Zero Waste", and the CNMI Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP).

- Solid Waste Management: the practice of managing unwanted or discarded materials (ex. garbage, and recyclables) resulting from normal, day-to-day activities.
- "Zero Waste": An approach to planning to reduce waste and maximize recycling, composting, or waste diversion as much as possible.
- The CNMI Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP)
 - Goals for the CNMI as part of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #12: Responsible Consumption and Production:
 - "By 2025, obtain centralized data and statistics on hazardous waste and the CNMI-wide import/ export stream for a comprehensive waste management plan for solid and hazardous waste."
 - "By 2030, 50% of the recyclable waste stream is diverted from landfills and composted, reused, or sold to support sustainable waste management systems."

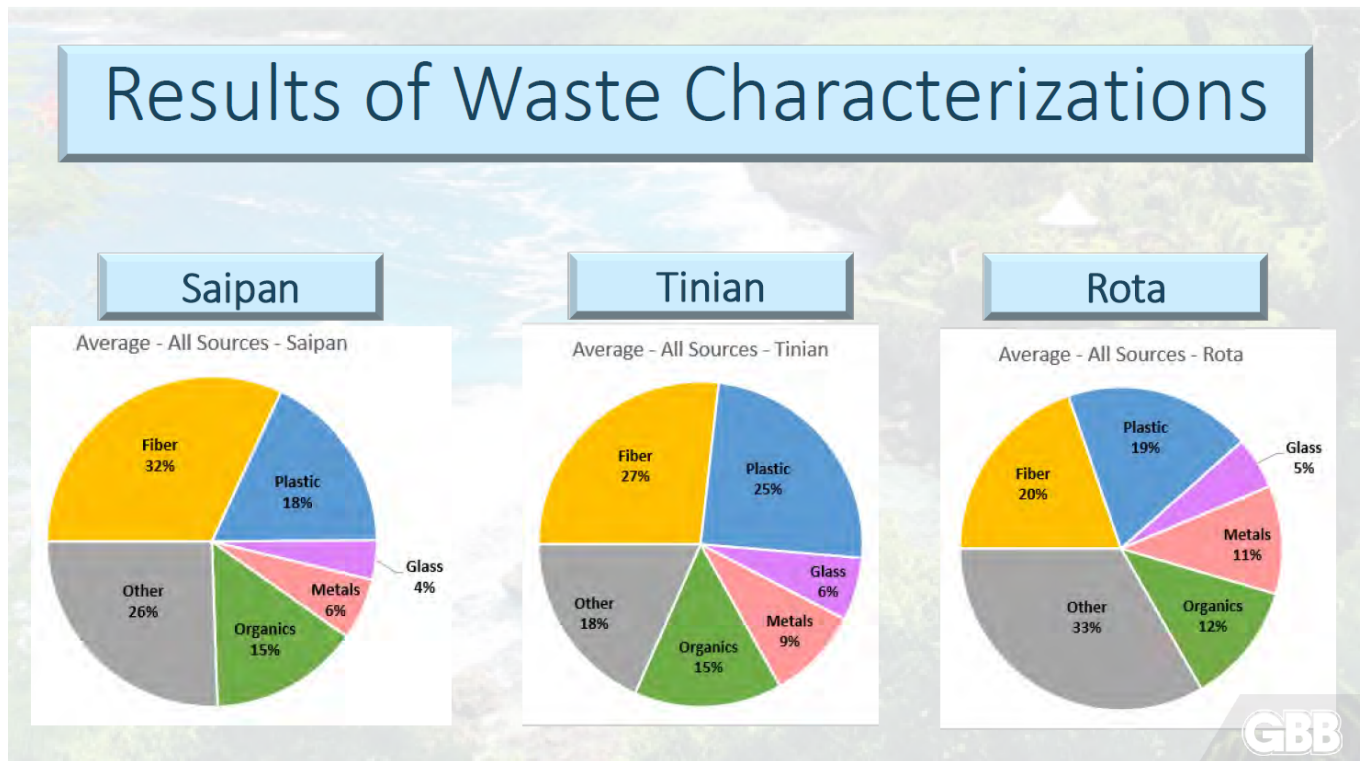
A video by Eco-Cycle Media titled ["The Case for Zero Waste"](#), was played to set the tone of further discussions for the rest of Day 1. The video goes over the prevalent culture of consuming and disposing products in excess and the harmful byproducts of items such as Styrofoam food containers, napkins, and cellphones. To counteract these things, the video advocates for sustainable systems and design by prioritizing the creation and use of products that can be reused, recycled, or composted.

Next, a slide with a graphic depicting the “Zero Waste hierarchy” and the concept of a “Circular Economy” was displayed. The “Zero Waste” hierarchy of solid waste management methods orders methods from least environmentally preferable to most environmentally preferable. It was iterated 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.

The circular economy, which details how raw materials are turned into products and having these products be distributed, consumed, collected, and recycled in perpetuity could serve as a roadmap for achieving “Zero Waste”.

Results of Waste Characterizations

The workshop facilitators then briefly went over the results of the waste characterization studies conducted on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota:



Visioning Break-out Session & Group Report Out

The in-person and virtual attendees of the workshop then spent an hour in breakout groups putting together their ideas that answer the question, “What is your vision of ‘Zero Waste’?” All groups then presented their ideas and vision of “Zero Waste” in the CNMI.

