

The PEW monument: Their trophy your loss

What it really seems like is a GIFT FROM THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WHO WILL SIGN AWAY THE FUTURE FOR MANY PEOPLE LIVING THIS COMMUNITY.

The Northern Islands hold a wealth of natural resources that should be properly managed and maintained as they are all over America. PEW wants to take that away from the people of the Marianas not give to us. As Mr. Gourley states, there is a new commercial fishing industry that has been established in the Marianas which could very well bring a substantial amount of revenues to this economy not to mention that its focus is on one of the oldest and most respectable careers that define island culture, fishing.

I personally attended the Pacific Fisheries forum that was recently held at the Fiesta Resort. With it came the ban on long line fishing operations within the 30 nautical miles. This was done to preserve those areas for the local fisherman. I HOPE THAT ALL OF THE INDIGENOUS, BORN AND RAISED FISHERMEN ARE PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION TO THIS VENTURE. PARTICULARLY THOSE WHOSE LIVES AND LIVELIHOOD IS IN ANYWAY AFFECTED by the loss of the age old custom of catching fish, selling fish and or providing fish for your families for the purpose of subsistence, survival or just to pay your CUC bill. If you go fishing to feed your families or sell your catch in order to pay your rent or any of your family members do the same, I hope you are not ignoring what PEW is proposing.

They have it all wrapped up in a pretty little package with a nice ribbon around it. To me it seems like a notch in their gun belt or a trophy on their mantle that will sit and collect dust. What the people of the CNMI will have is a marine sanctuary that will for time and all eternity will be closed to the people of the Marianas for private and commercial purposes. They are trying to place a nice shiny finish on their project by calling it a NATIONAL MONUMENT. We all know what monuments are. You know, like

ALONG with Mr. John Gourley, I would like to express my strong opposition to the PEW NMI MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT or, like Mr. Gourley said, "Whatever they are calling it now. This trophy they would like to place on their mantle so they can go home, wherever that may be, and brag about their great accomplishment.

Just so people can not slant things later, I will tell you in advance that I am directly involved with the company that is now fishing those waters. This monument directly affects my life and my livelihood. But even if it did not, my opinion would be the same. I grew up in southern California where I spent my share of time fishing, catching lobster and abalone etc. We had seasons, and size regulations and great efforts were made to regulate and maintain a sustainable fisheries industry.

Now that the garments are gone and the community struggles to find new industries and sources of income, they want to shut down the oldest and most traditional way of supporting your families and sustaining yourselves. As far as commercial fishing is concerned, the long line fishing company that has just invested a substantial amount of money in the CNMI is targeting pelagic, migratory fish. These fish do not live in the northern islands. They migrate throughout the Pacific and throughout the world. They will migrate through these waters and be caught thus benefiting this community in a variety of ways. On the other hand, they can have their monument and the fish will swim on to other parts of the world where they will be caught anyway. The community should also know that this fisheries business has placed their processing facilities on the islands rather than leaving the facilities on the boats. They are also focusing on processing and wholesale of the fish stocks while encouraging local fishermen to go out and bring their catch back to sell to their operation for processing and distribution to the local community, Guam and the mainland.

They have invested millions of dollars in the CNMI and are making great strides to provide jobs to U.S. citizens in the CNMI. One of its founders is an indigenous businessman. They call it a gift to the people of the Marianas.

Mount Rushmore the Grand Canyon etc. Look but don't touch.

You will still be able to enjoy it though. We can go up to Tapochau with our binoculars and say, "Hey, there it is, up there in the North." "Well, I know you can't see it or touch it or benefit from it or go there and catch fish to sell at market, but we can all sit around the dinner table and talk about how great it is that it is up there." They say they want to preserve it for the benefit of future generations. It's a monument. How do they expect future generations to benefit from it other than being able to look at it and talk about it? What other benefits are there? Simply by the fact that they can say, "yep it's up there all right, yep my grand dad told me it was up there and its there for us and how cool is that." But we can't go catch fish and bring them home to our friends and family. We can go look at all the great things that are saved for future generations.

It seems to me that the people of the Marianas need to think very hard and long before they decide to turn off the faucet of economic potential in the northern most islands and 1/3 of our EEZ. The fisheries should be properly managed and con-

trolled. The economy dictates that there must be serious justification for decisions made that affect the future of the Marianas. I would like to hear some specific details from proponents of this project as to how they expect this monument to benefit the Marianas. I am talking about some specifics, not just you think it's a great idea. What really makes it such a great idea? I have heard mention of the great ecotourism opportunity. This is not Australia or Hawaii where we have tourists from the four corners of the earth. We can barely maintain a tourism market for the main islands. With all the rainforests and world class ecotourism destinations within three to five hours at much more economical rates, do you really believe you can create a booming ecotourism industry to islands with almost no access from plant-operating. I think that idea may call for a reality check.

The other reason I could imagine would be vegetarian's ecotourists who want to protect the wildlife. I also support protecting the wildlife but if you eat fish but are against catching them in our waters but perfectly happy to order seafood in a restaurant, then that just reeks of hypocrisy. That says that it is okay to exploit everyone else's backyard but not to utilize and maintain our own natural resources that this island so des-

perately needs. I would welcome any comments from the proponents of this project provided their reason is something besides, just because I think it's a good idea. As for the silent majority, I strongly suggest that the people of this community do not sit on the sidelines because there is reason to believe that President Bush is going to side on which ever side speaks louder. They will swoop in and do this and you will never know what hit you and that will be that. I appeal to the local fishermen to unite and become informed on the potential impact on yours and future generations lives.

I will be organizing a seminar in order to provide the local fishing community to be better informed about what this is all about. I strongly recommend that all local fishermen, no matter how much or how little you fish, if you sell your fish and just consume it with your family, that you should attend this seminar. If you are interested in being better informed about PEW means to you and your future and would like to attend this seminar, please send me your contact information so we can contact you. You can reach me at jim@bizaidisaipan.com.

STAND UP AND BE COUNTERED!!!!

JIM DAVIES

Biz Aid Saipan