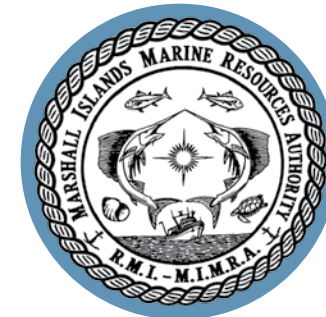


MIMRA



Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority
Annual Report FY2024

Marshall Islands
Marine
Resources
Authority



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority, PO Box 860, Majuro, Marshall Islands 96960
Phone: (692) 625-8262/625-5632 • www.mimra.com

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Cover: Drone Pilot Benedict Yamamura. Carrier Ship Sea Blazer. Purse Seiner Ocean Challenger.

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Year of collaboration

I am happy to report that MIMRA, together with fisheries agencies throughout the Pacific Islands and our regional agencies and donor partners, continued multi-levels of collaboration on fisheries action in 2024. The elevated level of fisheries management, conservation and revenue generation has come about through cooperation and partnerships in the fisheries sector.

These are producing results for the Marshall Islands. Beneficial collaboration includes membership of the Marshall Islands in the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, which in addition to increasing fisheries revenue at least eight-fold the past 15 years has opened up opportunities such as the Marshall Islands-based MIMRA partnership Pacific Islands Tuna LLC that is supplying the US retail giant Walmart with sustainably caught tuna; the partnership with the Forum Fisheries Agency that focuses on monitoring, control and surveillance of our vast fisheries waters, together with training opportunities for our fisheries and law enforcement personnel; the collaboration with the Pacific Community (SPC) that generates the scientific information about the status of tuna stocks in the region to inform policy decisions by our governments. And numerous partnerships with organizations and donors outside the region, ranging from The Nature Conservancy to the World Bank, developed MIMRA staff capacity, use of technology, and engagement in the tuna industry during 2024 as never before.

Climate-related problems looming for coastal and oceanic fisheries continued to be elevated in every fishery meeting in the region during 2024. Scientific reports are forecasting the negative impact of warming seas and ocean acidification from climate change on the movement and health of tuna stocks, making this a high priority for governments in the region.

This led the Marshall Islands to join Vanuatu and other Pacific nations to deliver a strong message in support of a climate petition before the International Court of Justice in The Hague in December 2024. From

Message from Anthony M. Muller, Chairman of the MIMRA Board of Directors and Minister of Natural Resources and Commerce.



December 2-13, the ICJ held proceedings on the petition filed by Vanuatu on the “Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change.” The two weeks of hearings at the ICJ was a landmark moment for climate justice on the global stage and allowed the Marshall Islands government a platform to speak in support of the urgency of climate action. MIMRA joined with the Forum Fisheries Agency and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement in delivering written submissions to the court.

During 2024, PNA leaders continued focusing on domestic tuna development for its members. The mandate from the PNA Ministers meeting in 2023 was to achieve economic independence through collaboration in sustainable tuna fisheries. At their annual meeting in 2024, the Ministers emphasized the priority that they attached to implementing the East New Britain Initiative of Papua New Guinea and supporting the Pacific Islands Tuna Initiative of the Marshall Islands. These initiatives provide PNA Members with new opportunities for managing PNA tuna fisheries to generate revenue and conserve stocks to secure a much greater share of the tuna value chain.

The PNA focus on our participation in the tuna value chain is playing out through MIMRA’s participation as a joint venture partner with The Nature Conservancy in Pacific Islands Tuna LLC. What started in 2022 as a pilot one-year effort to supply tuna to Walmart led to Walmart and the Marshall Islands agreeing to a two-year extension of the contract in 2023 to increase the volume of tuna being supplied to Walmart. This initiative is made possible by PNA’s Vessel Day Scheme, which manages the purse seine tuna fishery in the central and western Pacific. By the end of 2024, the tuna tonnage supplied to Walmart had provided the raw material for over 70 million cans of Walmart Great Value house brand tuna. As 2024 was wrapping up, Walmart, Pacific Islands Tuna and MIMRA officials were discussing a further contract extension for tuna supply.

During the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission’s annual meeting in December, MIMRA together with the Forum Fisheries Agency made progress on a number of important tuna management and conservation issues.

MIMRA partnered with National Geographic’s Pristine Seas program in 2023 to comprehensively survey and document reef health and marine resources at Bikini, Rongerik, Bikar and Bokak atolls. MIMRA staff joined with scientists and marine biologists from National Geographic, The Nature Conservancy, and other institutions on a three-week expedition to the northern atolls. The results of that trip in the form of written reports and a beautiful documentary film were delivered in 2024. The Pristine Seas and MIMRA work on the northern atolls set the stage for developing a plan to be implemented in 2025 to establish the nation’s first national marine sanctuary.

All of these initiatives point out the most important aspect of our fisheries management — whether it relates to the commercial tuna fishery or coastal fisheries resources — is effectively managing these resources for long-term sustainability.

Tony Muller

Raising capabilities

In 2024, we saw much greater emphasis placed on our Coastal fisheries, in part due MIMRA's ongoing collaboration with National Geographic's Pristine Seas program, as well as other international partners, focused on reef health and marine biodiversity. The reinvigorated focus on Coastal fisheries is much needed and overdue, giving visibility to the need to conserve and manage our domestic marine resources effectively.

Although our Coastal program does not generate a revenue stream comparable to the Oceanic commercial tuna program, the wide range of domestic coastal fisheries activity is no less deserving of conservation and management action. Work to develop the country's first National Marine Sanctuary for the northern atolls gained momentum in 2024 with the goal of implementing it in early 2025. The cornerstone of MIMRA's Coastal program remains the Reimaanlok (Looking to the Future) initiative focused on developing the knowledge and capability of communities on remote Neighboring Islands to manage their local marine resources. In aid of this, the long-standing Coastal Management Advisory Council — that brings many like-minded partners together with MIMRA to advance Coastal management and conservation — was revitalized during 2024 and continued to play an important role for Coastal fisheries. In addition, MIMRA saw good progress in 2024 for its fish aggregating device (FAD) installation around the country to support local fishers. Aquaculture and related coastal fisheries work continued to develop in 2024, with greater priority needed in 2025 to elevate Coastal management and development activity.

MIMRA's engineers and maintenance team kept vessels operating to regularly service remote islands, vehicles running, and facilities, including the MIMRA headquarters building and the local fish markets and fish bases, operational during the year.

The annual World Tuna Day event continues to grow in size and interest each year and 2024 was no exception. The event in 2024 emphasized student participation in presentations about jobs in the



Message from Glen Joseph, Executive Director, Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority.



industry. Representatives of local processing companies such as Pan Pacific Foods, Marshall Islands Fishing Venture and Pacific International Inc. set up booths and spoke with students and others who visited the World Tuna Day event that was held in Delap Park. MIMRA staff along with representatives of the FISH4ACP program engaged with students and the public for an interesting event.

MIMRA engaged regionally and globally to promote climate justice in the fisheries sector. This included advocacy

at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission annual meeting and in its committees and working groups, and globally at the International Court of Justice in the Netherlands. Global warming and ocean acidification are forecast to have a huge negative impact on tuna, undermining Pacific Island economies that are heavily dependent on the revenue currently generated from the commercial tuna fishery. FFA Deputy Director-General Dr. Pio Manoa put the climate problem in perspective in testimony to the ICJ in December 2024: "By 2050, major tuna fisheries could face a 20 percent decline, dealing a severe blow to economies of Pacific Small Island Developing States that are heavily reliant on fishing access fees and long-term sustainable fisheries."

An important climate adaptation initiative of the Marshall Islands together with other Pacific Islands is a proposal to the Green Climate Fund for a new regional program aimed at protecting tuna stocks from climate change impacts. It is hoped that this nine-nation initiative will receive

in all fisheries areas



Far left, at World Tuna Day, Pan Pacific Foods Human Resources Manager Martina Melang tells students about fisheries career opportunities. Below left, Director Glen Joseph. Left, Observer Pat Patrick checks tuna sizes on board the Hua Nan Yu 766.

possible by PNA's Vessel Day Scheme. These different initiatives have the same objective: Domestic development. In fact, there is enough tuna caught by purse seiners in the western and central Pacific to provide tuna to every member of the Forum Fisheries Agency for different types of domestic tuna processing.

An essential component of MIMRA's monitoring, control and surveillance of all aspects of commercial tuna fishing in Marshall Islands waters is the elevated capability of MIMRA's Oceanic Division to implement essential Port State Control measures. Virtually 100 percent of all purse seiners and longliners that visit Majuro port to transship tuna are monitored by MIMRA Fisheries Officers and Observers. The Oceanic Division has greatly expanded its capability to effectively manage the tuna fishing industry, from satellite surveillance of fishing in the Marshall Islands exclusive economic zone to hands-on boardings of virtually all fishing vessels in Majuro port, which includes inspection of ship logs and data collection from the transshipment and shoreside unloading of tuna. This Port State Control work helps the Marshall Islands to meet its obligations — domestic laws and regulations, as well as regional and international requirements.

All activity by staff in our Coastal, Oceanic, Competent Authority, Legal, Finance and Protected Areas Network divisions is focused on ensuring sustainable management of the marine resources of the Marshall Islands through collaboration and partnership with other agencies, ministries, regional and international organizations, and the fishing industry. In 2024, MIMRA continued to develop its capacity to deliver on this goal.

Glen Joseph

funding for implementation in 2025. This initiative emphasizes MIMRA's aim to integrate climate adaptation into tuna management.

One of MIMRA's biggest challenges is meeting the growing number of obligations for fisheries and oceans management and conservation as a result of joining conventions and treaties. These global conservation initiatives are very important to the health of our marine resources. At the same time, they require the limited number of MIMRA staff to produce surveys, studies and reports specific to each agreement on top of their existing workload. In 2024, MIMRA worked to increase its capacity to meet these many obligations.

While MIMRA advocated for climate justice internationally, it focused heavily on expanding domestic engagement in the tuna value chain. MIMRA's work in 2024 with the European Union and UN Food and Agriculture Organization-supported FISH4ACP program and construction of its new annex with a state-of-the-art laboratory are both linked to MIMRA's effort to gain certification by the EU to export tuna and marine products to the EU market of 27 nations.

During 2024, we saw an increase in

MIMRA BOARD MEMBERS

Chair: Minister Anthony M. Muller
V. Chair: Sen. David Kramer
Member: Mayor Ladie Jack
Member: Sen. Dennis Momotaro
Member: Anthony Paul
Member: Robert Muller
Member: Danny Wase

tuna supply to Walmart, which gives the Marshall Islands and PNA members access to the large United States market. This brings additional value to the Marshall Islands beyond sale of fishing days and licenses. MIMRA, together with PNA/FFA Members, is supporting expansion of tuna processing initiatives, with the goal of increasing the volume of tuna tonnage unloaded in PNA Member ports for processing and export, thereby increasing jobs and revenue generated for our islands. Both the Walmart tuna supply and domestic tuna processing are made



The Sea Blazer uploads tuna from the Ocean Challenger in Majuro lagoon.

MIMRA development in all areas continues apace

Summary

It was a year of significant developments on the international and domestic levels for MIMRA's Oceanic Division.

In the international arena, MIMRA Director Glen Joseph, as chairman of the FFA Officials, joined with Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency leaders for two appearances at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The first, in March, to submit statements in support of a landmark case brought by Vanuatu seeking a ruling establishing global responsibility for climate change, and the second, in December, to support the FFA, Marshall Islands and other Pacific nations delivering oral arguments in support of the earlier submissions that documented impacts on the tuna fishery in the region.

In addition, the 21st annual meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in Fiji in December delivered important results for tuna conservation management and, importantly, adoption of labor standards for fishing vessel crews. In the leadup to the WCPFC21, MIMRA Oceanic and Legal staff played key roles in the Commission's Technical and Compliance Committee and the Scientific Committee, as well as other working groups.

On the domestic front, major strides were made in preparing the Marshall Islands tuna processing industry and MIMRA as the regulatory authority for formally seeking access to the European Union market for products from the Marshall Islands. While this goal is still in the future, many steps were taken in 2024 to lay groundwork for readiness to achieve this long-term goal

of the country. The Competent Authority conducted numerous inspections of tuna processing facilities and sponsored trainings for employees as part of improving both physical infrastructure and human resources engaged in the tuna industry. And construction work on the new addition to MIMRA's headquarters building, which includes a state-of-the-art laboratory that is an essential aspect of complying with EU food health and safety rules, was nearing completion at the end of 2024.

In March, the Marshall Islands joined the United States government and leaders from independent Pacific nations to sign a 10-year extension of the US Pacific Fisheries Treaty that included provisions for the US government to increase the annual payment to \$60 million to access Western Pacific fishing grounds.



OCEANIC

The tuna value chain

At its annual meeting, FFA adopted its first plan of action on climate change and also backed a Papua New Guinea initiative for establishing regional tuna processing hubs to spread benefits in the region. The FFA reviewed the progress of the East New Britain initiative, which aims to enhance the economic benefits of tuna fisheries by developing regional processing hubs and other value-addition initiatives. Like the Marshall Islands tuna supply agreement with Walmart, the ENBi represents PNA nations making use of the PNA's management of the purse seine fishery as well as the FFA's multi-layered fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance program to engage in multiple areas of the tuna value chain to multiply benefits to island economies. Similarly, the PNA Ministerial Meeting endorsed both PNG's East New Britain initiative for tuna processing hubs and the Marshall Islands tuna supply arrangement with Walmart as two significant "wealth creation" opportunities in the tuna value chain.

MIMRA benefits from partnerships with many organizations.

Playing an important role in helping MIMRA expand tuna value chain opportunities for the Marshall Islands is FISH4ACP, an initiative of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific



A promotional graphic for Walmart's Great Value Chunk Light Tuna in Water with the key message that the fish is wild caught. The Marshall Islands tuna supply arrangement with Walmart is proving to be a significant "wealth creation" opportunity in the tuna value change.

ing workers, outreach education about careers in the tuna industry aimed at students and young people, and supporting the purchase of a "star loader," game-changing equipment to expand shoreside tuna unloading to create jobs and revenue for the local economy.

The World Bank-funded Pacific Regional Oceanscape Project for Economic Resilience is providing technical and funding support to multiple areas of the Oceanic Division, including support for fisheries observers and the Competent Authority.

The Nature Conservancy has been a long-time partner with MIMRA. It's joint venture work with the MIMRA-supported Pacific Islands Tuna LLC, a tuna supply company based in Majuro, continued the momentum of a tuna supply contract with Walmart, now in its third year in 2024. By the end of the year, it was estimated that tuna sourced by Pacific Islands Tuna had accounted for close to 70 million cans of Walmart house brand tuna, Great Value.

The tuna supply for Walmart is made possible by the Marshall Islands membership in the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, which manages the purse seine tuna fishery through its Vessel Day Scheme. The VDS establishes a system of monitoring and verification that meets stringent chain of custody rules ensuring tuna supplied to Walmart

"By the end of the year, it was estimated that tuna sourced by Pacific Islands Tuna had accounted for close to 70 million cans of Walmart house brand tuna, Great Value."

States aimed at making fisheries and aquaculture value chains in ACP nations more productive and sustainable. Implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in collaboration with MIMRA, the program is funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. It has focused on trainings for tuna process-



MIMRA Director Glen Joseph, left, at the FFA meeting in Fiji.

Milestone WCPFC meeting

through Pacific Islands Tuna is sustainably and legally caught.

Oceanic’s Monitoring, Control and Surveillance team continued doing their superlative work to monitor the fishery — both with hands on boarding and monitoring of virtually 100 percent of all fishing vessels that come into Majuro port as well as using the Oceanic Division’s MCS digital tools to monitor fishing vessels in the 200-mile zone of the Marshall Islands and beyond. This includes MIMRA’s team of Fisheries Observers who monitor purse seine and longline fishing operations at sea. In 2024, MIMRA Fisheries Observers had their highest number of trips on fishing boats since 2018.

WCPFC annual meeting

The late November-early December

annual meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in Fiji was a milestone session for accomplishment. Many important measures were adopted that advance improved management of tuna stocks. A signature accomplishment of WCPFC21, however, was the adoption of a new measure on Crew Labor Standards, focused on protecting the safety and welfare of the people who work in the fisheries sector. This measure aims to set a higher standard for the conditions of those who work on all varieties of vessels associated with the commercial tuna industry.

Among a series of other measures that were approved:

- The WCPFC committed to strengthening port State measures and enhancing tools used in high seas boarding and inspection activities.
- The Commission’s Harvest Strategy Workplan was updated, with commit-

ment to adopting a management procedure for South Pacific albacore in 2025.

- Interim minimum standards for electronic monitoring were adopted. This marks a significant step forward to close gaps in data and strengthen the WCPFC’s ability to independently verify the performance of Commission members compared to their obligations.

- Commission members reaffirmed their commitment to ensure that small island developing member states of the WCPFC can participate effectively in the management of fisheries resources. Additional funding was included in the 2025 budget to support more delegates from developing states to attend meetings of the Commission throughout the year. This is a particularly important point for the Marshall Islands and other islands with relatively small fishery departments that are faced with an increasing burden of obligations to domestic,



Vanuatu joins talks in Pohnpei

regional and international fisheries and oceans agreements, policies and rules.

