



**MINUTES OF THE 1<sup>st</sup> QUARTER MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD  
(MB) OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AREA (FMA) 12**

**Date** : March 23, 2023

**Time** : 10:00 A.M.

**Location:** Villa Excellance Beach and Wave Pool Resort in Tanza, Cavite

**MB Members Present:**

Chairperson	Regional Director, BFAR	<b>Sammy A. Malvas</b>
:	4A	-
Co-chairperson	Local Chief Executive	<b>Hon. Matt Erwin V. Florido</b>
Sectoral-		
Representatives	Municipal Fishing Sector	<b>Rodrigo A. De Jesus</b>
:		
	Commercial Fishing Sector	<b>Melanie P. Catapang</b>
	Academe	<b>Dr. Yasmin H. Primavera-Tirol</b>
	NGO	<b>Pacifico D. Beldia II (alternate)</b>
	IFARMC	<b>Wilfredo A. Hernandez (Balayan Bay)</b> <b>Eddy P. De Mesa (Tayabas Bay)</b>
	PNP-Maritime Group	<b>PCPT Edwin A. Cabalag</b>
	PFDA	<b>Custodio L. Balaoing, Jr.</b>
	DILG	<b>Michael Casto A. Ras, II</b>
	Regional Director, BFAR MIMAROPA	<b>Emmanuel H. Asis, DFT, CESE</b>
	BFAR VI	<b>Ryan O. Doronila</b>

**Absent:**

Aquaculture Sector **Atty. Immanuel L. Sodusta**

PAMB **Dir. Nilo B. Tamera, CESO III**



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14 Marketing/Processor **Dyna V. Bonites**  
15 Indigenous People **Oliver S. Tamboon**  
16 Philippine Coast Guard **CG CAPT Victorino Ronaldo Y Acosta IV**  
17 Regional Director, BFAR V **Ariel U. Pioquinto**  
18

19 **Other Attendees:**  
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21 **FMA 12 Secretariat (BFAR Region 4A)**

- 22 1. Dr. Sonia G. Olaivar-Elloso, Head Secretariat  
23 2. Allan U. Castillo  
24 3. Wilfredo O. Fajardo, Jr.  
25 4. Manuel O. Banton  
26 5. Cyrus T. Saraza  
27 6. Edmundo M. Amican, III, OIC - FRMS/ FMA Coordinator  
28 7. Jomar L. Villamor, FMA Secretariat  
29

30 **BFAR Region 4A**

- 31 1. Dr. Maribeth H. Ramos, SAG Chair/Project Leader, NSAP4A  
32 2. Princess Marie Alynagen L. Roque, NSAP 4A  
33 3. Edmark A. Serrano, NSAP 4A  
34 4. Trazarah Hanoof E. Argarin, NSAP 4A  
35

36 **BFAR Region MIMAROPA**

- 37 • Claress S. Jamilla  
38

39 **OCEANA**

- 40 • Atty. Rhea C. Yray-Frossard  
41 • Danny Ocampo  
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43 Agenda:



1. Presentation of SAG Resolution on the Recommended Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) and Harvest Control Measure (HCMs) for *Sardinella lemuru* (Bali sardines) in Tayabas Bay, Quezon side pursuant to the National Sardines Management Plan and Fisheries Administrative Order No. 263, series of 2019
2. Updates of the FMA 12 EAFM Framework Plan (implementation schedule)
3. FMA 12 EAFM TWG Updates
4. Other matters: Oil-spill updates in 9 coastal Municipalities in Oriental Mindoro

The first quarter meeting of FMA 12 MB was held in face-to-face on March 23, 2023 at 10:00 AM. It began with an Audio-Visual Presentation (AVP) followed by the singing of the Philippine National Anthem. In the absence of RD Sammy A. Malvas, Co-Chairperson Honorable Mayor Matt Erwin V. Florido took over as the presiding officer. The Chair formally opened the meeting by calling it to order. The head secretariat, Dr. Sonia G. Olaivar-Elloso, called the roll and, having a majority of the members present, a quorum was declared.

After a photo opportunity, the meeting proceeded with the Reading and Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. Mr. Edmundo M. Amican, III, the Secretariat member read the minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter FMA 12 MB Meeting.

Regional Director of BFAR MIMAROPA Emmanuel H. Asis inquired about the attendance of Region 4B during the previous meeting. Mr. Amican explained that the absence of a representative from BFAR4B was due to conflicting schedules. In response, RD Asis recommended to the Secretariat that they ensure future meetings are scheduled without conflicts and that, even in such cases, a representative from the region should be present. Additionally, the Chair proposed the implementation of advance notices and fixed time schedules to allow members to block off their schedules and prioritize quarterly meetings. Furthermore, the Chair suggested that, before concluding the meeting, the board should agree on a specific schedule for the next quarterly meeting.



