

Notes from the NPS Equity Engagements with R9 Territories:

Attendees:

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Introduction:

Robert Goo:

- Territories issues might not be captured in a larger discussion
- Territories have a unique perspective that we want to make sure we understand and consider in our equity efforts.
- For this conversation we will be deferring to territories to define disadvantage on their island.

Facilitated Discussion:

1. What challenges, including disproportionate human health and environmental impacts, does your community/Territory face?

Margaret Aguilar, Guam: when listening sessions happened and went back to agency to think about it:

- We have started having conversations with SRF and CIP.
- Wanted to go through in understanding of disadvantage systems - some don't have drinking water systems and some lacking public sewer.
- They had taken that into consideration when prioritization - in DWSRF - is being addressed. Will still take a look at how can continue prioritization to these particular communities
- There is an MOU between Guam EPA and GWA - finalized in 2010. Wastewater revolving loan fund for people on a septic system - by law have 5 years to connect to public sewer if installed in their area - this project in the north have program Guam Water works agency has system that people are on septic tanks people can apply for low interest load. Used 319 money as a grant to GWA \$75 seed money to help with hook up.
- That really is only program at this point in time. Slowly paying back loan, going back so more people can take advantage of the program.
- We would prioritize EJ related drinking water and sewer service

Merrill Ayuyu, BECQ: talking with Larry:

- impacts from natural disaster - especially flooding in low lying areas
- Military impacts
- Inaccessible public toilet in public beaches -

- Failing septics / too many people in household
- Unmaintained vehicles leaking
- Urban landscapes
- Uncontrolled grazing and ag
- Have been doing some work with [these] issues –
 - with safe drinking water - during super typhoon helped with access to drinkable water
 - With military steel working with DOD officials on [clean-up efforts]
 - Some success story - in Tinian Mortar clean up - Formerly used defense FUDS
 - Sewer connections: a couple years ago had funds available to assess which houses were connected to sewer which were not. Those that were not, we helped get them funded to connect to sewer. Most in a specific area are connected to sewer
 - for farmers in that area that needed to build their own waste system - helped them to get funding with NRCS
- Development on islands:
 - We try to permit developments. Some trying to avoid but working to enforce.

2. How are diverse perspectives identified and integrated into program goals and actions?

Olivia Tenorio, CNMI: CNMI are a very diverse population - 2 indigenous groups, + other cultural groups.

- This is very beneficial to establish integrated goals.
- Examples of using project ideas from other communities that work to bring to these communities:
 - Utilizing projects from other islands (rain gardens, native plants)
 - Storm drain sediment/trash traps
 - working with watershed coordinator from coastal resource manage office

Merrill Ayuyu, CNMI: we formed a task force with [multiple working groups?]: watershed working group, fire management working group. We have been a part of groups for several years.

- Work on some of the islands' watersheds with NGOs and govt on district revitalization on
- Use their feedback to set which goals could be placed first and last.
- Fire management working group: working with individual that is mapping areas on Saipan that are vulnerable to fire and those impacts mapping to help address erosion.

EPA Follow up Question: How are you reaching out into the community?

Merrill Ayuyu: A lot of public comments are on social media, have quarterly meetings biannual and annual. All are open to the public. If there is a project in a village, we go house to house to let them know. We are very fortunate that community wants to provide input.

Margaret Aguilar, Guam: those communities I mentioned earlier are identified by our agency based on income bracket and those that are struggling with access to water and sewer. So technically defined by the community (lacking services)

- We also have a watershed planning committee formed by executive order. Their efforts are aimed to come up with watershed plans.
 - Each agency that provides input (ex: forestry, public works) is involved in the planning committee - we can also look at including EJ into these upcoming projects.

- Pilot project - NOAA is putting together Watershed plan monthly meetings over the next year they will have 4 public meetings so this will be a great opportunity to see how EJ can be integrated.

3. How have 319 program resources and funds been used to address environmental justice and equity issues in the territory? Or alternatively, are there any examples you'd like to show case or relate to show successes in utilizing 319 program resources to address disadvantaged communities in the territories?

Olivia Tenorio, CNMI: we have a few success stories we would like to share. uploaded in database - one for monitoring efforts

Robert Goo, EPA: Follow up Question re: How well are consolidated funds working?