There were similar key areas of interest for everyone's "Zero Waste Vision" for the CNMI: Education and Outreach, Legislation, and Infrastructure.

- Education and Outreach: start early, recycling bins in classrooms, incentives for kids, behavior change campaigns for adults, claim ownership of our island pride and support behavior change
- Legislation: enforcement, public work projects, plastic bag bans, advance disposal fee, tax incentives for biodegradable products, cost recovery (wood chips, crushed glass, compost repurposed)
- Infrastructure and Facilities to Support Zero Waste: composting facilities, transfer stations, convenience centers, salvage stores ex. [Urban Ore Ecopark in Berkeley, California](#), potable tap water to address and reduce the amount of plastic water bottles created/ shipped in to support the CNMI's drinking water needs and allow for the creation of water bottle refilling stations, fountains, etc.

As groups shared their vision statements, there was some consensus around ideas of "who, what, how, and why" we envision a Zero Waste future for CNMI:

Who: Current and future generations of the people of CNMI

What: CNMI is a worldwide model of Zero Waste lifestyle through education supporting individual and community action to reduce, reuse, and recycle

How: Educate, Achieve, Personalize ZW – reduce, reuse, recycle; Educating to achieve a zero waste lifestyle throughout the CNMI

Why: Our health, our environment, our beautiful islands – protect our resources, land, water, all animal species, protect tourism which is our main draw for our economy – protect resources for everyone's future – extend life of our landfill, be more sustainable

One group presented a working vision that "CNMI is a worldwide model of Zero Waste lifestyle through education supporting individual and community action to reduce, reuse, recycle, compost, and more to achieve sustainable and responsible materials management to protect our resources and our loved ones now and for the future."

CNMI Zero Waste Visioning Workshops Day 2

8:30am- 11:30am

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Agenda Review & Day 1 Recap

Workshop facilitators Morgan McCarthy and Conchita Taitano of GBB, Inc. began the day with an overview of the day's agenda and a recap of what was discussed on Day 1. [Draft notes from Day 1 of the workshops can be found here.](#)

The Visioning Process: Guidelines

The facilitators provided guidelines as attendees prepare to discuss ideas for upstream, midstream, and downstream "Zero Waste" strategies for the CNMI: think big picture, anything goes, there is no such thing as a bad idea, and don't think about physical or budget constraints right now.

Upstream Objective & Strategies

"Upstream" was defined as policies, legislation, and practices to reduce waste at the source. Examples included banning materials from being accepted at landfills, universal curbside collection, and product and packaging bans. The facilitators also provided two examples of upstream "Zero Waste" strategies in action, first with a video of a [Hawaii-based restaurant's "Farm to Table" and "Back to Farm" approach](#), and second with a photo of Joeten's "Taya Plastic Tuesday", where stores do not give out or use plastic bags every Tuesday.

Group Break-outs: Upstream

Strategies shared by the groups included bans on materials such as cardboard, plastic bags, and single-use plastics; encouraging the use of reusable bags when shopping; green waste management strategies such as mulching cut grass and implementing a comprehensive composting program in the CNMI; incentivized return/recycling programs for things such as plastic bottles and aluminum cans; p behavior change campaigns and education and outreach; and advocating for legislation that encourages/enforces materials bans and more sustainable practices.

Midstream Objective & Strategies

The objective of "Zero Waste" strategies focused on the midstream seek to maximize resource longevity through reusing, repurposing, and repairing materials and products, and food recovery. Examples of midstream "Zero Waste" strategies in action include the Office of the Mayor of Rota-hosted Reuse/ Flea Market on Rota.

Group Break-outs: Midstream

Ideas shared during this breakout session included building out and developing centers for repair for things such as cars, heavy equipment, electronics, etc.; promoting the reuse of furniture, clothing, construction materials, scrap metals, crushed glass, etc., and uplifting the businesses/ organizations that support this strategy; and creating a habitat for entrepreneurs with business ideas focused on reusing, repairing, recycling, etc.

Downstream Objective & Strategies

The objective of downstream-focused “Zero Waste” strategies is to maximize resource recovery through conversion technology and processing materials such as recyclables, organics, and construction and demolition (C&D) debris. Another strategy shared is to maximize resource recovery through an appropriate collection system, whether it be “single stream” (resources are recovered all in one container), “dual stream” (resources are recovered in two separate and categorized containers), or “multi-stream” (resources are recovered in three or more separate and categorized containers).

Group Break-outs: Downstream

General downstream ideas shared by in-person and virtual attendees included processing the CNMI’s food waste into energy/ turning it into animal feed, and processing C&D materials, tires, glass, etc. into aggregates for constructing buildings and roads.

Group Voting: Prioritizing Zero Waste

To wrap up the two days of meaningful discourse on achieving “Zero Waste” in the CNMI, in-person and virtual attendees participated in a survey to rank their “Zero Waste” priorities in the CNMI. Survey results were shared in real-time during the workshops and will be included with these notes and additional materials when they are received from GBB.