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The presiding officer asked the board of any corrections and comments. Hearing no comments and suggestions, the minutes of the previous meeting was moved to be approved by RD Asis, and was seconded by the Commercial Fishing Sector Representative Ms. Melanie Catapang. The meeting proceeded with the Chair asking the secretariat if there are any business arising from the previous minutes. Mr. Amican responded that there were none.

The Chair began by discussing first the agenda item "Other Matters," focusing on the oil spill situation in Oriental Mindoro. RD Asis provided updates on the incident involving the sinking of the Tanker MT Princess Empress, which occurred on February 28, 2023, and had severe consequences for nine coastal municipalities. A state of calamity was declared, and the main challenge now is addressing the livelihood issues faced by approximately 64,000 affected individuals. Various National Government Agencies (NGAs), including DSWD and DOLE, are providing support through food packs, cash-for-work programs, and a 4.4 million pesos livelihood assistance program.

The oil spill reportedly extended to the waters of Batangas City, prompting a need for cooperative endeavors involving the Provincial Local Government, NGAs, and concerned parties to tackle the environmental emergency. Samples of fish and water are currently being gathered for examination, which plays a vital role in deciding whether the current fishing restrictions in affected regions can be lifted. Preliminary results provided by BFAR suggest the existence of minimal amounts of hydrocarbons resulting from bioaccumulation. To err on the side of caution, BFAR advises that fishing operations remain suspended until additional analysis is carried out. The situation is continuously being monitored.

Mr. Danny Ocampo, Oceana's campaign manager, presented additional updates on the oil spill. He shared his team's visit to Oriental Mindoro, particularly Pola municipality, where they assessed the environmental impacts and effects on the local community. Mr. Ocampo highlighted the continuous influx of thick oil along the coastline as a significant challenge. As response, the fishermen participated in a cash-



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for-work program focused on coastal cleaning as alternate activity due to fishing ban in the affected area. Communities created makeshift barriers using coconut husks known as "booms" to prevent oil reaching mangrove areas and fishponds. Meanwhile, the company responsible for handling the contaminated waste is still in the process of obtaining a permit for transporting the oil waste causing delays in oil disposals.

Concerns were raised about sustaining the community's livelihood, especially for families with school-going children. For instance, aquaculture products from the affected area are currently banned, pending water testing and clearance for shrimp and Bangus harvesting and sales.

In addition, Mr. Ocampo also provided updates on Oceana's Karagatan Patrol Platform; a monitoring system developed to aid in addressing illegal fishing. He emphasizes that there still detection of possible IUU inside the municipal waters. He also added that platform may also be used in oil-spill reporting and monitoring.

He also informed the board that the University of the Philippines - Marine Science Institute played a crucial role in developing the system's modeling for the oil spill, which has proven to be accurate. Projections suggest that the spill might reach the Batangas bay and Balayan bay.

Mr. Wilfredo A. Hernandez, the representative for the IFARMC Sector in Balayan Bay, asked about the possibility of the oil spill reaching the bay. Mr. Ocampo mentioned that based on the initial predictions indicated that San Juan and Calatagan would be affected based on the current patterns. As response, the LGUs was already taking precautions and preparations.

Pacifico D. Beldia II, the alternate representative of the Non-Government Organizations Sector, responded that if oil were to reach the innermost part of the Verde Island Passage, the amount would be very minimal because the oil is being controlled at its source. He mentioned that in the past three days, degraded oil had



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reached the shores of three barangays in Isla Verde simultaneously, but there was no further oil spillage after that. He mentioned a false alarm in Tingloy, where the same person initially reported an oil spill but later retracted the statement. He expressed appreciation for people's preparedness. According to him, if oil were to reach the shores, the impact would not be as severe as in Pola, Oriental Mindoro, since efforts are already underway to contain the oil at its source or "ground zero." The oil spill that had reached the immediate barangay and nearby municipalities had minimal impact and was similar in form to the degraded oil in Isla Verde, so there should not be significant concern. In terms of fabricating spill booms, the Malampaya Foundation initially provided materials but has since halted, based on feedback from the Municipal Agriculture Office of Naujan and Pola, Oriental Mindoro, suggesting that makeshift booms cannot effectively contain the degraded oil during periods of high waves. Finally, he commended the community for taking initiative. Regarding the economic impact on Puerto Galera, he acknowledged the Mayor's point and emphasized the importance of applying a filter when interpreting news to prevent unnecessary panic.