- Fully aware of the impact of climate change on the fisheries in the region, members endorsed a workplan to guide the Commission’s future work. This will incorporate climate change considerations into WCPFC’s fisheries conservation and management framework.

The science is clear: There are going to be impacts from global warming on the tuna fishery. “In the past, fisheries had no mandate in climate change,” MIMRA Director Glen Joseph said in comments reported in the media after the WCPFC. “We’d take it to the climate office. But whether we like it or not, whether it’s in our mandate or not, we must mobilize. How climate is changing is a grim picture.”

PNA Ministerial meeting results

The annual Parties to the Nauru Agreement Ministerial Meeting was held in Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia during September. The ministers covered many areas of the fishery.

One of the new developments recognized at the meeting was participation of a delegation from Vanuatu that participated, in part, to sign with PNA an Arrangement for the Participation of Vanuatu in the Palau Arrangement Longline Vessel Day Scheme. Ministers noted



The multi-story PNA Office in Majuro

“Ministers were encouraged to see stable tuna catches and effort in the main tuna fisheries in the region which indicated the effectiveness of regional tuna fisheries management, especially through the PNA Vessel Day Scheme.”

that this new partnership with Vanuatu was a very important step in strengthening collaboration on tuna management in the region. The Arrangement confirms the value of partnerships in managing the regional longline fishery.

PNA Ministers commended the work of PNA officials, the PNA Office, and the Marshall Islands as the host country for the PNA Office “for the continued effectiveness of the PNA Office.” The PNA leaders said that “effective management of the Office is critically important to the Parties because of the role of the PNA Office in administering the Vessel Day Scheme, managing funds held on behalf of the Parties, and supporting the Parties more broadly in their efforts to maximize the socio-economic value of tuna fisheries to the people of PNA and Tokelau.”

During the Ministerial meeting, scientists from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community updated the leaders about the status of tuna stocks in the PNA region. The scientific advice from SPC was that all four tropical tuna stocks in PNA waters continue to be assessed as healthy. “Ministers were encouraged to



Marshallese fisheries observers pictured at the dock near the MIMRA headquarters. From left they are Iven Joseph, Johnny Kahawai, Dick Komen, Dwight Riklon, Benisa Komwenga, and Lawrence Jifiam.

Observers pay raise applied

see stable tuna catches and effort in the main tuna fisheries in the region which indicated the effectiveness of regional tuna fisheries management, especially through the PNA Vessel Day Scheme (VDS),” the meeting communique said. It was emphasized that the Western and Central Pacific is still the only oceanic region in the world where the tropical tuna resources are being fished sustainably. Despite the health of tuna stocks in the region, the PNA leaders “recognized the continuing need for further efforts to address the impacts of commercial tuna fisheries on bycatches, ecosystems and the marine environment. In particular, Ministers “expressed concern over the increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and encouraged stock assessments to routinely capture the impacts of climate change.”

PNA leaders recognized both national observer programs and the PNA Observer Program for successfully placing observers back on all purse seine vessels from 2023 onward following the

two-year disruption of observer programs caused by Covid. It was reported to the meeting that the increased pay rates for observers that were agreed at the 2023 Ministerial annual meeting in recognition of the importance, quality and increasing complexity of the work of observers had been applied in 2024 and was greatly appreciated by observers.

The PNA Ministers also focused discussion on wealth creation from tuna value chain participation by the Parties. The Ministers emphasized the priority they attached to implementing Papua New Guinea’s East New Britain Initiative and supporting the Marshall Islands Pacific Islands Tuna initiative. These are both value-adding to and building upon PNA’s Vessel Day Scheme management of the purse seine fishing that can generate revenue beyond the sale of fishing days and licensing of vessels. The VDS establishes the foundation for sustainably managing and conserving tuna stocks to secure a much greater share of

the wealth created throughout the tuna value chain. Ministers welcomed the progress being made in promoting increased Pacific Islands participation and collaboration in onshore tuna activities through the East New Britain Initiative Working Group.

In tandem with MIMRA and Pacific Islands Tuna LLC increasing the supply of sustainably caught tuna to Walmart over the past three years, both have been promoting the opportunity for other PNA Parties to supply tuna to Walmart, which is seeking greater volumes of tuna caught sustainably in PNA waters.

Forum Fisheries Agency engagement

On March 28, 2024, the Pacific-US Tuna Treaty memorandum of understanding was signed at the US Embassy in Suva. Marshall Islands Ambassador to Fiji Junior Aini signed the treaty MOU on behalf of the Marshall Islands Government. The agreement allows US



The case before the Court of Justice

vessels continued fishing access within the EEZs of Pacific Island Parties for the year 2024.

The May Forum Fisheries Agency Officials Annual Meeting in Nauru featured a passing of the steering paddle from outgoing chair MIMRA Director Glen Joseph to Nauru fisheries CEO Charleston Deiye, who took over the chair position for the meeting and onward. They were joined in the FFA chair handover tradition by FFA Director General Dr. Manu Tupou-Roosen and Deputy Director General Dr. Pio Manoa.

At the Nauru meeting, fisheries officials adopted their first plan of action on climate change and also backed a Papua New Guinea-initiative for establishing regional tuna processing hubs to spread benefits of the commercial tuna industry in the region. Significant developments of the meeting including:

- Endorsement of an implementation plan for the FFA’s climate change strategy. This a comprehensive approach to integrating climate resilience into fisheries management. This endorsement will allow FFA to carry out action plans for climate adaptation, resilience and capacity building, underlining the urgency of the problem.

- East New Britain initiative. The FFA reviewed the progress of the East New Britain Initiative, which aims to enhance the economic benefits of tuna fisheries by developing regional processing hubs



FFA Director General Dr. Manu Tupou-Roosen, MIMRA director Glen Joseph, and RMI Ambassador in Geneva Doreen deBrum at The Hague.

“A team from the FFA appeared before the International Court of Justice at The Hague on 12 December putting a spotlight on the alarming impacts of climate change on Pacific tuna stocks.”

and other value-addition initiatives.

In March, FFA Director-General Dr. Tupou-Roosen presented the FFA’s written arguments to the International Court of Justice in The Hague in support of Vanuatu’s request to the court to clarify the obligations of countries in relation to climate change. MIMRA Director Joseph, as the then-chair of FFA Officials, joined Dr. Tupou-Roosen

and other FFA officials at The Hague, in The Netherlands, along with Marshall Islands Ambassador in Geneva Doreen deBrum for the official delivery of the FFA statement.

In December, FFA officials returned to The Hague for oral arguments in the case. A team from the FFA appeared before the International Court of Justice at The Hague on 12 December putting a spotlight on the alarming impacts of climate change on Pacific tuna stocks. Shifting tuna migration — driven by ocean warming, acidification, and deoxygenation — are moving these key tuna resources away from the Exclusive Economic Zones of FFA members, jeopardizing livelihoods, food security, cultural heritage and economic stability, said FFA Deputy Director-General Dr. Manoa to the court.

“By 2050, major tuna fisheries could face a 20 percent decline, dealing a severe blow to economies of Pacific Small Island Developing States that are heavily reliant on fishing access fees



Regional vessels involved

and long-term sustainable fisheries,” he said. With 15 of FFA’s 17 Members being Small Island Developing States, Manoa emphasized the need for urgent global action to address these unprecedented challenges and protect the Pacific’s marine resources. MIMRA Director Joseph joined the FFA team for the presentation.

Walmart partnership expands

Tuna sourced by Majuro-based Pacific Islands Tuna LLC for the US retail giant Walmart was expected to more than triple in volume compared to the first year. In mid-2023, Walmart’s Director of Global Sourcing Brandon Nikolish joined MIMRA Chairman and Minister John Silk in signing a two-year extension of the initial one-year trial agreement. During the first year, in 2022, Pacific Islands Tuna supplied tuna that resulted in nine million cans of Walmart’s house brand, Great Value.

That volume of tuna was expected to more than triple in 2024 and into 2025, as Pacific Islands Tuna increased the number of purse seiners supplying tuna for Walmart.

Pacific Islands Tuna (PIT) is a joint venture established by the long-standing partnership between MIMRA and The Nature Conservancy to support a Marshall Islands initiative to gain access to a new area of the tuna value chain.

The significance of this expansion in tuna supply from the PIT to Walmart, the world’s largest retail company, is several fold:

- PIT is combining a business development and conservation management strategy to its tuna sourcing. Piggybacking on the Vessel Day Scheme established by the Parties to the Nauru Agreement that governs the purse seine tuna fishery in the western Pacific, PIT is sourcing tuna from vessels catching



Working the fish on the FSM-flagged purse seiner Mathawmarfach.

“PIT’s aim is to increase the volume of this tuna that is unloaded dockside into freezer containers for shipment to canneries in Asia because this increases job opportunities domestically.”

free school tuna that have the sustainably-harvested seal of approval from the Marine Stewardship Council.

- It marks the first time a Pacific Island country has moved into the tuna supply chain, an area historically controlled by global multinational corporations.
- Sustainably caught tuna in the PNA-managed area of the Central and West-

ern Pacific dovetails with Walmart’s corporate philosophy of sourcing key food products from sustainably managed programs.

The primary goal of PIT is to “promote sustainable fishing and help islands participate in the tuna value chain,” said PIT Manager Gene Muller.

PIT had agreements with 11 Marshall Islands-flagged purse seiners and eight vessels flagged in the Federated States of Micronesia for supplying sustainably caught tuna for Walmart during 2024.

PIT’s aim is to increase the volume of this tuna that is unloaded dockside into freezer containers for shipment to canneries in Asia because this increases job opportunities domestically. Pacific International Inc. is handling unloading of tuna for PIT in Majuro while the containerization system is also being used in Kosrae, a neighboring island in Micronesia, for Walmart-bound tuna. This



The FISH4ACP project supported the plan to purchase a tuna loader that’s expected to boost onshore loading of frozen tuna for export. This fits with the goal to increase the volume of tuna unloaded in PNA member ports.

Expanding operations in RMI

creates greater economic value for these small islands.

The goal, said MIMRA Director Joseph, is to shift from lagoon-based transshipment from purse seiner to carrier vessel to unloading at dockside into freezer containers. Currently about 97 percent of all tuna is transshipped via carriers. The goal is to increase containerization to 30 percent of the total volume. This in turn supports the tuna supply agreement with Walmart.

The hope for the long term is to expand the project to involve other PNA members in supplying tuna for Walmart.

FISH4ACP supports industry expansion

Playing an important partnership role

in helping the Oceanic Division expand tuna value chain opportunities for the Marshall Islands is FISH4ACP, an initiative of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States aimed at making fisheries and aquaculture value chains in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific more productive and sustainable.

Implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the program is funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The goal of the Oceanic Division is to expand tuna operations domestically to increase jobs and revenue flow, as well as moving into other tuna value chain opportunities, including work to access

international markets such as the European Union.

This is where the FISH4ACP project has played an important role: Providing community education about jobs and opportunities in the commercial fisheries sector, supporting training programs to expand the skills of tuna industry workers, and co-funding a game-changing tuna loader that is expected to provide a significant boost to onshore unloading of frozen tuna for export.

MIMRA, together with Parties to the Nauru Agreement members, is supporting expansion of tuna processing initiatives, with the goal of increasing the volume of tuna tonnage unloaded in PNA Member ports for processing and export, thereby increasing jobs and revenue generated for our islands.



Competent Authority Auditor Donny Andrike trained locals on good food hygiene practices.

Training programs for locals

FISH4ACP's program works to add value to these fisheries initiatives in the Marshall Islands.

"Both the new tuna loader and the reefer container training are part of FISH4ACP's broader strategy that supports a sector that maintains a high-quality product while also ensuring environmental, economic and social sustainability," said Victoria Stansberry, FISH4ACP National Project Consultant in the Marshall Islands. "Proper handling of the tuna is crucial to quality control. The (tuna) loader allows for hygienic and efficient operations that encourages increased tuna landings. Reefer trainings are a way to equip local workers with the skills to confidently maintain the tuna cold chain and reduce post-harvest losses. Building local expertise also strengthens the workforce and strengthens the sector."

FISH4ACP has also supported the rollout of hygiene and food handling training programs for tuna processing plant workers. "FISH4ACP looks forward to continuing these trainings,"

"The Oceanic and Competent Authority divisions have engaged with the processing industry over the past two years to step-up quality control and improve hygiene in the handling of tuna for export to meet international standards."

said Stansberry. "A significant impact of these trainings that cannot be ignored is the employee reception from a work culture standpoint. It demonstrates to the local workforce and anyone considering joining that they are a valued part of the tuna industry and that there is value in investing in their performance."

MIMRA's Competent Authority, in particular, and local tuna processing

companies are focused on improving the operations of fish handlers which is a key part of developing an onshore tuna processing industry that meets international standards. The Oceanic and Competent Authority divisions have engaged with the processing industry over the past two years to step-up quality control and improve hygiene in the handling of tuna for export to meet international standards. FISH4ACP supported an introductory training on good hygiene practices and food risks for supervisors and staff from the small group of processing companies in the Marshall Islands.

It was targeted for local workers, marking a significant first step to create a safe and sustainable food system. Competent Authority Auditor Donny Andrike delivered the initial training on good hygiene practices and food risks and followed up individually with the processing companies to monitor progress. Fish processing staff from Pan Pacific Foods, Marshall Islands Fishing Venture, Koo's Fishing Company, Pa-



Exporting the fish brought onshore

cific International Inc. and MISCo Market actively participated in the two-day hygiene training in Majuro.

This activity laid the foundations for the continuation of other courses and practical trainings, which are very useful for local personnel in the area of food safety and skills in the food industry.

One challenge for stepping up the volume of frozen tuna shipped out of Majuro in freezer containers is the time it now takes to unload the fish at dockside. The decision in 2024 to purchase a tuna loader, a collaboration among FISH4ACP, MIMRA and Pacific International Inc., could transform tuna transshipment in the Marshall Islands to create dozens of new jobs in onshore fish handling and processing.

For decades, nearly 100 percent of tuna transshipment in Majuro Atoll has been purse seiners offloading their tuna to large carrier vessels anchored in the lagoon. Less than five percent of all tuna moving through Majuro annually is transshipped on shore. The goal is to increase the shore unloading of tuna to 30 percent of the total, which would change Majuro's position from a bystander collecting fees from transshipment vessels anchored in the lagoon to a significant player in this aspect of the tuna value chain.

The use of a tuna loader has the potential to contribute to economic growth, job creation, and the sustainable development of its fishing industry.



A purse seiner offloads tuna at the PII net yard.

The mechanized tuna loading equipment is expected to greatly reduce the time it takes to load freezer containers with tuna and will enable more tuna to be packed into each container. The new equipment was expected to arrive in the early part of 2025.

The joint FISH4ACP-MIMRA-PII investment in tuna loader facilities is part of modernizing tuna-related infrastructure, making it more attractive for fishing vessels to utilize Majuro port. It is hoped that this, in turn, can help attract more fishing activity to the country, further boosting economic growth.

Tuna transshipment operations decline

After three years of rebounding from one of the worst years for tuna transshipment during the Covid border shutdown of 2020, tuna transshipment fell in 2024. The number of transshipments in Majuro for the year was limited to 160, which is below even the anemic 175 transshipments conducted in 2020.

After 2020, the numbers rebounded strongly. In 2021, 298 transshipments took place. The next year it was 257 and in 2023, 294 transshipments were conducted.

But 2024 proved to be a challenging year for transshipments as many months with only single digit transshipments demonstrated the decline in use of Majuro port. At least two causes were behind the drop off in numbers in 2024: Tuna schools were concentrated in the southwestern Pacific for much of the year, focusing fishing in the waters of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. This meant purse seiners fishing in these areas tended to use ports in proximity to the fishing grounds for transshipment. It's a business decision as to where purse seiners transship their catches in order to get them back fishing as quickly as possible.

MIMRA is regularly recognized globally for its operations. MIMRA's website, mimra.com, for example, was in 2024 cited by the Global Tuna Alliance



Total Catch Purse Seine Fleets* in the Marshall Islands EEZ 2015-2024					
Year	SKJ	YFT	BET	OTH	Total
2015	21,293	4,295	126	0	26,344
2016	72,329	5,790	648	0	78,767
2017	22,765	2,901	788	65	26,519
2018	26,424	2,168	253	58	28,903
2019	4,806	65	410	11	5,394
2020	28,915	7,000	871	55	36,841
2021	35,842	18,270	514	14	54,640
2022	38,655	1,918	523	28	41,123
2023	39,435	1,484	3,228	67	44,232
2024	30,355	2,465	329	0	33,149++

Figures are metric tons. * Taiwan, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, FSM, and S. Korea (listed in order of catch tonnage).
Key: SKJ=Skipjack Tuna, YFT=Yellowfin Tuna, BET=Bigeye Tuna, OTH=Other. ++ 2024 tonnage is provisional.