- Merrill Ayuyu, CNMI: We will have to follow up w/ our Directors.
- Jared Vollmer, EPA: we send guidance that reflects consolidation of 319 and 106 and something else. [This means] no match which is way more flexible. The programs overlap, but the staff understands the differences and funding requirements
- Merrill Ayuyu: Management at CNMI know the priorities of each grant so do good job of balancing. Would like to maintain the use of the flexibility.

Ephraim Leon-Guerrero, EPA: would you say NPS is getting adequate resources to accomplish goals within grant?

- Merrill Ayuyu: feel using right amount

Ephraim Leon-Guerrero, EPA: what do you see as a deficit for program vs. what is needed

- Merrill Ayuyu: great question - the use of 319 funds for maintenance is not [currently] included, but we would like guidance from EPA [on the possibility for that]. Funding for maintenance would be an important increase.

Margaret Aguilar, Guam: With consolidated grants, the flexibility is helpful, but sometimes it causes inconsistencies in the funding. For example: [We have some] challenges with phased projects - sometimes Region 9 is able to find more to help.

- In the past have purchased some materials to support with BMPs to help keep soil in place. We haven't had flexibility to help partners with project in the last couple years, (bc management direct funds to other priorities) we want to solve the problem but it's hard

Merrill Ayuyu, CNMI: We have a similar example - provided planting materials and tools and forest service provided plants. So it has been working well for us with agro-forestry work.

4. How can we work better with other federal programs?

Margaret Aguilar, Guam: In Guam, we put all federal funds in a pot to meet a goal. No match with a consolidated grant allows some flexibility for coordinated federal work.

Jared Vollmer, EPA: I didn't realize what a hotbed [the territories are for federal projects] – NOAA, ACE, EPA, FS, FEMA, - and everyone doing plans. [It actually gets a] bit hard to track what everyone does

- DOI and Office of Insular affairs are technically in charge of coordinating, but not sure they know how much going on
- If EPA is doing a job but more spontaneous not sure how aware DOI of it.

Merrill Ayuyu, CNMI: We are not as huge as Guam - since impact of super typhoon we have learned to work on coordinating to make progress on one goal.

- If DOI can see impact and provide more opportunities for [?]

Margaret Aguilar, Guam: Agree, [we are] trying to coordinate to utilize funds to the best we can.

EPA Follow up question re: communicating successes? Communicating between agencies? Lessons learned?

Unattributed: Other communities need to learn that working together helps build comradery and a healthy community. A lot of times it's each person on their own - but with these new [early warning/hazard mitigation] systems to predict, now we are looking out for each other.

Margaret Aguilar, Guam: You can't do a project by yourself – there has to be collaboration. Diversity is so important to listen to – one person doesn't have the answer. When we meet these people, it's really an eye opener.

- Calamity is bad, but coming together is something people will really appreciate if they have tried it.
- It will be important to think about resilience and working together to protect DACs.

Robert Goo, EPA - how can we better protect communities through things like green infrastructure?

Unattributed: This might be something we might want to explore.

Margaret Aguilar, Guam: Saipan has experienced more storms than Guam. Army Corps has a hazard mitigation type plan; [We are] in the process of reviewing plan and looking at input from different agencies.

- Looked at flooding, utilities, and the environment [coupled with] how to be better prepared.

Robert Good, EPA: We can encourage pushing hazard mitigation. Does Guam have fire also?

Margaret Aguilar, Guam: yes. Always working to do outreach to prevent fires (especially in the south)

Any other issues you all wanted to discuss?

Merrill Ayuyu, CNMI: Issues we do face are land issues - private owners and dealing with them

- We're still figuring out how to approach them sometimes multiple owners sometimes uncertain who owns.
- [Working to figure out the best way] to talk with them about funding for BMPs
- Learning how to approach, how to assist.

Follow up: Are those in disadvantaged communities?

Merrill Ayuyu, CNMI: Yes

Margaret Aguilar, Guam: Merrill and Olivia brought up a lot of similar issues to what we experience here in Guam – especially:

- Cooperation among agencies.

- Try to help each other and see how we can better address.

Ephraim Leon-Guerrero, EPA: Margaret - I think you are working on SRF and that can be a struggle elsewhere. I think you have an advantage to get those programs prioritized.

- Could we get the process that reprioritized those communities?

Margaret Aguilar, Guam: We looked for how they rated criteria - shocked some don't have drinking water on Guam.

Jared Volmer, EPA: BABA requirements will hit territories especially hard – they are closer to other countries than to mainland US. We need to consider how to support them.

- Territories get a waiver?