Mr. Ras inquired about the penalties or sanctions imposed on MT Princess Empress. Mr. Ocampo explained that it took the response team three weeks to provide a response, and he is unaware of any compensation being given to the affected fisherfolk by the company. However, it was mentioned that the company is involved in contracting and funding efforts to contain the oil spill. Additionally, it was mentioned that Mayor Jennifer Cruz is consulting with the NBI (National Bureau of Investigation) to pursue legal action against the company, although their involvement in environmental rehabilitation remains uncertain.

Ms. Catapang expressed concerns about the 4.4 million budget allocated for livelihood support and whether it had been initiated. Previous instances of seasonal closures did not result in the provision of support even after the closure ended. RD Asis clarified that the budgets from BFAR and other agencies were being used for direct interventions, including food packs and cash-for-work programs.





Atty. Rhea C. Yray-Frossard, Campaign and Research Director of Oceana, informed the board about lawyers submitting a statement demanding accountability for the sunken ship. They have also been in contact with an oil spill expert from Mindanao State University, and Dr. Bacosa offered expertise during a recent hearing in Congress. The oil spill was found to have adverse effects on plants and crops, with anecdotal reports of color changes in corn and coconut. The significance of the Verde Island Passage in terms of marine biodiversity was emphasized, highlighting the threat posed by the oil spill. The FMA 12, composed of stakeholders, was deemed suitable for discussing relevant policies or resolutions.

Mr. Ras raised the question of whether the board could issue a resolution to hold MT Princess Empress accountable for the damages caused by the oil spill, considering the National Government's slow response. He suggested that the board's resolution could prompt the responsible company to take action. The Presiding Officer agreed, stating that a resolution is an expression of sentiments within the board's purview.

RD Asis confirmed that the National Government is already filing administrative and criminal cases and conducting investigations through the National Bureau of Investigation and Department of Justice. Mr. Ras emphasized the importance of passing a resolution, especially since the incident occurred within FMA 12, urging the National Government and the responsible company to expedite their actions. The Chair agreed, and Oceana was asked to assist in drafting the resolution. The resolution was unanimously approved through a motion made by RD Asis.

As the meeting awaited the arrival of RD Malvas, agenda items 2 and 3 were addressed.

**Agenda 2 & 3: FMA 12 EAFM Framework Plan (implementation schedule) and FMA 12 EAFM TWG Updates**



Mr. Edmundo M. Amican III, the FMA Coordinator and member of FMA 12 TWG, emphasized the objective of the FMA 12 EAFM TWG (Ecosystems Approach to Fisheries Management Technical Working Group) in developing the 5-year FMA 12 Framework Plan. He highlighted that the plan received approval from the Management Board on December 6, 2022, indicating the completion of the TWG's task.

Following that, the TWG engaged in a discussion regarding their future direction of work. The primary focus of the discussion centered around the FMA 12 Scorecard, and the following agreements were reached:

- All the members of the TWG agreed to consider 2024 as the first year covered by the Scorecard.
- The TWG would support the decision of the Management Board regarding the continuation of the EAFM TWG.
- An Internal Rules and Procedures (IRP) specific to the FMA 12 TWG would be developed.
- The plan would be rolled out before implementing the Scorecard to assess its effectiveness.
- The discussion placed significant emphasis on Year 1 of the Implementation Schedule

Regarding updates to the Plan, the final version has not yet been finalized and published by the Secretariat. Additionally, efforts are underway to gather photos for inclusion in the plan.

The Chair sought clarifications and comments from the board, particularly highlighting the urgency of Activities 4 and 5 in the plan. Dr. Yasmin H. Primavera-Tirol, the representative of the Academe Sector, emphasized the importance of implementing control measures to regulate fine mesh nets and adopting policies to reduce the catch of juvenile fish, suggesting that these measures should be implemented in the first year.





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225           The Chair inquired about the existence of a designated committee or technical  
226 working group that had studied and analyzed the proposed policies. The purpose  
227 would be to recommend these policies to the board for submission to the provinces,  
228 where they could be adopted as local ordinances. In response, SAG FMA 12 Chair  
229 Dr. Maribeth H. Ramos explained that establishing an Inter-agency Task Force or  
230 TWG was one of the recommendations put forth by the FMA 12 SAG.

231           The Chair agreed that it would be beneficial to establish a dedicated committee  
232 to thoroughly review and reconsider previous issuances on fishery administrative  
233 orders and the fisheries code, particularly in relation to enforcement. It was also  
234 acknowledged that certain provisions within the fisheries code might not be applicable  
235 to various municipalities and provinces.