Total Catch Longline Fleets* in the Marshall Islands EEZ 2015-2024					
Year	ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	Total
2015	122	2,286	1,380	359	4,147
2016	67	1,522	1,127	420	3,136
2017	71	1,698	1,389	445	3,603
2018	52	2,210	1,262	316	3,840
2019	134	1,974	1,699	410	4,269
2020	21	1,640	1,282	256	3,199
2021	122	1,677	1,136	331	3,265
2022	233	1,636	1,347	368	3,584
2023	160	2,018	949	284	3,411
2024	344	2,624	2,180	0	5,148++

Figures are metric tons. *Marshall Islands chartered, FSM and China (listed in order of catch tonnage). **Key:** ALB=Albacore, BET=Bigeye Tuna, YFT=Yellowfin Tuna, OTH=Other.

Total Catch Pole-and-Line Fleet* in the Marshall Islands EEZ 2015-2024				
Year	BET	SKJ	YFT	Total
2015	0	615	2	617
2016	0	429	1	430
2017	0	72	0	72
2018	0	1,017	1	1,018
2019	0	1,022	2	1,024
2020	0	2,223	9	2,619
2021	2	761	14	777
2022	0	880	13	893
2023	0	516	0	516
2024	0	27	0	27++

Figures are metric tons. * Pole-and-line fleet is exclusively Japan.
Key: BET=Bigeye Tuna, SKJ=Skipjack Tuna, YFT=Yellowfin Tuna.

Source: MIMRA Oceanic Division

Taiwan ships top scores at 47,048mt



as a “best practice.” And in 2023, MIMRA’s Oceanic Division was recognized for its world class Port State measures and prevention work against illegal fishing by the International Fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Network.

MIMRA Director Joseph said that another step by MIMRA to confirm its management of fisheries operations in Majuro port was to sign onto the UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s Agreement on Port State Measures to indicate its agreement and compliance with international port management rules. All of these initiatives, combined with MIMRA’s daily, ongoing work in monitoring the tuna industry, is part of elevating the level of compliance by the Marshall Islands with international best practices.

Transshipments involving Taiwan-flagged purse seiners accounted for the highest number of transshipments in 2024, with 61 out of the 160, or nearly 40 percent of the total. The Taiwan vessels transferred 47,048mt of tuna during the year. Coming in second were Marshall Islands-flagged purse seiners with 36 transshipments accounting for 28,111mt of tuna. Nauru, 29 and 21,302mt, Federated States of Micronesia, 26 and 17,592mt, China, 5 and 1,562mt, and Tuvalu, 3 and 1,300mt rounded out the vessels that used Majuro port for transshipping their tuna.

Tuna transshipments during 2024 averaged 731mt each. The highest average transshipment tonnage was set in 2019 with an average of 807mt. The lowest in the past 10 years was 2020 with an average of 679mt.



Provisional purse seine transshipments & unloadings in Majuro in 2024

Flag	Number of PS Transshipments	SKJ	YFT	BET	Total
China	5	1,532	26	4	1,562
Federated States of Micronesia	26	16,386	987	219	17,592
Marshall Islands	36	25,749	1,548	814	28,111
Nauru	29	19,831	1,171	300	21,302
Taiwan	61	44,539	1,993	516	47,048
Tuvalu	3	1,262	38	0	1,300
Total	160	109,299	35,763	1,853	116,915

Source: MIMRA Oceanic Division.

Note: The numbers listed under different tuna species are metric tons.

Key:
SKJ: Skipjack;
YFT: Yellowfin;
BET: Bigeye.

Records broken in FY2024

The majority of transshipments are from purse seiner to carrier vessel in the lagoon. The good news is that shoreside unloading of tuna continues to increase each year. While it has historically been around five percent of the total tuna tonnage unloaded on the docks for container export, in 2024 the volume rose to 12 percent. A total of 13,885mt tons of whole frozen containerized tuna was exported in 2024. Pan Pacific Foods exported the highest volume of whole tuna at 6,804 metric tons in 2024. The other two whole frozen tuna exporters, Marshall Islands Fishing Venture and Pacific International Inc. have steadily increased their numbers of containerized whole tuna exports in recent years. The new tuna loader is expected to be a game-changer for shoreside unloading once it goes into operation in 2025. It will both speedup the unloading process and provide improved handling of the tuna by more quickly moving the frozen fish into freezer containers.

The 44 active fisheries observers employed by the MIMRA Observer Pro-

gram in 2024 accounted for the highest number of trips on purse seiners and longliners in six years. A total of 178 trips were covered by observers — 135 on purse seiners and 43 on longliners. This was a large increase from the previous year’s total of 117 fishing trips covered by observers and the highest since the 179 trips in 2018. Moreover, the 43 longline vessel trips set a record for MIMRA observers. The highest number of longline trips prior to 2024

was 39 in 2017. Longline observer trips in 2024 accounted for nearly 25 percent of the total, the highest percentage for longline trips ever in years with over 100 observer trips.



Packaging fish at PPF.

Tuna tonnage in 2024

In 2024, the 11 Marshall Islands-flagged purse seine vessels operating throughout the Western and Central



Seiners bring in 86pc of the catch

Pacific Ocean caught 90,156mt of tuna. This was the highest total tonnage in the past five years, and well above the 67,520mt caught in 2023.

The retained catch estimates from the chartered longline vessels associated with the Majuro-based Marshall Islands Fishing Venture totaled 4,472mt. This was nearly double the 2023 retained catch of 2,314mt and the highest volume in the past five years. The chartered longline vessels primarily fished in the Marshall Islands EEZ.

The commercial catches within the Marshall Islands EEZ are taken predominantly by the purse seine fishery but longline and pole-and-line operations also occur. In 2024, estimated total catch for all gears combined was 38,324mt with purse seiners accounting for 86 percent of the total catch followed by longliners with about 14 percent and pole-and-line less than one percent. The purse seine catch in the Marshall Islands EEZ decreased from 49,422mt in 2023 to 33,149 metric tons in 2024, another reflection on the location of tuna schools in the southwest Pacific for most of the year.

The catch levels by different fishing gear operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ during 2024:

• **Pole-and-line catches:** The catch by Japanese pole-and-line vessels was the lowest in the past 10 years due to very few of these vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands in 2024. Only five pole-

Number of foreign longline, pole-and-line and purse seine vessels licensed to fish in RMI EEZ, by year and flag, from 2020 to 2024.	Flag	Gear	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Source: MIMRA Oceanic Division	China	LL	20	18	22	29	29
		PS	9	9	10	12	12
	FSM	LL	10	12	11	10	11
		FSMA	70	83	79	886	93
	Japan	LL	2	2	1	6	0
		PL	21	25	3	13	5
		PS	28	29	22	25	28
	Kiribati	PS	3	4	2	2	0
	South Korea	PS	25	21	20	22	16
	Nauru	PS	0	0	0	2	0
	Philippines	PS	15	15	15	6	0
		LL	0	0	0	0	0
	Taiwan	PS	18	21	23	22	21
	Tuvalu	PS	0	1	1	1	1
Sub-total	USA	PS	25	0	0	0	0
		LL	32	32	34	45	40
		PL	21	25	3	13	5
Total/Year		PS	190	183	195	181	171
		LL	243	240	232	239	216
		PL	21	25	3	13	5



A MIMRA vessel approaches a purse seiner in Majuro lagoon.

and-line vessels were licensed to fish in 2024, down from the 13 the previous year. The total catch amounted to 27mt, with skipjack tuna accounting for the entire catch. The 27mt tons of tuna caught compares to the 516mt caught by the 13 licensed boats in 2023. When Japan licensed 20 or more pole-and-line vessels to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, the catch rose as high as 2,619mt in 2020.

• **Longline catches:** The 2024 longline catch in the RMI EEZ was the highest in 10 years, with 5,148mt caught. Prior to 2024, the highest tonnage since 2015 was 2019 at 4,269mt. The longline catches since 2015 have ranged from a low of 3,136mt in 2016 to the high set in 2024. A total of 40 longline vessels, including the 29 chartered to the Marshall Islands Fishing



A MIMRA Fisheries Enforcement Officer boards the FSM purse seiner Mathawmarfach for a routine inspection.

Southern waters most popular

Venture, were licensed to fish in Marshall Islands waters in 2024. In addition to the 29 China-flagged longliners associated with MIFV, 11 FSM-flagged longliners were licensed to fish in 2024.

Bigeye tuna accounted for over half of the 5,148mt caught. The bigeye tonnage was estimated at 2,624mt. A total of 2,180mt of yellowfin tuna was caught. Albacore accounted for 344mt and 284mt tons was categorized as “other.”

The 40 domestically based longline fleet of Chinese and FSM vessels operate through MIFV, which is a subsidiary of Luen Thai. These vessels accounted for nearly all of the 5,148mt tons of tuna caught during the year. The chartered China-flagged vessels caught 3,726mt, while the FSM vessels caught 1,408mt. The balance of 14mt was made up by other China-flagged longline vessels.

In contrast to the purse seine fishery, which is mostly concentrated in the southern waters of the Marshall Islands EEZ, longline fishing is more widely dispersed throughout the EEZ.

• **Purse seine catch:** Available



Competent Authority staff conduct an inspection at MIFV.



One of the 27 tuna unloadings from purse seiners into freezer containers at the PII facility.

PII facilities busy in FY2024

logsheet data show that purse seine vessels caught 33,149 mt of tuna in the Marshall Islands EEZ in 2024. This is the lowest total in five years and well below 2023, when 49,422mt were caught. Taiwan-flagged vessels caught the most tuna, 12,698mt, or 38 percent of the total. Marshall Islands vessels caught the next highest volume with 6,197mt that amounted to 19 percent of the total tonnage caught in the EEZ. Kiribati vessels came in third with a catch of 6,023mt, Nauru vessels were next with 4,759mt, FSM vessels followed with 3,207mt and S. Korea vessels rounded out the total with 265mt.

Skipjack tuna was the dominant purse seine catch. A total of 30,355mt of skipjack was caught, accounting for 86 percent of the total. Yellowfin catches ac-

“ For 2024, PII handled 27 tuna unloadings from purse seiners into freezer containers for later shipment to offshore canneries. TPPI's net yard handled net repairs for 10 seiners compared to 18 in 2023.”

counted for 2,465mt, and bigeye was limited to 329mt.

The catch levels in the Marshall Islands EEZ are usually influenced by locations of the tuna schools and prevailing environmental conditions, with

higher catch rates usually recorded during or immediately following strong El Niño periods.

Onshore processing, exports

This year saw continuing strong use of PII fisheries facilities by the purse seine fleet. For 2024, PII handled 27 tuna unloadings from purse seiners into freezer containers for later shipment to offshore canneries. TPPI's net yard handled net repairs for 10 purse seiners compared to 18 in 2023. It also assisted five vessels with loading salt or fresh water.

Pan Pacific Foods (PPF) tuna plant continued operations in 2024 but these were limited to cold storage and containerization of fish. The company again did not produce processed fish.



President speaks at World Tuna Day

PPF, PII and the Marshall Islands Fishing Venture combined to export to offshore canneries 13,885mt of whole tuna in freezer containers. PPF exported the largest volume at 6,804mt. Both PII and MIFV have steadily increased the volume of freezer containers of whole tuna exports.

The largest volume of these exports in 2024, 5,454mt, went to Thailand. A total of 5,348mt was exported to China, while 2,208mt was exported to the Philippines, 227mt was exported to Vietnam, and 97mt to Taiwan.

World Tuna Day

As it has for the past several years, MIMRA and the Oceanic Division celebrated World Tuna Day in Majuro in early May.

The event, held at Delap Park and open to the public, generated a high degree of interest among students, community members and Marshall Islands leaders. President Hilda Heine spoke at the opening of the event, highlighting the importance of tuna conservation and management.

Industry employees set up booths to showcase their processing operations that offered participants the opportunity to learn more about the domestic tuna processing industry.

A highlight of the day was competitions for the quality of cutting tuna and creating a variety of dishes with tuna that were judged and awarded prizes.



World Tuna Day was celebrated at Delap Park and offered fun events for everyone, but the career fair was a special bonus for students.



OBSERVER PROGRAM

Fisheries Observer trips by flag and gear 2024

Flag	Purse Seine	Longline
Taiwan	95	0
FSMA/FM	26	0
FSMA/Nauru	11	0
FSMA/Kiribati	0	2
FSMA/Tuvalu	0	9
MIFV China	0	38
MIFV/FM	0	5
Total	135	43
Key: FSMA=FSM Arrangement vessels; FM=Federated States of Micronesia; MIFV=Marshall Islands Fishing Venture.		

The eyes and ears of the

After a rebound year in 2023, the first full year of normalcy post-Covid, the MIMRA Observer Program in 2024 covered the highest number of fishing vessel trips in six years. The team of 44 observers went on 178 trips, both purse seine and longline vessels. This is the highest number since 2018, when observers conducted 179 trips. Last year set a record for female observers at six. In 2024, this record was broken again with the addition of one more female, bringing the total to seven of the 44 active observers. The MIMRA Observer Program has five permanent staff: Compliance Officer Makbi Bwijko, Data Specialist Ziggy Duffy, Data Entry/Debriefing Assessor Jacob Keju, Observer Assistant Trainer Iaokiri Barai, and loneline port sampler Lomodro Jibas. Seven of the staff and active observers are certified Pacific Islands Regional Fisheries Observers (PIRFO) debriefers, who work with the observers who monitor purse seiners and longliners. Four of them are senior observers — Paul Capelle, Alington Abija,

Leban Jelton and Lawrence Jitiam — while three are program staff — Keju, Bwijko and Barai. MIMRA Observer Program staff participated in a number of important workshops and meetings during 2024. These included:

- POACM 11 PNA Observer Agency Coordinators Meeting, February 26.
- ROCW24 Regional Observer Coordinators Workshop, February 27–March 1.
- Observer Coordinators Training March 4-8: Basic Psychology and Asset Management.
- FFA Observer Data Critical Analysis Training May 27–31.
- PNA E-Reporting Workshop November 25–29.

The full resumption of observer trips on fishing vessels, the addition of two certified debriefer assessors, Jitiam and Capelle, the participation of an increasing number of female observers, and the general stability of the active observer group during 2023 and 2024 led to a productive year of work in the area of com-

pliance monitoring of fishing vessels. Of the 179 trips MIMRA observers went on, 135 were purse seiners and 43 longliners. The majority of the 135 trips on purse seiners were on Taiwan-flagged vessels, 95. A further 26 were on FSM Arrangement and FSM-flagged vessels, followed by 11 on FSMA/Nauru-flagged vessels, and one on Tuvalu. For the longline vessels, all trips were on vessels associated with the Marshall Islands Fishing Venture operation in Majuro. A total of 38 trips were on MIFV/China-flagged vessels and five were on MIFV/FSM-flagged longline vessels. In addition to working on fishing boats to monitor and report on operations at sea, when observers are in port they are assigned to port monitoring duties. These include monitoring and collecting data on purse seiners when they are transshipping their tuna tonnage to carrier vessels or unloading tuna at dockside for freezer container export, as well as monitoring longline vessel offloading at Marshall Islands Fishing Venture’s processing facility.



Fisheries Observer trips 2015-2024

Year	PS	LL	Total
2015	182	0	182
2016	175	28	203
2017	153	39	192
2018	145	34	179
2019	141	33	174
2020	20	12	32*
2021	0	23	23*
2022	9	0	9*
2023	94	23	117
2024	135	43	178
* Observer coverage restricted due to Covid .			
Source: MIMRA Oceanic Division.			



Far left, Observer Lawrence Jitiam with Captain Jianguo Chen on the bridge of Hua Nan Yu 766. Above, Observer Dwight Riklon on the bridge.

Marshalls fishing industry



Observer Pat Patrick, right, checked the size of the fish before they were hauled by a crane onto the dock.



Oceanic highlights

Vessels tonnage

The Marshall Islands saw an over 40 percent drop in the number of tuna transshipments in Majuro port in 2024, from 294 in 2023 to 160 this year. The transshipments accounted for a provisional total of 116,915 metric tons of tuna. The big decline in transshipments reflected tuna schools to the west, with purse seine fleets making use of closer ports to transship their catches. Despite the downturn in transshipments, there were bright spots. The number of unloadings at dockside and mixed unloadings/transshipments to carrier vessels in the lagoon increased significantly in 2024. Of the 160 transshipments, 123 were to carrier vessels, 14 were combined transshipment and unloadings — compared to 10 in 2023 — and 23 were unloadings at dockside — more than triple the six in 2023. As in 2023, Taiwan-flagged purse seiners accounted for the highest number at 61, followed by Marshall Islands vessels at 36, Nauru-flagged purse seiners at 29, and FSM vessels at 26. China and Tuvalu combined for eight.

VDS revenue

Purse seine Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) revenue showed a significant decline in 2024 compared the previous year. VDS revenue plummeted by \$3.3 million, from \$25,198,926 in 2023 to 21,865,319 — a 13 percent drop. Fishing rights revenue declined by 36 percent, from \$3,394,040 in 2023 to \$2,187,380 in 2024. Licensing fees were 19 percent lower in 2024: \$1,522,000 in 2024 compared to \$1,882,120 the previous year. Total net operating revenue at \$27,234,031 amounted to a 15 percent drop over 2023.

