



**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
Council**

Subject: Comments on Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Disaster Recovery Framework

Docket: FEMA-2010-0004

From: The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Disaster Recovery Framework (Framework), February 5, 2010 draft. The Framework defines an approach to preparing for, planning for, and managing disaster recoveries that addresses the complexity of long term recovery with flexibility and adaptability.

The Framework describes Recovery Support Functions (RSFs) as bringing together federal departments and agencies to collaborate on recovery needs. We recommend the Framework include regional fishery management councils (RFMCs) as part of the RSF structure in any disaster and recovery effort that involves the marine environment including impacts to fisheries, coastal areas, and adjacent coastal uplands. RFMCs are Congressionally mandated, federally funded entities with local experience and knowledge in coastal and marine resources and ecosystems, in addition to fisheries expertise. They would therefore be able to assist in damage and needs assessments and contribute to disaster recovery efforts in their areas. Moreover, the RFMCs are involved in community efforts and utilize community advisory bodies in management of their fishery ecosystem management plans and may, therefore, be an excellent source of community capacity-building and providing community-based solutions. This would be especially relevant in terms of the Framework's identified Natural and Cultural Resources RSF. The Framework identifies the Department of the Interior, Department of Commerce, Environmental Protection Agency, United States Department of Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, and Department of Homeland Security/FEMA to work together on the Natural and Cultural Resources RSF. The addition of RFMCs would greatly enhance the RSF's ability to address traditional and cultural uses and management of the marine environment and resources. Inclusion of the RFMCs would also support the RSF's mission to be inclusive and to engage entities that would bring a wealth of expertise. RFMCs would also be valuable in pre-disaster planning efforts. Therefore, we recommend the Framework include RFMCs in the list entities involved in local planning efforts as well as part of the RSF structure.

Additionally, the Framework could be improved by addressing regional differences (including traditional, social, and cultural values); and the need to conduct disaster recovery assessments and plan recovery actions differently based on them. The

Framework defines successful recovery as "The community successfully meets its priorities to overcome the impacts of the disaster, reestablishes an economic and social base that instills confidence in the local citizens and businesses regarding the community viability, and rebuilds the community to be more resilient from future disasters."

Communities have vast regional differences in their ideas of successful recovery based on their needs, geographic location, economic condition, and cultural and traditional values, among other differences. These differences should be acknowledged and addressed in the Framework. For example, in the Territory of American Samoa approximately 95 percent of the landmass is held under the traditional land tenure system and under the direct authority of the Samoan chiefs known as "matai." Under this system, traditional land cannot be purchased or sold and the current reigning chief from within the family unit has final say over the disposition of a family's holdings. This system ensures the passage of assets to future generations and serves as the catalyst in the preservation of the Samoan culture. In addition, the Samoan Constitution, the Convention of 1899, and subsequent amendments and authority recognize the primacy of Samoan custom over all sources of traditional law. This is one example of regional difference that would need to be considered in every aspect of recovery assessments and recovery efforts in the Territory. Indigenous peoples in each of the states and territories in the western Pacific region have their unique rights. However these indigenous communities do not fall under the 'tribal' category and so often slip through the cracks in processes such as this effort described in the Framework.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on FEMA's draft Framework and look forward to reviewing a revised version that addresses our comments and recommendations. In addition, we want to point out the importance of having proper funding for all actions described and proposed in the final version to ensure their successful implementation.