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237           The meeting took a temporary pause and entered a brief recess.

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239           **Agenda 1: Presentation on the results of findings on *Sardinella lemuru* (Bali**  
240 **sardines) in Tayabas Bay**

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242           Upon RD Malvas's arrival, he assumed the role of the presiding officer and  
243 warmly welcomed everyone in attendance.

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245           The meeting continued with the FMA 12 SAG Chair providing an update on the  
246 recent activities carried out by the SAG. This included engaging in consultations with  
247 the Municipal Agriculture Offices (MAOs) and stakeholders of the Sardines sector in  
248 order to prepare the final draft of the FMA 12 SAG Resolution.

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250           Mr. Edmark A. Serrano, NSAP data analyst, presented information on the total  
251 production by sector and year, classification and composition of fishing gears, the most  
252 commonly used municipal and commercial fishing gears, species categories and their  
253 composition, the dominant species caught in each sector, the production of *Sardinella*



*lemuru* by sector, seasonal patterns of catch, the primary municipal and commercial fishing gears involved in catching *S. lemuru*.

Ms. Trazarah Hanoof E. Argarin, NSAP data analyst, provided a detailed explanation of the performance indicators utilized in the analysis of *S. lemuru* in Tayabas Bay, Quezon. This encompassed the definitions and methodologies employed for assessing these indicators.

Before moving on to the presentation of recommended Harvest Control Rules (HCRs), the Chair sought clarification from the board. Dr. Tirol inquired about the availability of fishing effort data, and Dr. Ramos explained that such data could include the number of boat landings, fishing hours, and fishing trips, among other factors. Dr. Tirol specifically asked for a graph depicting the yield in terms of fishing hours, which Dr. Ramos confirmed existed but was not included in the presentation. Dr. Tirol suggested sharing the graph through email. RD Malvas concurred with Dr. Tirol's point, emphasizing the importance of examining the correlation between production and fishing effort.

Mr. Beldia noted a significant decline in the production ratio of reef-associated species from 57% before the expansion to 30.8% during the expansion. He recommended that future Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management should incorporate data on reef-associated species while also considering the extent of reef habitat. Mr. Serrano's response indicated that within the reef-associated category, the second top species, *Selar crumenophthalmus*, will be analyzed after *Sardinella lemuru*.

Dr. Tirol raised the issue of 97% of sardine catch coming from commercial fishing and suggested considering the gears used to catch sardines during specific months or seasons when formulating HCMs (Harvest Control Measures). Dr. Tirol also proposed including the mesh size used in the presented table.



Discussions ensued regarding the gravid season and spawning period of *S. lemuru*. Custodio L. Balaoing, Jr., the representative of the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority, noted that commercial fishing vessels typically return home during the fourth quarter, coinciding with the critical season of increased fishing effort. During this time, most catches consist of fish below the size of first maturity.

Mr. De Mesa shared their experiences regarding the volume and size of fish caught by *Taksay* (Ringnet) and *Basnig* (Bag net), as well as the price per kilo ranging from 20-30 pesos.

Ms. Catapang raised concerns about the potential impact of an oil spill, suggesting that fish caught in Balayan Bay, which consists of various species of significant size and volume, may flee into the bay due to the spill.

Mayor Florido commended the SAG for their presentation and addressed issues raised in RD Malvas' absence, such as the need for unified policies within the areas covered by FMA 12, the Management Board's recommendations to provinces, cities, or municipalities for appropriate ordinances, and the reconsideration of the applicability and suitability of national laws.

Dr. Ramos proceeded to present the recommendations for Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) and Harvest Control Measures (HCMs) outlined in the SAG Resolution.



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Harvest Control Rules	Harvest Control Measures	Specific Management Actions
Implement maximum catch limit      Consider gear type restriction and regulation on mesh sizes   Consider implementing a minimum size limit  Reduce and regulate the catches of juvenile sardines	Catch Limit     Gear type and size restrictions   Size Limit          Market Restriction	<b>Creation of multi-agency task force to evaluate the following recommended actions:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the boat and gear inventory of municipal and commercial fishing vessels;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require the commercial fishing operators to submit catch reports for monitoring;</li> <li>Reduce the number of fishing trips;</li> <li>Reduce the current fishing effort by 25.11 % based on the computed E rates;</li> <li>Review of the existing regulation of fine mesh nets;</li> </ul> </li> <li>Review and validate the list and admeasurement of municipal fishing vessels in compliance with Executive Order 305 "Devolving to Municipal and City Governments the Registration of Fishing Vessels Three (3) Gross Tonnage and below";</li> <li>Review existing municipal fishing ordinances to come up with a unified fisheries ordinance on size limits;</li> <li>Strengthen law enforcement efforts and strict monitoring of existing fishery laws and regulations within Tayabas Bay;</li> </ol>