Vessel licenses

A total of 218 purse seine, longline and pole-and-line vessels were licensed to fish in Marshall Islands waters in



Tuna transshipments Majuro 2015-24

Year	Number	Metric Tons	*Average	
2015	504	368,323	731	
2016	551	403,809	733	
2017	424	292,754	690	
2018	403	307,164	762	
2019	449	362,454	807	
2020	175	118,743	679	
2021	298	221,609	743	
2022	257	218,759	851	
2023	294	229,239	780	
2024	160	116,915**	731	

*Average metric tonnage per transshipment.
** Provisional total mt.
Source: MIMRA Oceanic Division.

2024, down nine percent from the 239 licensed the previous year. The breakdown was 173 purse seine, 40 longline, and five pole-and-line vessels. As is the case each year, not all licensed vessels fished in the Marshall Islands EEZ during the year.

Funding to RMI

MIMRA transferred \$29,960,000 to support the national government's budget in 2024, an increase over the \$28 million provided in 2023. The \$29.9 million amounted to about five percent of the national budget.

National fleet

The Marshall Islands-flagged purse seine fleet of 11 vessels caught an estimated 90,156mt of tuna, up from 67,520mt in 2023. In addition, the provisional catch of the 29 chartered longline vessels associated with the Majuro-based Marshall Islands Fishing Venture-operated fish base totaled 4,472mt, nearly double the 2,314mt caught the previous year.

Observer action

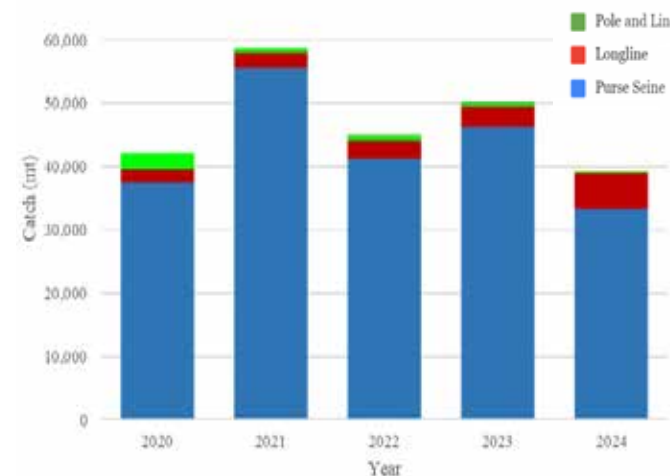
MIMRA's 44 active fisheries observers



for MIMRA in 2024



Total catch by different fishing gear-types operating in the RMI EEZ from 2020 to 2024



PII continued its specialized services for the tuna fleet, including use of the dock facility for the repair of the all-important fishing nets.

bined to export to offshore canneries 13,885mt tons of whole tuna in freezer containers. PPF exported the largest volume at 6,804mt. Both PII and MIFV have steadily increased the volume of freezer containers of whole tuna exports. The largest volume of these exports in 2024, 5,454mt, went to Thailand. A total of 5,348mt was exported to China, while 2,208mt was exported to the Philippines, 227mt was exported to Vietnam, and 97mt to Taiwan.

RMI EEZ tonnage

An estimated 38,324mt of tuna was caught in the Marshall Islands EEZ by purse seine, longline and pole and line vessels in 2024. Most of this volume — 86 percent — was caught by purse seiners, while longline vessels accounted for 13 percent of the total catch and pole and line vessels picked up less than one percent. The provisional purse seine catch of 38,324mt was a 16 percent decrease compared to 2023, which was an indication of both the fluctuation in number of vessels fishing and location of tuna schools.

ramped up the number of trips on purse seiners and long liners in 2024 to pre-Covid levels. Observers carried out 135 purse seine trips and 43 longline trips during 2024 for a total of 178 trips. This total is almost identical to observer trips in 2018 and 2019.

PII vessel service

This year saw continuing strong use of PII fisheries facilities by the purse seine fleet. For 2024, PII handled 27 tuna unloadings from purse seiners into freezer containers for later shipment to offshore canneries. The total volume of

the unloadings was 8,779mt filling 356 containers. PII's net yard handled net repairs for 10 purse seiners compared to 18 in 2023. It also assisted five vessels with loading salt or fresh water.

Onshore processing, exports

Pan Pacific Foods (PPF) tuna plant continued operations in 2024 but these were limited to cold storage and containerization of fish. The company again did not produce processed fish. PPF, PII and the Marshall Islands Fishing Venture com-

COMPETENT AUTHORITY

Progress in access to the European Union market

A combination of work, cooperation and investment from both the Marshall Islands Competent Authority and the domestic tuna industry resulted in the Marshall Islands meeting the final requirements toward its application for access to the European Union tuna market in late 2023. This included providing to the Directorate-General for Health & Food Safety objective evidence of the Competent Authority's ability to fulfill the obligations of implementing Official Controls for the Marshall Islands tuna industry, demonstrating equivalent standards to those enforced by the EU. The Competent Authority will continue to make progress as we anticipate the next step in the process for accessing the EU market: An in-country assessment by EU authorities in the near future.

Audits and inspections

One of the main functions of the Competent Authority includes Inspections and/or Full Verification Audits of all on-shore tuna processing plants. These include Pan Pacific Foods (RMI), Marshall Islands Fishing Venture, the tuna landing sites, such as Pacific International Inc.'s dock and the RMI Port Authority's Delap Dock, and the 11 Marshall Islands-flagged purse seine fishing vessels belonging to Koo's Fishing Company and Pan Pacific Fishing. The required frequency for auditing each establishment, either onshore facilities or the fishing vessels, is based on the level of risk determined through Competent Authority routine Inspections or Full Verification Audits, as well as sampling and laboratory testing results.



Competent Authority's Tatiana Shoniber, center, and Donny Andrike, right, observe Pan Pacific Foods Quality Control Head Joyce Planos as she conducts calibration testing of the metal detector.

At the beginning of each year, all tuna processing and handling establishments are required to submit their food safety programs (known as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control points/HACCP plans) for annual review and approval by the Competent Authority.

During 2024, the Competent Authority conducted 16 vessel inspection audits, four processing plant inspection audits and four tuna landing-site inspection audits, which also included the annual review of each company's food-safety program by carrying out desktop audits of their HACCP programs and good hygiene/manufacturing practices programs.

Through these audits, both the Competent Authority and the companies involved are able to identify areas and issues of non-conformity and determine the appropriate corrective actions needed to rectify problems and remain compliant with Marshall Islands legislation and regulations, as well as equivalent EU and other international market requirements.

In late 2023, through these audits, the Competent Authority was able to identify the initial Marshall Islands companies that met EU standards at the time, namely PPF's fishing boats Lajabwil and Lomoto and a designated landing-site at PII. These will be the basis for EU's assessment and determination if Marshall Islands has adequate oversight over its industry to ensure conformity, and therefore eligibility for access into its market.

During the beginning of 2024, two more of PPF's boats, Unaak and Jabbuk, and one of Koo's Fishing Company's vessels, Koo's 103, achieved similar status of meeting EU standards. By the end of 2024, PPF's entire fleet of purse seiners achieved and maintained this standard-qualifying status.

The diligent enforcement of requirements by the Competent Authority and the industry's ability to rectify problems and issues in a timely manner has improved the overall sanitary and hygienic practices in all our establishments, putting the Mar-



Top, Competent Authority's Donny Andrike (right) holds a hygiene training for local tuna industry workers sponsored by the Fish4ACP. Above left, Dexter Martinez, Tatiana Shoniber and Donny Andrike take part in a career exhibit. Above, Dexter Martinez participated in the Pacific Fisheries Leadership Program.

shall Islands on a path toward meeting stringent EU tuna import standards.

Sampling and sample submission

The other primary regulatory function of the Competent Authority is to implement a sampling and testing regime that is required to meet EU and other global market requirements. Beginning in 2023, the Competent Authority identified and designated accredited laboratories to carry out its sampling and testing needs. The Competent Authority Manager and MIMRA's Lab Manager visited, assessed and designated the Institute of Applied Science (IAS) at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, and alsoASUREQuality in New Zealand, to be the official laboratories for the Competent Authority.

In late 2023, the Competent Authority submitted its first samples to these international laboratories for analysis. In 2024, the Competent Authority met

its obligation to twice annually collect, submit samples, and maintain the results. This was and continues to be a logistical challenge, as currently there are no courier services capable of delivering our samples to be received in Suva, Fiji within the time required. Therefore, a Competent Authority officer was required to fly to Suva twice in 2024 with our samples to ensure they were received at the USP laboratory within the required timeframe for the Competent Authority to fulfil this obligation for the first time.

Vessel unloading and containerization

Beginning in 2024, the RMI Competent Authority conducted 100 percent coverage of all vessel unloading and containerization activities that take place at the PII landing-site, Delap Dock and also at each of the processing plants and companies. There were close to 100 operations during the year, which

sometimes lasted for several days, depending on the quantity of fish being unloaded into containers or directly into bins and transported to PPF's cold storage facilities. The work required the presence of Competent Authority officers to ensure sanitary conditions at the operation sites, documentary review of vessel hatch temperatures, record keeping for traceability purposes, sensory assessment and temperature monitoring of fish. Many times, this work is required after regular working hours, on weekends and on holidays, which was a tremendous challenge and constraint for the Competent Authority's small team of only two officers and one team leader (manager).

Volume of certified tuna exports

In 2024, the Competent Authority issued Export and Health Certificates for 139 consignments of containerized whole

COMPETENT AUTHORITY

First training in Marshallese

round skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin tuna exports. Each of these consignments ranged from one to over 20 40-foot reefer containers destined for various markets. From 2018 to 2024, the volume of exported whole round skipjack tuna was the highest in 2024 at 13,585.5mt, while the combined skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin tonnage — 14,761.6mt — exported in 2024 was the second highest next to 2019 when 16,538.7mt was exported.

Trainings for Industry

In June of 2024, MIMRA in collaboration with the FISH4ACP

program, organized the first Training on Good Hygiene Practices that was conducted in Marshallese language. The target participants were the Marshallese workers in Pan Pacific Foods (RMI), Marshall Islands Fishing Venture (MIFV), MISCo Market, MIMRA's Outer Islands Fish Market, PII landing-site and Koo's Fishing Company. The training was co-facilitated by FISH4ACP and the Competent Authority officers who were more than happy to share their knowledge with their Marshallese counterparts in the industry. The objective of the training was to ensure local workers in the tuna industry are better equipped to carry out their work by having increased awareness of food safety and its relevance to their daily functions.

On several occasions throughout 2024, the Competent Authority conducted refresher training on the techni-

Tuna Exports by Species Type

Year	Skipjack	Big Eye	Yellow Fin	# Of Cert.	Total Volume	Highest Total Volume
2018	4,718.4 MT	213.5 MT	1,039 MT	101	5,970.9 MT	7 th
2019	13,367.8 MT	679.5 MT	2,491.4 MT	223	16,538.7 MT	1 st
2020	11,509.7 MT	386.3 MT	2,221.2 MT	167	14,117.2 MT	3 rd
2021	6,824.2 MT	*818.5 MT	*3,648.3 MT	130	11,291 MT	4 th
2022	6,967.8 MT	267.1 MT	3,549 MT	120	10,783.9 MT	5 th
2023	4,794.9 MT	176.03 MT	1,996.9 MT	79	6,967.83 MT	6 th
2024	*13,585.5 MT	159.6 MT	1016.5 MT	142	14,761.6 MT	2 nd
Total	61,768.3 MT	2,700.553MT	15,962.3 MT	962	80,431.13 MT	

+ 2024: Highest volume of Whole Round Skipjack Tuna Exported: 13,585.5MT

+ 2021: Highest volume of Big Eye Whole Round Tuna Exported: 818.5MT

+ 2021: Highest volume of Yellowfin Whole Round Tuna Exports: 3,648.3MT

cal aspects of HACCP, Pre-Requisite Programs and other relevant issues for the Quality Assurance and Quality Control staff from the industry. These ongoing trainings were supported by the World Bank. These small trainings were necessary to update the technical people in the industry to ensure they are aware of the standards and requirements being imposed by the Competent Authority on the industry.

Support and Technical Assistance

The Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)'s Market Access program provided significant support and technical guidance for the small Competent Authority team. They conducted several in-country consultations during the year that helped strengthen the overall function and capacity of the Compe-

tent Authority. FFA's Market Access program also organized training attachments for Competent Authority officers to visit tuna industry operators in Papua New Guinea, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji and Solomon Islands to gain experience. FFA also organized experienced Competent Authority Officers from Fiji and Solomon Islands to spend two-week-long attachments in the Marshall Islands to share their knowledge and skills in the area of vessel and processing plant audits, vessel unloading monitoring and other areas of tuna industry management that the Competent Authority team learned from.

The World Bank's PROPER (Pacific Regional Oceanscape Project Economic Resilience) project was very supportive of Competent Authority current and future work to continuously grow and make progress.



The 19th PNA Ministerial Meeting held in Pohnpei, FSM, in September 2024. The Chair of MIMRA, Minister Tony Muller, is pictured sixth from left.

MIMRA keeps a finger on the pulse at regional talks

The Legal Division provides advice to the MIMRA Board of Directors and management regarding fisheries legal issues at the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels. All legal work carried out by the Legal Division is based on the principles of upholding the rule of law and conserving the nation's marine resources for the benefit of the people of the Marshall Islands.

The Legal Division advises both the Coastal and Oceanic Divisions. For the Oceanic and Industrial Affairs Division, the Legal Division is tasked to review national fisheries laws that may require review against regional and sub-regional measures that are binding on the Marshall Islands as a member of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries

"Before fishing vessels are issued licenses to fish in the Marshall Islands exclusive economic zone (EEZ), they are required to have an access agreement with MIMRA."

Agency, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Parties to the Nauru Agreement, and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Legal Division provided in-house training for compliance and enforcement officers within MIMRA on an "as-needed" basis for capacity building and understanding of the laws of the Marshall Islands. The Legal Division also handled

legal drafting of bills, resolutions, regulations, bilateral access agreements, and local government ordinances in support of safeguarding marine resources in the Marshall Islands.

The Legal Division also assists management in the negotiation of fishing day sales under PNA's Vessel Day Scheme. Fishing days are sold to bilateral fishing partners and to domestic partners (in line with the FSM Arrangement which provides for preferential treatment to purse seine vessels flagged in island nations, including the Marshall Islands). Before fishing vessels are issued licenses to fish in the Marshall Islands exclusive economic zone (EEZ), they are required to have an access agreement with MIMRA. This is required before commencement of fishing prior to January 1 of each New Year. These license conditions are out-



Above, MIMRA Chairman Minister Tony Muller, right, talks with FSM Vice President Aren Palik, center, and Nitijela Member and MIMRA Vice Chair David Kramer. Top Right, MIMRA's Laurence Edwards, II, with other participants in the IFLOS training. Right, PNA Office Commercial Manager John Maefiti, left, and MIMRA Legal Advisor Dr. Transform Aqorau in a meeting at MIMRA HQ.



Division updates RMI's

lined in access agreements required under the Fishing Access and Licensing Act.

The Legal Division completed a substantial amount of the work on fisheries regulations, which resulted in the promulgation of certain regulations for Coastal Fisheries and Oceanic Fisheries in 2024. The regulations that were certified by the Marshall Islands Cabinet were the The Protected Areas Network (Amendments) Regulations, 2024; and The Fishing License (Third Implementing Arrangements) (Amendments) Regulations, 2024. In addition to these 2024 regulations, there are more regulations (either amendments to existing regulations or new regulations) that will be forthcoming in fiscal year 2025. Current coastal legislation focuses on regulating the licensing process; regulating and conserving certain

species that are used for commercial purposes; and regulating the import and export process of sea cucumbers and aquarium fish.

The Legal Division attended and participated in a variety of meetings and workshops involving MIMRA staff during FY2024. These included:

- Public International Law Focused on the Law of the Sea and Peaceful Settlement of International Dispute Training (February 5–16, 2024), JICA Center, Hattagaya, Tokyo, Japan.
- Pre-Forum Fisheries Commission 132 and Annual FFC132 (April 29–May10), Yaren, Nauru.
- Visit to Philippines Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and MOU Discussion (May 13-17, 2024), Quezon City, Manila, Philippines.
- Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) Re-

gional Fisheries Prosecution Workshop (June 17-21, 2024), Honiara, Solomon Islands.

- FFA Capacity Development Needs Analysis and Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) Interagency Workshop (June 24–28, 2024), Suva, Fiji Islands.
- FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) 36th Session (July 8–12, 2024), Rome, Italy.
- International Foundation on the Law of the Sea (IFLOS) Summer Academy 2024 (July 27–August 24, 2024), Hamburg, Germany.
- Workshop on Enhancing Partnership in Ocean and Fisheries Governance: Republic of the Marshall Islands and Global Fishing Watch (August 28, 2024), Majuro, Marshall Islands.
- 19th PNA Ministerial Meeting (Sep-

Laurence praised for presentation

Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority Legal Counsel Laurence Edwards, II, completed a month-long law of the sea-related legal course in Germany during July and August 2024. Edwards attended the Summer Academy of the International Foundation for the Law of the Sea in Hamburg, Germany.