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<p>Consider market restrictions for juvenile sardines</p> <p>Implement spatio-temporal fishing limits</p>	<p>Spatio-temporal restriction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensify enforcement on the regulation of active fishing gears such as, but not limited to motorized push nets, Beach seine, Danish seine, within municipal waters;</li> <li>• Strict implementation of “No commercial fishing gear operation” (Purse seine, Bag net, and Ring net) within municipal waters subject to the exceptions provided by the code;</li> <li>• Determine and implement a minimum size limit for catching sardines;</li> <li>• Strict implementation of appropriate mesh size;</li> </ul> <p>5. Implement the technology-based system such as a Vessel monitoring system (VMS).</p> <p>6. Conduct catch documentation and value chain analysis;</p> <p>7. Determine appropriate/sustainable sizes for processed sardines such as smoked, dried, fish paste and fish sauce</p> <p>8. Conduct studies on reproductive biology, spatio-temporal distribution of plankton, chlorophyll concentration, and larval distribution to determine the spawning season and spawning ground of <i>S. lemuru</i> within Tayabas Bay;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of the closed season once the spawning season has been determined taking into consideration the alternative livelihood or assistance for the affected fisherfolk;</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish fishing season based on average length to determine the period where optimum sizes of sardines are caught;</li></ul>
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Dr. Ramos emphasized that successful implementation of these measures would require collaboration among LGUs and national agencies. She drew attention to the problem of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, particularly concerning unregistered fishing vessels. During consultations in Pagbilao and Lucena in Quezon, IUU fishing emerged as the primary concern. Dr. Ramos shared her experience in Navotas, where clients only submit reports when compelled to do so. Ms. Catapang proposed the establishment of CFLCs (Community Fish Landing Centers) to ensure precise catch data.

RD Malvas acknowledged the comments and emphasized the importance of CFLCs (Catch and Landing Data Collection) in ensuring the accuracy of catch data. Additionally, RD Malvas mentioned the presence of municipal and regional fish ports under the PFDA (Philippine Fisheries Development Authority) that will provide suitable facilities for the landing of fish by Commercial Fishing Vessels.

Mr. Balaoing pointed out that typically, only the Carrier vessel lands at the Fish Port, even if there are three Taksay (Ringnet) catching vessels involved. In response, RD Malvas stated that regardless of the landing procedure, all three catching vessels are obligated to submit accurate reports. Furthermore, RD Malvas suggested that one of the specific management actions to be recommended is the strict monitoring and collection of proper reports regarding the unloading and fish catch data from CFLCs and the Municipal and Regional Fish ports under PFDA.

During the discussion on the recommended Harvest Control Rule (HCR) for the Science Advisory Group (SAG) and the reduction of fishing efforts, several participants raised their concerns and suggestions.

Ms. Catapang expressed her concern that reducing fishing trips may have a significant impact on fish production and its sustainability. She explained that Commercial Fishing Vessels find it challenging to avoid catching Sardines when targeting other species like *Galunggong* (round scads), even during the specific



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season for round scads. She suggested that strict law enforcement would be an effective solution, stating that if Commercial Fishing Vessels are prohibited from entering Municipal waters, it would lead to sustainable fishing.

Based on his consultation experience regarding the seasonal closure of Batangas and Mindoro, Mr. Beldia advised against highlighting specific species in the HCRs, as multiple species are targeted using various fishing gears, making implementation difficult. He agreed with Ms. Catapang's points about reducing fishing trips during periods of strong winds and waves when Commercial Fishing Vessels are less active, coinciding with peak spawning seasons. He also supported the strict enforcement of laws in Municipal waters to reduce fishing efforts by Commercial Fishing Vessels.

The Chair summarized the discussion, suggesting that instead of focusing on reducing fishing efforts or trips, the emphasis should be on enforcement, specifically the strict implementation of Section 16 and 86 of the Fisheries Code. He explained that effective enforcement would naturally reduce fishing efforts since Commercial Fishing Vessels would be deterred from operating in restricted areas.

Dr. Ramos reiterated the recommendation of conducting a Boat and Gear Inventory (BGI). She explained that after the BGI, regulating fishing trips and efforts would be more feasible. RD Malvas supported the idea of conducting the BGI but emphasized that it should be implemented alongside the strict enforcement of Section 16 and 86 of the Fisheries Code. RD suggested that the BGI should precede discussions on reducing fishing trips and efforts. Once the BGI is completed, the HCR for reducing fishing trips and efforts can be revisited.

Mr. Beldia proposed that after implementing the subsequent recommendations (BGI and strict enforcement of sections 16 and 86), a study should be conducted to examine the correlation between achieving these recommendations and the reduction of fishing efforts.



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Dr. Ramos added that the completion of the Boat and Gear Inventory (BGI) already encompasses the recommended specific management action of reviewing and validating the list and measurement of municipal fishing vessels. She cited that there are more than three gross tonnage operating in municipal waters that is allowed by the LGU.

Regarding the issue of boat admeasurement for municipal fishing boats registered as having a gross tonnage of 3 or above, Mayor Florido expressed the need for legal action to be taken. PCPT Edwin A. Cabalag, the representative of the Philippine National Police – Maritime Group, mentioned that the LGU is responsible for certifying and inspecting municipal fishing boats.

Mayor Florido raised the issue of accountability and the need for an example to be set in the policy. PCPT Cabalag questioned the factors to be considered for allowing commercial fishing vessels (CFVs) within the 10.1km municipal waters and the differences between municipalities allowing CFVs within this range compared to those adhering to the 15km limit.

RD Malvas clarified that the Fisheries Code allows LGUs to decide on allowing small commercial vessels within the 10.1km range, provided they meet certain requirements. PCPT Cabalag expressed concern about potential loopholes and suggested a uniform 15km limit. Mayor pointed out that provisions in the Fisheries Code can be amended if they are being abused, and FMA 12 can recommend amendments to Congress.

PCPT Cabalag raised the issue of superlights and the lack of experts or authorities to certify them, which has resulted in dismissed cases. Wilfredo O. Fajardo Jr. confirmed the absence of applicable personnel for certifying superlights and mentioned efforts to identify authorized experts for certification purposes.



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Mr. Beldia suggested that the Management Board (MB) could consider recommending or providing definitions and appointing expert witnesses to certify cases that qualify as superlights, which could then be adopted by the Local Government Units (LGUs). He pointed out that certain municipalities have already incorporated regulations for superlights, as specified by the Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO), into their local ordinances.

RD Asis said that he believes that there is an ongoing discussion for the amendments of the Fisheries Code. He said that there are various platforms where such discussions are being done. He suggests that the discussion for the amendments be collated then be transmitted to the National Technical Working Group.

RD Malvas acknowledged the need to review a Fisheries Administrative Order to determine the appropriate expert witness for superlights. Mayor Florido provided an example from San Francisco, Quezon, where commercial fishing within the 10.1 to 15 kilometers municipal waters was allowed under the previous mayor but ceased under the current mayor's term. This example highlighted the potential misuse of the provision. RD Malvas directed the Secretariat to forward the discussion on Fisheries Code amendments to the NTWG responsible for such amendments.

Mr. Ras brought up one of the recommendations outlined in the SAG Resolution, which proposed the creation of a multi-agency task force. However, the management board reached a consensus that, given its composition of multiple agencies, there was no requirement for an additional task force. Instead, the board would assume the responsibility of assessing and evaluating the recommendations.

RD Malvas summarized the three specific management measures: conducting an inventory of municipal and commercial fishing vessels, reviewing existing regulations on fine mesh nets, and strictly implementing Section 16 and 86 of the Fisheries Code. Mr. Ras suggested specifying the details of these measures, including



who would conduct the inventory and the specific dates and periods for implementation.

RD Malvas explained that the inventory of municipal fishing boats and gears would be conducted by the LGU, while the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) would handle the Boat and Gear Inventory (BGI) of commercial fishing vessels and gears in coordination with the LGU. Mayor Florido proposed a resolution requesting the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to urge the LGUs to promptly carry out the inventory of boats and vessels at the municipal level. The DILG Representative emphasized the need for clear details in the resolution, and RD Malvas suggested that the resolution should include specific formats and guidelines.

RD Malvas, Mr. Ras, and Mayor Florido discussed the specific management measure of reviewing the Municipal Fishing Ordinances. RD Asis mentioned that the Fisheries and Marine Resources Enforcement Division (FMRED), particularly the Coastal Resource Management (CRM) section / Fisheries Resource Management Section, is responsible for compiling and keeping copies of the municipal fisheries ordinances.

RD Malvas asked for input from the Management Board (MB) regarding the proposed Harvest Control Rule (HCR) to regulate mesh size. Mayor Florido recommended that the MB make a specific recommendation to Congress, urging them to incorporate the size regulation into legislation.

RD Malvas included that the regulation of fine mesh is among the recommendations made for the Technical Working Group (TWG) responsible of reviewing amendments to the Fisheries Code. The Secretariat has been tasked to document the discussions in line with the recommendations put forth by the MB.