The Summer Academy's theme was "promoting ocean governance and the peaceful settlement of disputes."

Edwards researched and made an oral presentation on the "concept of maritime spatial planning and assessing benefits and challenges of planning process for areas within national jurisdiction."

His presentation was graded "very good" and he was recognized with a certificate of participation "with distinction" by the chair and deputy chair of the foundation sponsoring the course.

"It was an honor and privilege to have attended and participated with world class lecturers and participants altogether under the auspices of IFLOS," Edwards said at the conclusion of the IFLOS Summer Academy.

Edwards was one of 12 participants in the month-long legal course. His participation in the law of the sea course was sponsored by the UK Scholarship program.



Laurence Edwards, II, at the IFLOS course.

fisheries regulations

tember 16-18, 2024), Pohnpei, FSM.

- FFA Pre-WCPFC Technical and Compliance Committee 20 (September 20–24, 2024), Pohnpei, FSM.
- TCC20 (September 25–October 1, 2024); Pohnpei, FSM.
- 4th Meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum Officials Committee Specialist Subcommittee on Sea-Level Rise in Relation to International Law (November 6, 2024).
- Introduction to the Law of the Sea and Fisheries Law for Non-Lawyers in the Marshall Islands (November 15, 2024), Majuro, RMI.
- Introduction to International Fisheries Law for Non-Lawyers in the Marshall Islands (November 18, 2024), Majuro, RMI.
- Introduction to Fisheries Enforcement for Non-Lawyers in the Marshall Islands (November 20, 2024), Majuro, RMI.

- FFA Pre-WCPFC21 (November 21–26, 2024), Suva, Fiji.
- WCPFC21 (November 28–December 3, 2024), Suva, Fiji.

In addition to these duties, the Legal Division assists MIMRA in legal representation in court for prosecution against fishing vessels or companies alleged to have engaged in unlawful acts in violation of national fisheries laws and regulations of the Marshall Islands. This includes illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, contravention of conditions of fishing licenses, obstruction of fisheries observers, misreporting, and other infractions. For the past five years, most cases have been settled out of court by way of summary proceedings, which is allowed under the Fisheries Enforcement Act.

MIMRA continued active monitoring and enforcement of Marshall Islands

fisheries laws and regulations with the support of the Marshall Islands Police Department/Sea Patrol and the Attorney-General's Office. Over the past several years, this has resulted in court filings and out of court settlements against several fishing vessels which led to a total of \$1,075,000 in fines collected from 2019 to 2024. There were no new cases filed in 2024, but an earlier MIMRA-identified fishing violation was settled during 2024 that resulted in a fishing company paying a fine of \$150,000 for an alleged infringement of fishing rules in the Marshall Islands EEZ.

There is zero tolerance for fisheries violations in the Marshall Islands. MIMRA firmly believes that there is no room for complacency as MIMRA officers are continuing to vigilantly monitor fisheries activity and any alleged infractions.



The Outer Islands Fish Market Center is the backdrop for a range of MIMRA vessels.

Busy year of partnerships and community action

Summary

The Coastal Fisheries Division had a productive year in 2024, with a wide range of programs and activities implemented. This included follow up to the Coastal Fisheries Division partnership with National Geographic's Pristine Seas survey expedition of Bikini, Rongerik, Bikar and Bokak in 2023. During the year, the foundation was laid for the implementation in 2025 of the first-ever National Marine Sanctuary encompassing these northern atolls.

Ongoing work to support Neighboring Island involvement in the Reimaanlok (Looking to the Future) Process for local communities to manage their ma-

FISH MARKETS

rine resources; continued installation of fish aggregating devices (FADs) in various locations around the Marshall Islands to aid local fishers; furthering the Micronesian Challenge process; trainings in conservation management and enforcement for different entities during 2024; work on ciguatera poisoning; supporting Neighboring Island fishers by buying their fish catches to bring to the Outer Islands Fish Market Center in Majuro to sell; collaboration with Japan's Overseas Fisheries Cooperation Foundation in support of the Coastal Division's fisheries manage-

ment and development program for the Neighboring Islands; and other initiatives were undertaken in 2024.

OIFMC

Although the Fish Collection and Distribution Program continued to face logistical challenges in procuring essential parts and equipment — due to rising costs and delayed shipments — it nevertheless ended 2024 with a higher volume of fish collected from the Neighboring Islands for sale in Majuro compared to 2023.

These challenges for procuring replacement parts were compounded by the aging condition of MIMRA vessels, which frequently encounter engine



Increase in pounds brought for sale

problems, raising concerns for the safety of Coastal staff and crew who travel to the Neighboring Islands. Despite these obstacles, the program remained committed to servicing participating atolls and communities by providing a reliable market outlet for outer island fishers and ensuring a steady supply of fish and seafood to the populations of Majuro and Ebeye. The Program also actively supported local initiatives that promote community livelihoods, food security, and sustainable fisheries development.

The Outer Islands Fish Market Center (OIFMC) on Majuro receives fish and continued to provide fishers with income in 2024 by directly purchasing fish and fish products from fishers on remote atolls. In 2024, Coastal vessels made 39 trips to five atolls. The number of trips was fewer than the 62 in 2023 but reflected vessel availability. Those 39 trips accounted for collecting 52,238 pounds of fish from the Neighboring Islands, a significant increase over the 32,576 pounds the previous year. The revenue that went to fishers totaled \$95,234 — also up from the \$73,871 in 2023.

For the Arno fishers, a total of 13,826 pounds of fish were purchased at a value of \$32,677; 17,189 pounds of fish were purchased from Aur fishers at a value of \$29,439; Maloelap fishers received \$23,966.36 for 13,878 pounds of fish; Jaluit fishers received \$4,166 for 4,791 pounds of fish; and Wotje fishers received \$4,985 for 2,551 pounds of fish.

The OIFMC enforced quality and



FISH MARKETS

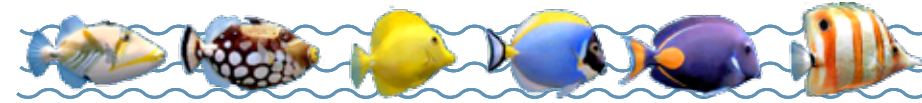
“In addition to selling fresh fish from the Neighboring Islands, the OIFMC produced many value-added products for sale. These included different types of fish jerky...”

size limits on the fish that are brought in from these five atolls and with fuel costs remaining high, OIFMC continued grouping atolls in one trip to maximize the number of fish per trip landed on Majuro. One of the reasons that fish purchases are much higher for Arno Atoll, aside from the fact that it is the closest atoll to Majuro, is that fishers from Arno with boats directly deliver their fish catches to Majuro to sell to the OIFMC.

In addition to selling fresh fish from the Neighboring Islands, the OIFMC produced many value-added products for sale. These included different types of fish jerky and various other fish products produced by OIFMC staff.

KAFMC

The Kwajalein Atoll Fish Market Center (KAFMC) received the F/V Laintok in August 2010. While the F/V Laintok provides transportation for KAFMC for trips to its fish base partners and projects on the Neighboring Islands, operations remained limited and inconsistent due to the high cost and limited availability of fuel on Ebeye. Compounding this challenge, mechanical issues with the F/V Laintok have increased in frequency over time. Many of the required parts are no longer manufactured, and sourcing alternatives involves long wait times, increased unit costs, and rising transportation expenses. Additionally, major repairs must be conducted in Majuro, further delaying service. In the early part of 2024, Laintok and other MIMRA vessels were



Pictured at the Fish Market Center are: Left, Boat Engineer Jeffson Edmon, Value-Added Specialist Sonny Sanchez, and Boat Engineer Joklur Toshire. Above, Boat Deckhand Rason deBrum. Right, Security Officer Tony Fredd.



dry-docked for heavy maintenance.

Despite these constraints, KAFMC continues to supply limited amounts of fish to the Ebeye community by directly purchasing fish and local produce from fishers in Namu, Ailinglaplap, Ailuk, Likiep, and Ebeye, while also providing support through fuel and ice provisions. Due to the vessel's ongoing mechanical issues, only limited fishing trips have been possible — mostly within the western part of Kwajalein Atoll — with supplemental supply provided by F/V Jebro and F/V Timur from Majuro. MIMRA visits to the four remote atolls to purchase fish and

FISH MARKETS

local produce maintained the KAFMC connection with local fishers.

For fiscal year 2024, KAFMC was able to directly inject to the communities \$14,644 for 10,120 pounds of fish. This compares to \$16,138 in fish purchases in 2023. In addition, KAFMC purchased \$1,903 worth of local produce. From both fish and local produce, MIMRA injected \$16,547 into these remote islands compared to \$19,633 last year.

OFCF partnership produces results

The Japan Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation Fisheries Development Assistance for Pacific Island Nations (FDAPIN) Phase VII is one of the most important collaborations for MIMRA. The OFCF has been an important partner with MIMRA's Coastal Division since the 1990s assisting MIMRA to develop commercial fisheries in the Neighboring Islands, provide necessary boats and fisheries equipment, and assist with maintenance training and capacity building.

An OFCF FDAPIN expert and MIMRA engineers performed maintenance work in Majuro in January and February 2024 focusing on the vessels Jebro and Timur. They fixed Jebro's engine starter, and later, MIMRA engineers replaced Timur's alternator after it arrived in Majuro. During the same period, the team visited Ebeye to repair the vessel Laintok and conduct sea trials as the vessel had been out of service for a long period. Additionally, equipment for MIMRA



Keeping fisheries facilities running

transport vessels arrived from Japan in January. Some equipment was installed during this period, while others were stored for future vessel maintenance.

In January–February 2024, FDAPIN experts and MIMRA engineers performed maintenance on ice-making machines at OIFMC, KAFMC, and the Jaluit and Wotje fish bases. A new condensing unit with ventilation was installed in Jaluit, and the old one was repaired and stored as a spare. At KAFMC, new condensing units were installed, but freon leaks from ice plates reduced performance. As a result, four plates required immediate replacement. At OIFMC, the machine is still working, but the condensing unit shows corrosion and will soon need replacement.

In addition to facilitating and supporting the annual visits by OFCF experts, the MIMRA maintenance team responded to electrical, mechanical, and carpentry job orders throughout the year, prioritizing the smooth operation of fisheries facilities. During 2024, repeated power outages affecting Majuro required heavy reliance on MIMRA backup generators, resulting in a notable surge in fuel consumption as well as maintenance needs. Furthermore, the maintenance team experienced extended delays in acquiring essential parts and equipment for maintaining the backup generators as well as other MIMRA equipment. Shipping



The colorful Kwajalein Atoll Fish Market Center.

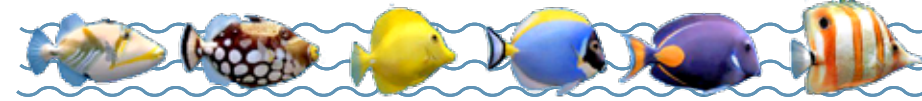
FISH MARKETS

delays and long periods from placing an order to delivery of the order in the post-Covid period hampered MIMRA's ability to perform needed maintenance on its equipment. Despite this, the maintenance team continued general inspection and assessment of equipment of the outer island fish bases and compiled lists of equipment needing service on site, as well as sending some equipment to Majuro for major repairs.

Maintenance and repair activities in FY2024:

- Transport vessels: Yearly dry-dock and maintenance service and repairs of all MIMRA fish transport vessels (Jolok, Timur, Jebro, Lantanir and Laintok) including topside and hull maintenance.

- Community boat repairs on outer islands. One was ongoing.
- Maintenance and repairs on Wotje and Jaluit Fishbases, including ice machine maintenance and backup generator maintenance at Wotje.
- Maintenance and repairs on Arno Fishbase and Ine sub-Fishbase, including building repairs and ice machine maintenance.
- Maintenance and repairs at OIFMC, including ice machines and equipment maintenance and inspection.
- Maintenance and repairs at KAFMC, including ice machine maintenance, inspection and replacement of ice plates; maintenance and inspection of other KAFMC equipment; and F/V Laintok mid-year engine check.
- MIMRA vehicle maintenance and repairs for the Authority's 22 vehicles.
- Maintenance and repairs on Woja Hatchery in Majuro, including backup generator maintenance.
- Maintenance and repairs on Ajeltake Hatchery in Majuro, including backup generator maintenance.



MIMRA looks to the future



Community members with certificates after completing a "FishKit" workshop.

The eight step Reimaanlok (Looking to the Future) Process for Conservation Area Management Planning Framework helps communities in the Marshall Islands think globally and act locally. It employs community-based tools and approaches to articulate local objectives that translate to national, regional and international goals for conservation management of local resources.

The Reimaanlok eight step process, when triggered by a community's leadership (Step 1), includes a scoping and budgeting exercise (Step 2), site visits by Reimaanlok facilitators to build awareness on the need for resource planning by the target atoll community (Step 3), followed by the gathering and analysis of various natural and social resource data parameters (Step 4) in

REIMAANLOK PROCESS

"The process itself is an empowering experience for atoll communities and a vehicle for national cohesion and shared purpose among members of CMAC."

order to design (Step 5) and ultimately legislate (Step 6) an integrated atoll resource management plan inclusive of programs to ensure ongoing monitoring and adaptive management (Step 7)

and local commitment retention (Step 8).

Given the specific needs and unique circumstances of atoll municipalities, the Reimaanlok facilitation consortium known as the Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC) may follow these eight steps in a linear or iterative process. This helps foster a sense of trust and shared purpose within the community and the Reimaanlok facilitators, so that the process itself is an empowering experience for atoll communities and a vehicle for national cohesion and shared purpose among members of CMAC.

Among the many noteworthy atoll-



Coastal fisheries staff show trainees how to size and measure fish.

Communities stay engaged

REIMAANLOK PROCESS

appropriate features of the Reimaanlok process, in Step 3, a Local Resource Committee is established by the local government, which then oversees the development of the resource management plan in that atoll or island. Step 4 is also noteworthy in that it entails gathering rich datasets along socioeconomic, ecological, and physical parameters. The information collected feeds into the ConservationGIS database that has been developed and is constantly updated by CMAC.

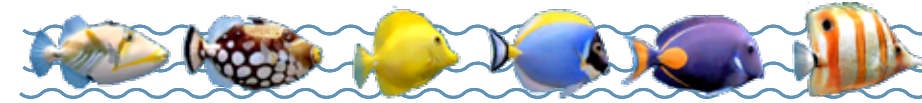
Some communities using this approach are finding early success as they proceed in the step-by-step process of articulating threats and their needs and priorities, codifying these into a management plan with various short, me-

dium, and long-term measures including in enhancing their ecosystem and socio-economic resilience to climate impacts. Moreover, these communities remain engaged in the process of implementing and monitoring these measures as a unifying activity for their community.

At the national level, the Reimaanlok Framework is finding success as it becomes increasingly embedded within national government legislation, governance, and financing systems. The most important of these is its inclusion within the Marshall Islands Protected

Area Network (PAN) legislation.

In addition to smaller grants from funding partners such as Seacology, GEF Small Grants Program, and the Micronesian Conservation Trust, there are a few large multi-million dollar initiatives that advance the Reimaanlok Framework including: World Bank-funded Pacific Regional Ocean-scape Project for Economic Resilience (PROPER), United Nations GEF-5 Ridge-to-Reef Project, German BMUB International Climate Initiative Project, and the US Department of Interior Coral Reef Initiative.



The Reimaanlok steps

1 Initiation

A need to develop a community-based resource management plan is identified either at the local government level or at the national level.

2 Project Scoping and Setup

Establishment of a project work-plan, a team of facilitators, and identification of budget and resources.

3 Building Commitment

An initial visit is made by the national team to carry out education awareness about the benefits of conservation and resource management, and to build trust with the community.

4 Collecting and Managing Information

Further visits focus on collection and documentation of local knowledge and use of resources, socio-economic information, and baseline scientific information.

5 Developing the Management Plan

Several visits are made to the community to develop, draft, and revise a detailed management plan.

6 Sign-Off

Achieve commitment to the plan through sign-off of management plan.

7 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Management

Monitor achievement of the objectives — both biological and socio-economic. Adapt the management plan accordingly.

8 Maintaining Commitment

Ensure community has adequate support for ongoing management.



Deputy Director Coastal Fisheries Florence Edwards leads a workshop.

REIMAANLOK PROCESS

Where are they now?

Step 1 Kwajalein (Jabro Island)

Step 3 KBE

Step 5 Majuro (Buruon, Bokelatulik), Jaluit, Lib

Step 6 Ailinglaplap, Jabot, Mejit, Majuro (Ajeltake), Majuro (Drenmeo)

Step 7 Ailuk, Namdrik, Majuro (Bikirin, Woja, Bokaibotin, Ene Kalamur), Ujae, Lae, Utrok, Ebon, Maloelap, Arno, Mili, Wotje, Bikar, Bokak, Namo, Wotho, Aur, Likiep

Pending: Rongerik, Rongelap, Ailingnae, Jemo, Enewetak, Ujelang, Erikub, Takā.