Dr. Ramos reiterated the recommended specific management action to intensify enforcement on the regulation of active fishing gears, such as motorized push nets, beach seine, and Danish seine, within municipal waters.

Mr. Florido inquired about the means of intensification, specifically if there would be augmentation from the PNP-Maritime or the Philippine Coast Guard to enhance visibility in Tayabas Bay. He also sought clarification about Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS).

PCPT Cabalag responded that considering the limited strength of the PNP-Maritime Group, it may not be feasible as they only have 140 personnel to cover the entire CALABARZON region. He noted that each municipality has a territorial police unit that functions within their jurisdiction, and LGUs have established Bantay Dagat units.

Mr. Danny Ocampo shared information about the Karagatan Patrol platform, where multiple agencies including the Coast Guard, Maritime, PNP, and Navy have access to updated VIIRS information. He highlighted the importance of VIIRS, which is widely utilized in other countries for monitoring and can even serve as evidence for prosecuting fishing vessels.

Atty. Yray-Frossard mentioned that letters are sent quarterly to the mayors of the top 20 LGUs spotted with the *red lights*, and BFAR regional offices are copy furnished for awareness. The letters serve as reminders about the detections in their respective municipalities.

Regarding the implementation of the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), Ryan O. Doronila shared their ongoing experience in Region 6, where they install VMS for willing Commercial Fishing Vessel Operators. However, there is opposition from a certain group. Mr. Ocampo further explained Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) 266, which mandates compliance with the VMS within one year for Commercial





Fishing Vessels. He mentioned slight delays due to petitions for temporary restraining orders filed by Commercial Fishing Vessel Operators. VMS serves as a monitoring tool for strict enforcement and can be used to detect illegal fishing activities. Additionally, VMS can record fish catches and has a safety feature with a panic button for emergencies.

Manuel O. Banton reported that the installation of VMS for commercial fishing vessels is currently underway and is mandatory based on FAO 266.

RD Malvas underlined the recommendation of amending the Fisheries Code that would impose limitations on the sale of juvenile fish in the market. The Chair instructed the Secretariat to include the provision regarding the restriction of juvenile fish in the market in the list of recommended amendments to the Fisheries Code.

Regarding the specific management action to conduct studies on reproductive biology, spatio-temporal distribution of plankton, chlorophyll concentration, and larval distribution to determine the spawning season and grounds of *S. lemuru* in Tayabas Bay, RD Malvas asked if the presented information was sufficient for the MB to recommend a seasonal closure. Dr. Ramos confirmed that the presented data was adequate, and it was up to the MB to decide if it constituted strong evidence.

Mr. Beldia suggested adopting the results of the National Stock Assessment Program (NSAP) studies as a basis for the seasonal closure, as there would not be significant changes in the spawning periods and grounds. He also cited the maturity stage (Stage 4) of *S. lemuru* from November to February.

The meeting continued with discussions about implementing a seasonal closure for the top gears targeting *Sardinella lemuru*.

In summary below are the adopted HCRs, HCMs and Specific Management Actions

Harvest Control Rules	Harvest Control Measures	Specific Management Actions
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Implement maximum catch limit	Catch Limit, gear type and size restriction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A resolution requesting the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) to urge the Local Government Units (LGUs) for the immediate conduct of inventory in municipal level (3 GT and below) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) for commercial level (3.1 GT and above).</li> <li>○ Strict implementation of Section 86 “Unauthorized Fishing” and Section 16 “Jurisdiction of Municipal/City Governments” of RA 10654</li> <li>○ Require the commercial fishing operators to submit catch reports for monitoring;</li> <li>○ Review and validate the list and admeasurement of municipal fishing vessels in compliance with Executive Order 305 “Devolving to Municipal and City Governments the Registration of Fishing Vessels Three (3) Gross Tonnage and below”;</li> <li>○ Review of the existing regulation of fine mesh nets;</li> <li>○ Conduct catch documentation and value chain analysis;</li> </ul>
	Strengthen law enforcement efforts and strict monitoring of existing fishery laws and regulations within Tayabas Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensify enforcement on the regulation of active fishing gears in line with the provision Section 95 “Use of Active Gear in Municipal Waters, Bays, and other Fishery Management Areas” of RA 10654 and Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 201 “Ban of Fishing with Active Gear”;</li> <li>• Strict implementation of appropriate mesh size in line with Section 93 “Use of Fine Mesh Net” of RA 10654 and FAO 155-1; “Amending Section 2 of FAO No. 155, regulating the use of fine meshed nets in fishing”.</li> </ul>
Implement spatio-temporal fishing limits	Spatio-temporal restriction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment and implementation of the seasonal closure for all commercial fishing gears for the months of November 1 to January 1 of each year;</li> <li>• Banning of the use beach seine in municipal water from January 1 to March 1 of each year;</li> </ul>

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523 RD Malvas inquired about the possibility of recommending the continuation of  
524 the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Technical Working Group



(TWG), highlighting their ongoing responsibilities related to the implementation of the EAFM Framework Plan. Mr. Beldia agreed with the Chair's proposal.