Wotje becomes fourth atoll to join PAN family group

Summary

As the Protected Area Network (PAN) Office entered its fourth year, the Office remained focused on advancing local conservation and sustainable development through targeted site funding and capacity-building training.

Building on last year's progress, the PAN Office made further advances in 2024, including a giant clam farming project on Wotje Atoll. Originally initiated under a different funding source, the project was integrated into the PAN framework, making it the fourth atoll to receive PAN site status. The newly designated PAN site underwent technical review by the Coastal Management Advisory Council and received final endorsement from the MIMRA Board, securing PAN funding to support sustainable livelihoods.

The MIMRA Board in 2024 raised the funding limit from \$20,000 to \$25,000 per project, while reducing the number of eligible sites per year from five to four. Each project funded may span a period of up to two years, depending on the proposed activities and timeline. This change aims to increase flexibility and strengthen locally driven conservation and development projects.

Namo Atoll was one of the atolls receiving PAN funding. While project implementation in Namu experienced delays during the reporting period, the PAN Office met with the newly elected Mayor to discuss next steps. The mayor expressed continued commitment to the project, and the local team plans to conduct a supply inventory to resume activities. This engagement reflects ongoing efforts to reactivate support and maintain coordination.

PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK



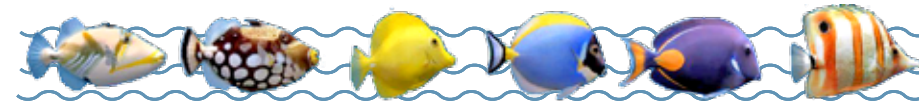
PAN staff Bryant Zebedy demonstrates use of data sheets to develop community skills for using the marine monitoring toolkit.

Community Marine Monitoring Toolkit

In April 2024, the PAN Office co-facilitated a weeklong training for 13 Local Resource Officers from Reimaanlok sites to strengthen community-based monitoring of coastal habitats. The training was hosted by the Marshall

Islands Conservation Society and supported by the USAID OurFish OurFuture Project and the IUCN KIWA-funded MiCoast Project. The training focused on building skills in four key monitoring areas: Fish catch, intertidal invertebrates, reef health, and seagrass habitats.

Through classroom instruction and



Bryant Zebedy demonstrates how to collect data on seagrass to Local Resource Officers.

Training on Bokanbotin islet



A Local Resource Officer conducts a survey in the lagoon at Bokanbotin Island in Majuro Atoll as part of that island's participation in the Reimaanlok Process for marine resource conservation.

field exercises, participants learned to apply the Community Marine Monitoring Toolkit developed under the Reimaanlok Framework. Additional sessions covered fisheries regulations, ciguatera sampling, and survey mapping. The training concluded with the signing of LRO contracts and the awarding of certificates. A second cohort was

planned for October 2024, with a focus on reporting and facilitation.

In May, individuals from Bokanbotin islet in Majuro Atoll received the Community Marine Monitoring Toolkit training. The PAN office facilitated the training alongside the MIMRA Coastal Division focusing on coral reef monitoring and invertebrates surveys. The

module run through facilitation was carried out on site following a field training session.

The participants only learned the Reef Health and Marine Invertebrates modules because unlike larger scale conservation areas, Bokanbotin is a full no-take zone. In addition, the special habitat features of the site does not in-



Key team members continue on CMAC

clude seagrass and mangroves. As part of the World Bank PROPER initiatives, the Bokaanbotin participants received the equipment needed to carry out the monitoring methods after completion of the training.

Reimaanlok and CMAC

In 2024, the Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC) met three times to support key national environmental efforts such as the Reimaanlok Plan and the Protected Areas Network. Membership and leadership of CMAC remained the same: Moriana Phillip (RMIEPA) continued as Chair, Dolores deBrum-Kattil (MICS) as Vice-Chair, and Glen Joseph (MIMRA) as Permanent Secretary. CMAC also continued to provide guidance through its five thematic working groups: Marine, Terrestrial, SEM, Livelihoods, and Communications.

CMAC is collaborating on the project “Strengthening and Enabling the Micronesia Challenge 2030,” funded by the GEF-7 International Waters Project, to further reinforce regional conservation targets. This ongoing project supports the Marshall Islands’ commitment to the Micronesia Challenge 2030, a regional goal to effectively manage 50 percent of marine and 30 percent of terrestrial resources by 2030.

Under this initiative, a National Project Coordinator was hired, and work



CMAC officials joined the certificate presentation for LROs in 2024.



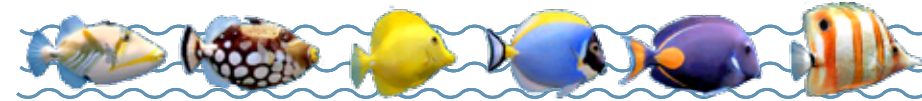
The Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC) met regularly in 2024 (middle and above) to review plans and implementation activities.

PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK

began to update three key conservation tools: The Reimaanlok Framework, the CMAC Strategic Action Plan, and the Field Guide to Reimaanlok Implementation. Two workshops related to this work were held in 2024. In July, CMAC began updating the Reimaanlok

National Framework and Strategic Action Plan through a series of stakeholder consultations and working sessions. A follow-up workshop was held at the end of September to address gaps in the draft documents before seeking formal endorsement from the CMAC Executive Committee.

The next phase of the project heading into 2025 will involve reconvening the newly established working groups to finalize updates to the Reimaanlok Field Guide and conduct pilot field trials, which will then be presented to the CMAC Executive Committee before broader rollout.



SPC Director-General Stuart Minchin speaks at the 16th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting in New Caledonia.

COASTAL HIGHLIGHTS



Chief of Coastal Fisheries Benedict Yamamura took part in the 22nd Pacific Maritime Boundaries session.

Issues facing coastal fisheries

Regional Technical Meeting

MIMRA participated in the 6th SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture (RTMCF6) held in Noumea, New Caledonia in November 2023 to discuss and address some of the main technical issues affecting coastal fisheries and aquaculture.

The goal was to improve capacity for evidence-based resource management, equitable access to resources, and to enhance the sustainable development of aquaculture and nearshore livelihoods.

Coastal Fisheries Division staff Bryant J. Zebedy and Kyotak Ishiguro were nominated to attend this important meeting. Participants presented their priority issues and needs, and updated the

group on the progress in implementing agreed actions endorsed by all member countries during the previous meeting in 2022 (RTMCF5).

The RTMCF6 also included the 3rd Community-Based Fisheries Dialogue (CBFD3). The outcomes of the meetings were reported to the 16th Heads of Fisheries meeting conducted the following year in April 2024.

Pacific Maritime Boundaries

MIMRA participated in the 22nd Pacific Maritime Boundaries Working Session held in Sydney, Australia. The Authority was represented by Chief of Coastal Fisheries Benedict Yamamura, who engaged with regional and international experts on Extended



MIMRA staff participated in the Generative Artificial Intelligence workshop in Lautoka, Fiji.

Training workshops in Fiji,

Continental Shelf (ECS) matters — an area currently under consideration by the Marshall Islands.

Micronesia Coastal Fisheries Workshop

MIMRA representatives attended a regional fisheries management workshop held in Guam in April and found it highly beneficial. The workshop brought together fisheries managers from across Micronesia to share assessment results, management strategies for key species, and explore opportunities for cross-jurisdictional collaboration. Participants were introduced to FishKit tools, including the Size Limit Builder and Stock Health Tracker, and learned how to use these resources to support science-based fisheries management. Hands-on activities using fish length data helped reinforce the practical application of these tools within their own jurisdictions.

In follow up, MIMRA staff and interns, along with Marshall Islands Conservation Society staff, had an incredible time at a tai-

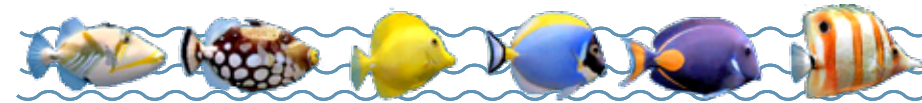
COASTAL HIGHLIGHTS

lored training workshop on fisheries science concepts and the design of fisheries management measures, organized and delivered by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and partners.

Participants received hands-on training with FishKit, an innovative online toolkit designed for developing fisheries management measures in coastal community settings. They learned how to apply this powerful tool specifically to RMI coastal fisheries.

Artificial Intelligence for Strategic Communications Training

MIMRA staff attended a workshop on Generative Artificial Intelligence held in Lautoka, Fiji, supported by the Forum Fisheries Agency and the Pacific European Union Marine Partnership.



Above, Chief Maintenance Officer Gary Roberto. Above right, as part of an anchored FAD installation program for Laura fishers, Coastal Fisheries staff handed over FAD and fishing safety gear to a community fishers group, with a similar presentation at Mejit Island (right). Below, preparing tuna jerky at Mejit Island.



COASTAL HIGHLIGHTS



Guam and Mejit Island

This workshop equipped us with valuable knowledge and skills to enhance our communication efforts. Generative AI enables more efficient content creation, personalized marketing, and improved audience engagement.

Anchored FAD Program

On October 16, 2023, a MIMRA FAD team, including staff and the Outer Island Fish Market Center crew, deployed to Mejit Island to install an anchored Fish Aggregating Device (FAD). En route, they stopped in Wotje to deliver fishing gear.

Upon arrival in Mejit, the team conducted community consultations with the local government and fishers, delivered presentations on sea safety and FAD awareness, and handed overfishing equipment. Training sessions, including fish jerky preparation, were also held. The FAD was successfully deployed one mile offshore of Mejit Island at a depth of 1,200 meters.

In another FAD program activity, MIMRA and Marshall Islands Conservation Society representatives joined in handing





Participants in the Ciguatera Data Collection and Training Workshop at the Marshall Islands Resort.

Majuro officials kept informed

over anchored FAD fishing gear and sea safety equipment to the Ri-Eonod in Laura (REIL) Association as part of ongoing alternative livelihoods both organizations are implementing with local communities in the Marshall Islands.

RMI Ciguatera work and Initial Training

Representatives from MIMRA, alongside counterparts from Ministry of Health and Human Services, Marshall Islands Conservation Society, Majuro Atoll Local Government and Marshall Islands Environmental Protection Authority convened for a week-long Ciguatera Data Collection and Training Workshop at the Marshall Islands Resort February 12-16. This collaborative initiative, conducted in partnership with researchers from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, signified an important moment in our collective efforts to understand and combat ciguatera poisoning.

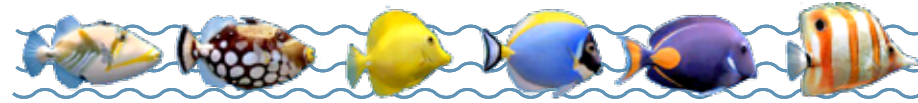
Majuro Police get involved

The Coastal Fisheries and Oceanic Divisions of MIMRA delivered a presentation to the Majuro Atoll Local Police, outlining the agency's day-to-day operations and responsibilities. The session prompted engaging discussions, with

COASTAL HIGHLIGHTS



Oceanic Chief Fisheries Officer Beau Bigler speaking during a presentation to local police officers.



Above, Coastal MCS enforcement workshop participants supported by PROPER. Below, MIMRA corporate retreat.

COASTAL HIGHLIGHTS



Engaging local governments

participants raising insightful questions regarding existing conservation areas in Majuro, transshipment activities, and relevant regulatory frameworks administered by MIMRA. The discussions focused on marine operations, conservation, and understanding and enforcement of regulations.

Donors support Coastal Fisheries MCS and Enforcement

The Marshall Islands hosted a successful five-day workshop, "Introduction to Basic Monitoring, Control, Surveillance & Enforcement (MCS&E) for Coastal Fisheries," from September 16–20, 2024, at RRE Kibedrikdik in Majuro.

Bringing together participants from 11 local governments, the workshop aimed to strengthen MCS&E practices in coastal fisheries. Sessions covered essential topics such as compliance, leg-

islation, inspections, evidence management, and patrol planning.

Expert speakers from the Pacific Community (SPC), New Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), and MIMRA led the training.

Interactive elements — including quizzes, group work, and field inspections — helped reinforce learning and build practical skills. The event concluded with inspection exercises, participant feedback, and closing remarks from partner organizations.

Thirteen additional local governments are scheduled to attend a similar training in 2025, as the Marshall Islands continues to advance sustainable fisheries management across the region.

MIMRA Corporate Retreat

The MIMRA Corporate Retreat, held on July 3, 2024, at Bokanbotin Island, brought together 65 staff members for a day of



At the Micronesia Challenge talks in Guam, from left: Melvin Kilma, EPA Chief Coastal Division, Alicia Edwards, PAN Coordinator, DeVante Abner-Floor, UOG student, Benedict Yamamura, Chief, MIMRA Coastal Fisheries Division, and Dua Rudolph, MICS Deputy Director.

Climate change Challenge

workshops, team-building activities, and discussions on improving organizational operations.

The retreat began with opening remarks by Acting Executive Director Florence Edwards, who reflected on MIMRA's growth, followed by a presentation by Corporate Adviser Lars Olsen on MIMRA's mandate, strategic planning, and the AchieveIT system set to be installed the next day. Staff from various divisions presented their responsibilities, challenges, and suggestions for improvement, highlighting themes such as better communication with stakeholders, capacity building, and increased staffing resources.

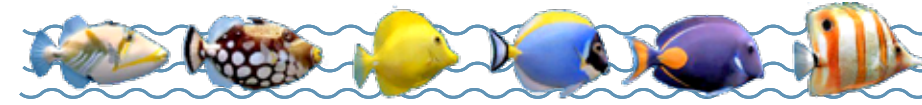
Micronesia Challenge discussions in Guam

A five-member team from the Marshall Islands participated in the Micronesia Challenge Convening in Guam in December 2024. The meeting brought together conservation leaders, community representatives, and policymakers who are engaged in protecting the natural resources and cultural heritage of the Micronesia region, including the Marshall Islands.

COASTAL HIGHLIGHTS

The RMI delegation was composed of leaders from the Coastal Management Advisory Council's working groups — Marine, Terrestrial, and Socio-Economic. The Coastal Management Advisory Council was formed by the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority to engage expertise from outside of the fisheries authority in coastal management issues. Those attending included: Melvin Kilma, chief of Land and Coastal Division RMI EPA; Alicia Edwards, coordinator of Protected Area Network at MIMRA; Devante Abner-Floor, formerly with RMI EPA and now at University of Guam; Benedict Yamamura, chief of Coastal Fisheries, MIMRA; and Dua Rudolph, deputy director Marshall Islands Conservation Society.

The Micronesia Challenge talks in Guam covered many areas, including climate change and its impacts on island ecosystems, promoting sustainable livelihoods for our communities, managing and mitigating invasive species, and advancing innovative fisheries management strategies.



Why we love Bumble Bee Snails and Flame Angels

Overview

Private businesses based in the Marshall Islands that export tropical fish, clams and corals have identified and developed market demand globally for aquaculture products from the Marshall Islands, primarily for aquarium use. In FY2024, companies in 15 countries imported aquarium fish and invertebrates from the Marshall Islands.

The United States is by far the largest importer of aquarium fish and invertebrates. Following the US, the next biggest importer of Marshall Islands aquarium products was Taiwan. Rounding out the top five: China, Japan and the European Union.

In 2024, ornamental marine life, encompassing fish, invertebrates, giant clams, and corals, was exported from the Marshall Islands. During the year, the total number of aquarium fish and invertebrates exported overseas reached 277,128 pieces. This was fewer than the previous two years, including 2022 when a record was set with the export of 339,678 aquarium fish and invertebrates. The average number exported during the four-year period 2021-2024 was 282,030 annually.

The two most popular fish and invertebrate for export and purchase on the receiving end of the supply chain were: Bumble Bee Snail and Flame Angel.

MIMRA's role in these exports is to provide export certification documents showing that the aquarium export products were grown in the Marshall Islands and are legally exported. MIMRA also regulates and enforces fisheries law and regulations governing the harvest and export of various aquaculture and other marine products.

MIMRA operates two hatcheries on Majuro Atoll as part of its program of

AQUACULTURE



Hatchery improvements were made at Woja in 2024.

supporting aquaculture development. It also has worked with local communities in Likiep and Arno for the operation of giant clam hatcheries. Both of these outer island hatcheries, however, faced logistical and funding issues in 2024, rendering them largely inactive. Operational challenges with the two outer island giant clam hatcheries showed in the export data. Only 10,700 giant clams were exported in 2024 compared to 16,729 the previous year.

Hatcheries and production

A workshop for validating the regional and national mariculture assess-

ments was facilitated by the Food and Agriculture Organization in Fiji. Key stakeholders were invited to attend the workshop to review the documents and provide additional information to support development of sustainable strategies to address the current challenges and opportunities in the mariculture sector.

Additionally, participants were requested to provide progress updates regarding the implementation of the project outputs for the FAO/TCP/SAP/3904 framework — a technical cooperation program focused on food security and sustainable fisheries practices supported by the FAO. A key aspect of this FAO-supported project for MIMRA was its



Lae, Ujae join clam farming family

component for training fisheries officers in giant clam farming techniques.

For MIMRA, the FAO technical cooperation project was focused on enhancing giant clam production at the Woja (Majuro Atoll) hatchery and the development of a pilot project that focuses on investigating seaweed cultivation for potential domestic consumption needs to achieve objectives related to food security, nutrition, job creation, and overall economic development. The implementation of these activities was initiated during the year.

The World Bank's Pacific Regional Oceanscape Project-Economic Resilience (PROPER) initiative supported the expansion of giant clam farming for two new neighboring island communities: Lae and Ujae atolls. Raceway tank materials and equipment was delivered, and technical assistance for demonstrating construction of tanks was provided. Once the communities complete the construction of their raceway tanks, MIMRA Aquaculture staff will provide training on giant clam farming and hatchery husbandry.

Meanwhile, Aquaculture staff continued to focus on operation of the two hatcheries in Majuro, in Woja and Ajeltake, and the hatcheries on Likiep and Arno atolls.

Woja hatchery

Training on giant clam farming was provided to several members of the Woja community encompassing cage and ce-



Giant clam production and seaweed cultivation at the Woja hatchery was a focus of the FAO technical cooperation project.

AQUACULTURE

ment cookies (substrate) construction and basic cage maintenance practices to prevent biofouling and improve growth performance. Farmers were informed of the required conditions they need to consider when selecting sites for deploying nursery cages. Each proposed site was assessed before the cages were delivered to ensure each one met the environmental characteristics of a safe and suitable location to farm giant clams.

Cage deployment was delayed for more than a month due to unfavorable weather conditions. Once the weather improved, the cages were deployed and seeded — each farmer received approximately 1,000 seedlings.

Regular monitoring was conducted after the cages were planted to gather information regarding cage maintenance and growth development. After two months, more than two-thirds of the seedlings inside each cage were lost. Most of the farmers claim high water temperature and strong currents have contributed to the high mortality. Only one farmer managed to successfully complete the grow-out phase and harvest all of his giant clams for sale.

After distributing all seedlings inside the tanks, staff initiated the implementa-

tion of modifying the hatchery system which include incorporating an aeration system and maximizing the filtration and water flow capacities. All activities were completed. The hatchery is currently working on trialing these changes to see if they have positive impacts on increasing the seedling production yield.

Ajeltake hatchery

Due to financial instability experienced by Aquaculture Technologies of the Marshall Islands (ATMI) in continuing its lagoon cage operation for growing out moi (Pacific threadfin) fingerlings supplied by MIMRA, hatchery staff were instructed to cease larval production until the company has secured a source of funding. The procurement of hatchery supplies (algae paste, enrichment, dry feed, and other supplies) needed for the production of live feed was also affected by the decision. After few months, only moi broodstocks and a few hundred juveniles remained at the hatchery — all of which were lost due to frequent power outages while the backup generator broke down.

Since ATMI is unable to resolve its financial issues, MIMRA decided to sell all adult moi at the cage site and withdraw all juveniles back to the hatchery for broodstock development. More than two thousand potential broodstocks were

AQUACULTURE

successfully transferred from the cages to the hatchery. Unfortunately, two months after concluding the transfer the stock collapsed. No communication was received from the hatchery regarding the situation during the period — which would have allowed immediate intervention in developing measures to help mitigate the problem.

In an effort to restabilize the Ajeltake hatchery aquaculture operation, MIMRA has purchased more than 40 mole (Spinefoot or rabbit fish) from local fishermen to use for breeding stock, and also encouraged the hatchery to acquire moi from Arno. MIMRA is actively seeking a replacement for ATMI to continue with the grow-out phase of the project. Activities aimed at achieving these objectives are currently in progress.

Likiep hatchery

The hatchery was unable to restock the tanks with seedlings due to limited gas and oil for operating the water pump for the raceways and there was limited to no available transportation to send provisions to Likiep needed for the operation of the hatchery. The situation forced the hatchery to temporarily cease operation. All giant clams were transferred from the tanks into ocean cages in the lagoon in the vicinity of the hatchery. A few of the juvenile giant clams had reached the appropriate size for marketing and were shipped to Majuro. Two shipments were made but only one successfully made it to its final destination.

Arno hatchery

The Arno hatchery remains non-operational pending the completion of ongoing construction and renovation work. During 2024, a plan was underway to assess the conditions of the facility in an effort to reinstate the giant clam farming operation for the facility.



The grow-out of clams placed in lagoon cages in the Woja area had mixed results in 2024.

PROPER

Pacific Regional Oceanscape Project — Economic Resilience

Training Local Resource Officers for sustainable management of coastal fisheries resources was a focus for MIMRA in 2024.



Project's goal is to focus

The Pacific Regional Oceanscape Project — Economic Resilience focused on strengthening fisheries management, environmental monitoring, and sustainable livelihoods in the Marshall Islands during 2024. Key activities included capacity building, improved data systems, and infrastructure upgrades. Efforts to enhance oceanic and coastal fisheries management will continue, supported by community training and partnerships with regional bodies. The PROPER plan supports MIMRA's goals for sustainable and resilient fisheries aligned with national and regional priorities.

Strengthening policy and institutions

Training and capacity building initiatives supported by PROPER in 2024 included: Completing three targeted training sessions led by the Legal Division for non-lawyer stakeholders in the fisheries sector, including community representatives, fishers, NGO staff, and government personnel; and the procurement for an individual consultant to provide support on automating the fish market inventory system was issued in October 2024. The implementation of a data collection system for Reimaanlok con-

"MIMRA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the RMI Environmental Protection Authority to collaboratively address marine pollution under PROPER."

tinued to be a priority but was delayed due to ongoing consultations with newly elected mayors and the selection of new Local Resource Council members.

Audits on four purse seine vessels and two tuna processing operations were completed in 2024, resulting in two vessels being included on the Competent Authority External List for European Union exports, with two additional vessels expected in early 2025. Food safety training sessions were conducted in September and November 2024, with another session scheduled for January–February 2025. The MIMRA laboratory under construction in 2024 was expected to be completed by May 2025. PROPER is funding laboratory equipment and a consultancy focused on technical support, methodology, and development of stand-

ard operating procedures, with contract award expected in the first quarter of 2025 in line with the laboratory's anticipated completion. In November 2024, MIMRA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the RMI Environmental Protection Authority to collaboratively address marine pollution under PROPER.

MIMRA is utilizing project cost savings and finding from a recent energy audit to procure Starlink satellite internet equipment and services. An Request for Quotations for the rehabilitation of nine fish bases, hatcheries, and one sub-fish base was issued in December 2024, with a submission deadline of December 20, 2024.

Strengthening national capacity for oceanic fisheries

During 2024, MIMRA focused on revising the terms of reference for the ePort system to take account of the other phases of this activity. A new electronic monitoring module within the Fisheries Information Management System was finalized. The Parties to the Nauru Agreement Office is engaging with software providers to ensure member access. Efforts were initiated to improve real-time

PROPER



on fisheries sustainability

data connectivity for fisheries observers and port monitors, with procurement of rugged tablets and software planned for 2025.

MIMRA continued port-based data collection to assess the quality and volume of bycatch and discards. Concurrently, the need for pellet production equipment was carefully reviewed and evaluated, and a plan is under development to recruit local personnel to support its future operation.

Reporting support with in-country visits

To address the ongoing vacancy of the Coastal Fisheries Data Analyst position, the terms of reference were revised and given flexibility to provide reporting support with scheduled in-country visits to Marshall Islands, aimed at strengthening local capacity. A Request for Expressions of Interest for the concept design of the Micronesia Atoll Research Station (MARS) was issued in December 2024, with contract award anticipated in the first quarter of 2025.

The Protected Areas Network (PAN) office continues to roll out Reimaanlok toolkit training, having trained four communities using PROPER funding support. The PAN office is also supporting the Marshall Islands Conservation

"The Protected Areas Network office continues to roll out Reimaanlok toolkit training, having trained four communities using PROPER funding."

Society in delivering training to an additional seven communities. Joint efforts with the Aquaculture Division continued in Ujae and Lae atolls to update community management plans and enhance giant clam farming techniques.

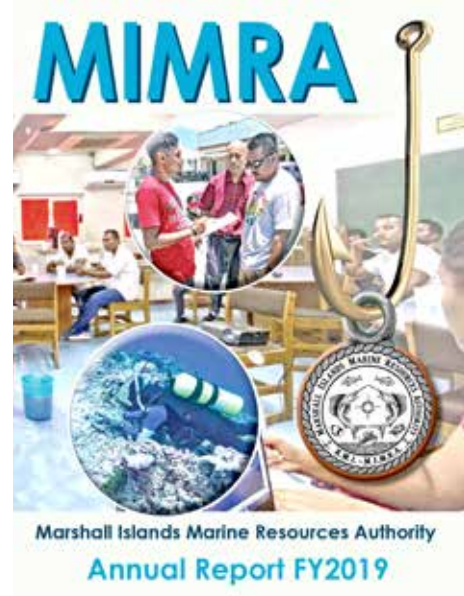
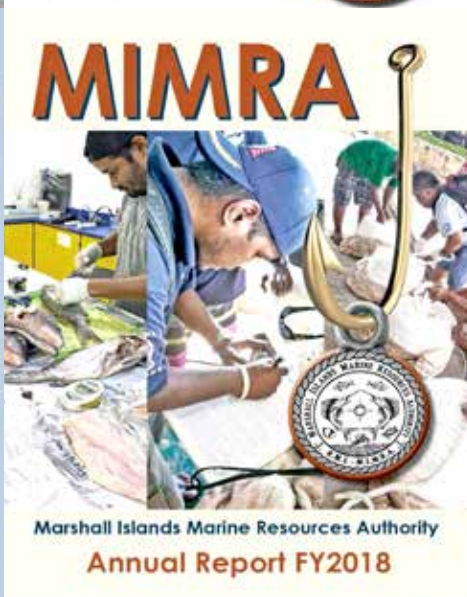
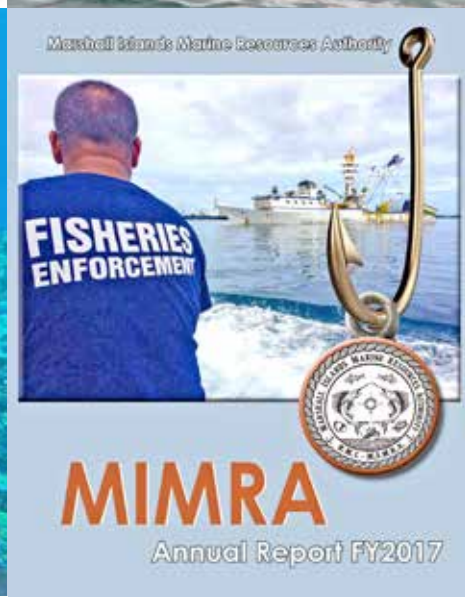
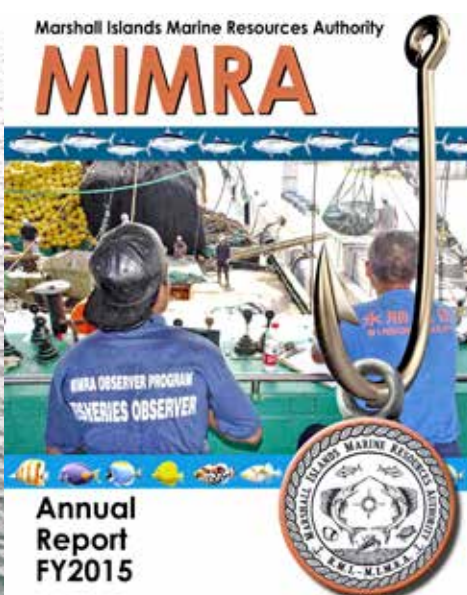
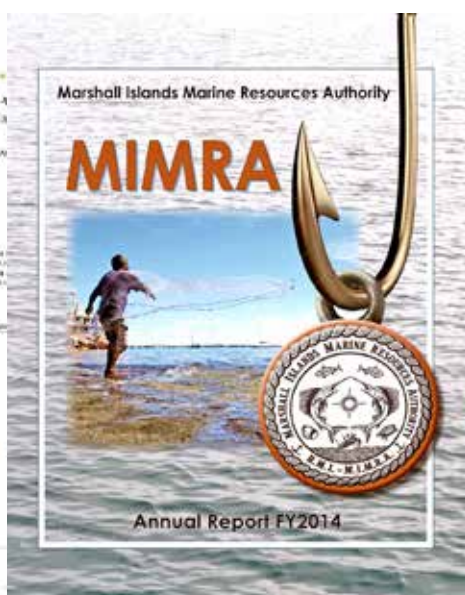
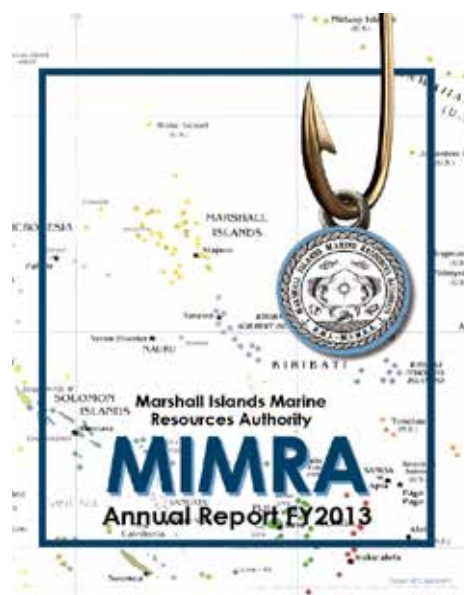
During 2024, PROPER supported development and diversification of livelihoods in support of coastal fisheries management and outer island infrastructure sustainability. Planning in 2024 for the potential expansion to 11 implementation sites, MIMRA identified the need to engage two supervision consultants through a shared procurement process. The Request for Expressions of Interest for the supervision consultancy and the Regional Aquaculture Specialist was issued in September 2024. Contract signing was expected in the first quarter of 2025. The terms of reference for

the Coastal Fisheries Development and Value Addition Advisor were returned for revision.

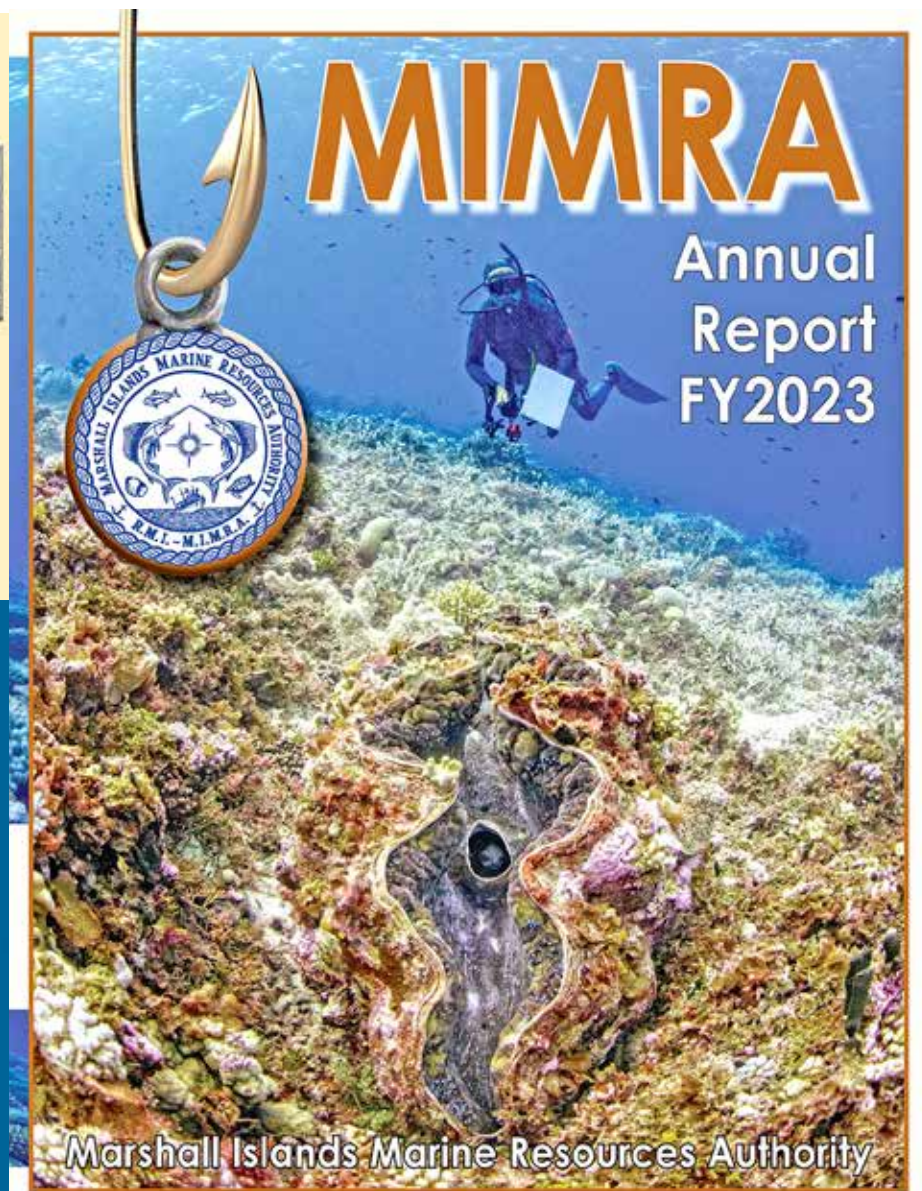
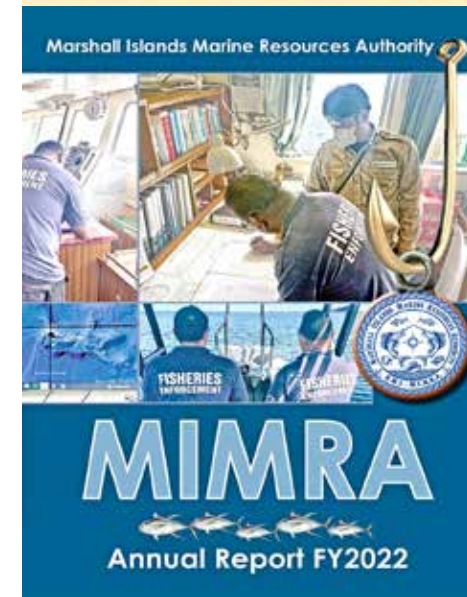
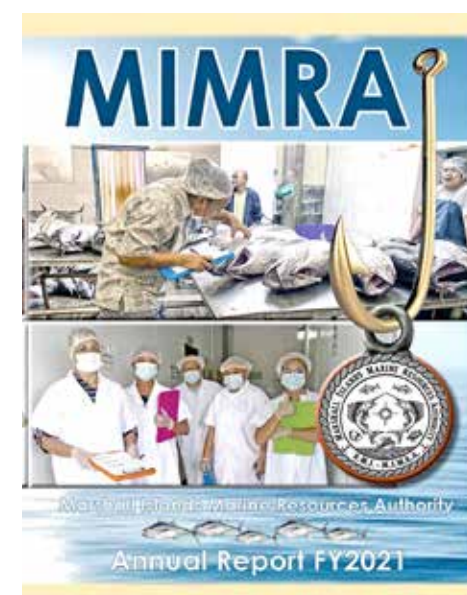
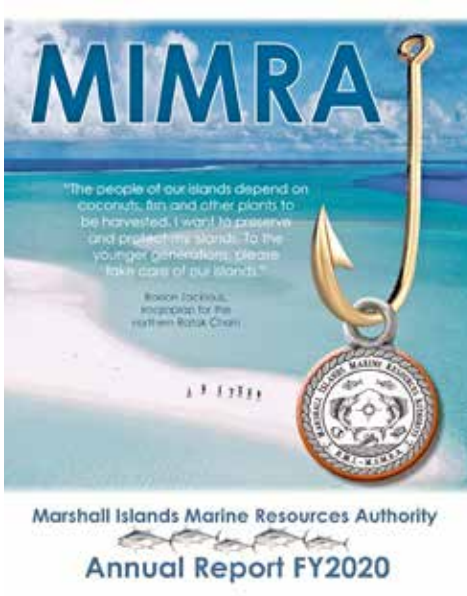
Two communities that have completed step seven of their Resource Management Plans under the Reimaanlok Process were eligible to receive baseline equipment to support giant clam farming and were expected to submit formal requests by the end of 2024. The feasibility study for biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) was discontinued, with the allocated budget redirected to support the development and promotion of locally manufactured FADs.

Project Management

The second Implementation Support Mission was successfully conducted from November 4–8, 2024, providing an opportunity to review project performance and ensure alignment with overall objectives and timelines. Project coordination was temporarily affected due to key staffing gaps: the Project Coordinator vacated the role on October 15, 2024, and the Project Assistant was on leave and off-island during the mission. These absences impacted the Project Management Unit's ability to fully support mission activities and on-ground coordination during the reporting period.



The cover photos on the MIMRA Annual Reports generally reflect the prominent focus of that financial year. To embrace this focus, be it coastal fisheries, oceanic endeavors, industry enforcement, or the steps being taken to increase its presence on the world stage, the team searches out the best images to portray the subject. Over the years many have been taken on field trips, while some require special photo shoots to present the topic to the readers.



‘MIMRA is one of the few fisheries with annual reports’

Being accountable and transparent has long been a MIMRA promise to the people of the Marshall Islands, with a key element of this being the publishing of annual reports with detailed information on the activities of the Authority.

Reports from 2001 forward can be read online or downloaded from MIMRA’s website at <http://www.rmimimra.com/index.php/resources>.

The reports are also available as glossy paperbacks and in Kindle format at Amazon: Just go to [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and search for “MIMRA Annual Report”. The reports cost about \$10 each plus, potentially, shipping.

MIMRA believes the reports are of benefit both domestically and internationally. For example, fisheries expert Robert Gillett in his 2017 book, *Fisheries in the Economies of Pacific Island Countries*

and Territories, commented: “The annual report of the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority is exemplary.”

In Giff Johnson’s 2021 book *Our Ocean’s Promise*, it was noted that Gillett also said MIMRA “is one of the few fisheries departments in the Pacific that produces an annual report, which is essential for both promoting fisheries and being transparent in operations.”



AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Primary revenue driver:

Financial accountability is a strong focus of the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority. The Finance and Corporate Affairs Division is responsible for maintaining MIMRA's accounts and preparing for and completing audits annually. A high-level of accountability is essential to MIMRA being able to carry out its mission of managing conservation and sustainable development of coastal and oceanic fisheries resources.

The accounting system and policies implemented by MIMRA's Finance and Corporate Affairs Division follow accounting principles generally accepted in the United States to ensure a high degree of accountability.

Emphasizing MIMRA's diligence in financial accountability, MIMRA's FY2023 audit by Ernst & Young LLP auditors showed no "findings." In addition, EY auditors in their "Opinion" for FY2023 stated:

"We have audited the financial statements of the business-type activities of Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA), a component unit of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, as of and for the years ended September 30, 2023 and 2022, and the related notes to the financial statements, which

MIMRA Contributions to RMI FY2015-FY2024

Fiscal Year	Contribution
2015	\$15,773,000
2016	\$26,285,938
2017	\$40,129,700
2018	\$29,440,214
2019	\$29,141,128
2020	\$31,300,000
2021	\$26,000,000
2022	\$26,200,000
2023	\$28,000,000
2024	\$29,960,000*

Source: MIMRA Financial Statements and Independent Auditors' Reports, FY2015-FY2024.

*2024 figure was not yet audited as of the date of publication of this report.

collectively comprise MIMRA's basic financial statements as listed in the table of contents. In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material

respects, the financial position of the business-type activities of MIMRA as of September 30, 2023 and 2022, and the changes in financial position, and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America."

In FY2024, MIMRA experienced a significant downturn in both operating and non-operating revenues. The Authority's total revenue fell to \$29,053,458 in FY2024 compared to \$34,354,892 the year before. This was the result in large part of a downturn in most of the commercial fishing revenue centers. The net operating revenues in FY 2024 fell 15 percent overall compared to 2023.

The Parties to the Nauru Agreement's Vessel Day Scheme is the primary driver of operating revenue for MIMRA and has been since 2013. That year, VDS revenue increased 170 percent from the previous year and started a climb to its peak year in 2019 of \$28,143,896. The first year that VDS revenue increased above the \$20 million mark was in 2016. VDS revenue has not dropped below the \$20 million mark since then, but 2024 generated the lowest level of VDS revenue since 2015. The average annual



The Vessel Day Scheme

revenue from the VDS from 2016 to 2023 was \$25,961,605. The 2024 figure of \$21,865,319 represents a 16 percent drop compared to the average for the previous eight years.

This decline in VDS revenue reflected, in part, a drop off in the number of VDS "pooling days," a system through which multiple PNA members pool their days together, giving fishing vessels access to multiple exclusive economic zones for a higher fishing day price. The number of days MIMRA has put into the pooling system declined from 268 in 2022 to 108 in 2024. All told, MIMRA sold 3,106 fishing days in 2024, with 108 pool days and 15 trading days with other PNA members.

In addition, "fishing rights" and "license fee collection" revenue both declined. Fishing rights revenue dropped from \$3,394,040 in 2023 to \$2,187,380. Similarly, license fees declined from \$1,882,120 to \$1,522,000 in 2024. Tuna transshipment fees were also down slightly. The decrease in fishing rights revenue was due to the drop in revenue from the FSM Arrangement vessels and Japan bilateral fishing agreement.

On the positive side, Fisheries Observer fees increased by 22 percent in 2024, the first full year of observers

working on purse seiners and longliners post-Covid. Fishing violation collections and local fish market revenue were also up, 500 percent and 49 percent, respectively, although both these revenue sectors are small compared to the VDS, fishing rights and license fees. Although there were no fishing violations issued in 2024, the \$150,000 collected during the year reflected settlement of a case from the previous year.

Non-operation revenue contributed importantly to MIMRA operations. MIMRA received \$1,819,427 in grants, of which \$1,363,211 was accounted for by the ongoing World Bank-funded PROPER (Pacific Region Oceanscape Project — Economic Resilience) project.

MIMRA's "net position" had generally increased in the past few years. In 2024, however, it declined nearly 20 percent from a net position of \$39,216,267 in 2023 to \$31,718,620 at the end of the fiscal year, September 30, 2024. This is largely due to MIMRA's contribution of \$29,960,000 to the Marshall Islands national government in 2024, a contribution that was well in excess of VDS revenue of \$21,865,319.

MIMRA's operating expenditures in-

creased slightly from 2023 to 2024, going up by one percent (from \$6,332,663 to \$6,351,104 in 2024). Wages and salaries increased seven percent as a result of implementation of a new pay scale. Boarding and observer fees increased by 180 percent from \$153,248 to 428,967 in 2024. This was largely a result of 2024 being the first full year without Covid vessel and travel restrictions in place. Of note, travel declined by eight percent while fuel and oil costs jumped 46 percent.

Overall, MIMRA's operating expenses grew by only \$8,441 in 2024.

Main challenges to MIMRA remain the high cost of gasoline and diesel, which in 2024 hovered around the \$7 per gallon mark. In addition, events out of MIMRA's control can lead to significant fluctuations in revenue generation. These include climate change and El Niño events that cause tuna schools to move to different locations; the three-month annual fish aggregating device (FAD) closure to ensure tuna stocks are being conserved; and costs such as needed ongoing maintenance for MIMRA's new headquarters opened in 2019 and the annex under construction in 2024 and expected to go into operation in 2025.

FINANCE

MIMRA: Management's Financial Condition and Operations for fiscal years 2024, 2023 and 2022

This table summarizes the financial condition and operations of MIMRA for fiscal years 2024, 2023, and 2022.

Financial Operations

Statement of Net Position

FINANCIAL OPERATIONS	2024*	2023	CHANGES	%	2022
ASSETS:					
Current and other assets	22,209,244	31,995,046	(9,785,801)	-31%	32,715,067
Capital Assets	6,797,618	6,326,934	470,684	7%	6,462,176
Other non-current asset	817,264	112,368	704,896	627%	133,715
Investment in JV	2,536,837	1,857,549	679,288	37%	3,445,052
Total Assets	32,360,965	40,291,897	(7,930,931)	-20%	42,756,010
LIABILITIES:					
Current and non-current liabilities	546,532	990,093	(443,560)	-45%	1,874,749
Long Term Liability	95,812	85,537	10,275	12%	99,720
Total Liabilities	642,345	1,075,630	(433,284)	-40%	1,974,469
NET POSITION:					
Investment in Capital Assets	4,034,436	5,953,348	(1,918,911)	-32%	5,440,036
Restricted	-	1,326,685	(1,326,685)	100%	352,898
Unrestricted	27,684,184	31,936,234	(4,252,049)	-13%	34,988,607
Total Position	31,718,620	39,216,267	(7,497,646)	-19%	40,781,541
TOTAL LIABILITIES/NET POSITION:	32,360,965	40,291,897	(7,930,931)	-20%	42,756,010

Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Changes in Net Position

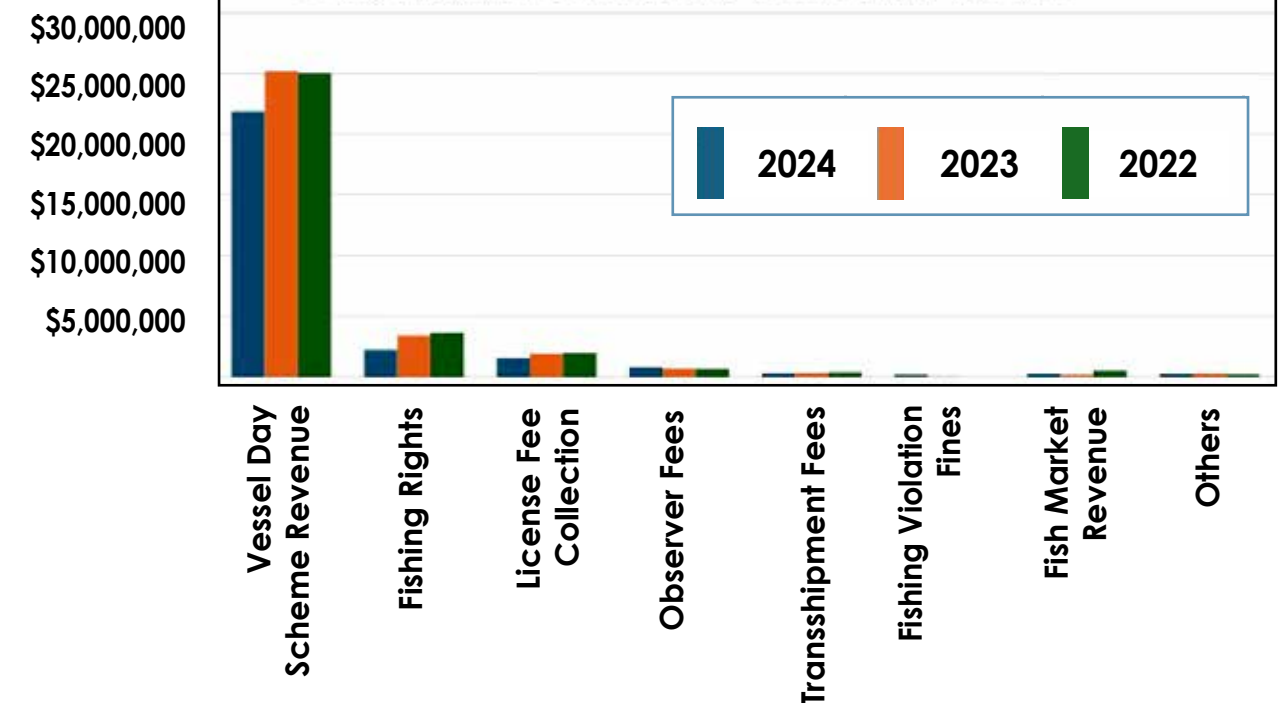
REVENUES:					
Operating Revenues	27,234,031	31,763,386	(4,529,354)	-14%	31,945,210
Non-Operating Revenue	1,819,427	2,591,506	(772,078)	-30%	443,667
Total Revenue	29,053,458	34,354,892	(5,301,433)	-15%	32,388,877
EXPENSES:					
Operating Expenses	6,351,104	6,332,663	214,753	3%	5,407,564
Non Operating Expenses(RMI/Local)	30,200,000	29,587,503	612,497	2%	27,280,243
	36,747,416	35,920,166	827,250	2%	32,687,807
NET	(7,693,957)	(1,565,274)	(6,128,683)	392%	(298,930)
Capital Contribution	-	-	-	-	784,905
Change in Net Position	(7,693,957)	(1,565,274)	(6,128,683)	392%	485,975
NET POSITION AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	39,216,267	40,781,541	(1,565,274)	-4%	40,295,566
NET POSITION AT END OF YEAR	31,718,620	39,216,267	(7,693,957)	-20%	40,781,541

* Note: FY2024 figures are unaudited.

FINANCE

MIMRA: Management's Discussion and Analysis for fiscal years 2024, 2023 and 2022

Comparative Revenue: FY24 vs FY23 vs FY22



	2024	2023	Changes	%	2022
Vessel Day Scheme Revenue	21,865,319	25,198,926	(3,333,607)	-13%	24,986,929
Fishing Rights	2,187,380	3,394,040	(1,206,660)	-36%	3,617,510
License Fee Collection	1,522,000	1,882,120	(360,120)	-19%	1,936,700
Observers Fees	790,698	650,678	140,020	22%	626,050
Transshipment Fees	269,000	316,000	(47,000)	-15%	347,000
Fishing Violation Fines	150,000	25,000	125,000	500%	-
Fish Market Revenue	225,479	151,804	73,675	49%	453,111
Others	224,155	253,922	(29,767)	-12%	166,170
Operating Revenues	27,234,031	31,872,490	(4,638,459)	-15%	32,133,470



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