RD Malvas instructed the Secretariat to prepare the terms of reference outlining the duties and responsibilities of the FMA 12, with the intention of elevating the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Technical Working Group (TWG) to the specific FMA 12 TWG.

Ms. Catapang sought clarification regarding the implementation of Seasonal Closure and provided an example from Balayan Bay, where livelihood assistance was provided. The Regional Director (RD) explained the process as follows: The Management Board (MB) has already adopted Seasonal Closure as a specific management action. This decision will go through the usual procedure of being adopted as a Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO). A draft FAO will be prepared and submitted to the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC), where it will undergo a series of consultations. The same process will be followed for the development of the seasonal closure plan in Tayabas Bay. The Technical Working Group (TWG) is responsible for drafting the FAO, which will then undergo consultation, be submitted to the NFARMC for adoption, and once approved, it will become an FAO that the Local Government Units (LGUs) in Tayabas Bay will be required to comply with. Addressing Ms. Catapang's concerns, RD Malvas stressed the significance of incorporating livelihood assistance measures for individuals impacted by the FAO.

Mayor Florido inquired about the specific livelihood assistance provided in Balayan Bay. The IFARMC Representative for Balayan Bay responded that there was a 21-day closed season initiated by nine municipal mayors within Balayan Bay. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) provided assistance during the first closure, while commercial fishing operators provided assistance during the second closure. RD Malvas shared about the incorporation of livelihood assistance program this year, citing examples from Davao, Zamboanga, Palawan, and the



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Visayan Sea. There is a budget allocation for livelihood interventions in areas with seasonal fishing closures each year.

The management board deliberated on the earlier conversation about the implementation schedule that was presented. Mayor Florido proposed the adoption of the implementation schedule presented by the Technical Working Group (TWG), which includes the incorporation of baseline monitoring. Dr. Tirol seconded the motion.

Dr. Tirol informed the board about the upcoming 17th National Marine Science Symposium, which will be organized by the Philippine Association of Marine Science (PAMS). She highlighted that the symposium includes a special session on Oil Spills. Dr. Tirol shared this information with the board to bring their attention to the event and its potential relevance. She suggested that the management board consider attending the symposium and proposed that the secretariat reach out to the PAMS President, who is also a member of the Science Advisory Group, for further details. The symposium is scheduled to take place at Batangas State University, and there is a registration fee of 3,000 pesos. RD acknowledged Dr. Tirol's suggestion and recommended that interested board members coordinate with their respective offices regarding the payment of registration fees. RD also endorsed the invitation from PAMS to the board members, emphasizing the potential value of their participation in the symposium.

Following the meeting's prior request, Mr. Amican proceeded to present the draft resolution prepared by Oceana. The resolution emphasized the urgency for National Government Agencies (NGAs) to promptly undertake transparent and science-based measures in response to the oil spill incident involving the MT Princess Empress on February 28, 2023. The resolution also called for an investigation into the incident and emphasized the need for holding the responsible oil tanker and oil company accountable. Furthermore, it stressed the urgency of providing immediate assistance to the affected communities.



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The board agreed to hold a special meeting on April 23, 2023, to comprehensively address the issue. Additionally, the board expressed the intention to learn from the experiences and lessons of Region 6, which had previously dealt with the Guimaras oil spill in 2010. The board suggested revisions to the draft resolution, which were incorporated. Mayor Florido then proposed the adoption of the resolution, and RD Asis seconded the motion. Further refinements were made to specify details regarding the Special MB meeting and plans for mitigating the impacts of the oil spill incident. Finally, Mayor Florido moved for the adjournment of the meeting, and Ms. Catapang seconded the motion.

Prepared by:

Certified True and Correct:

**JESREEL M. NARIDO**  
Member-Secretariat, FMA 12  
Aquacultural Tech. I, BFAR 4A

**EDMUNDO M. AMICAN, III**  
Member-Secretariat, FMA 12  
FMA Coordinator

Reviewed/Attested by:

Approved by:

**ALLAN U. CASTILLO**  
FMA Focal, Head Secretariat  
OIC, FMRED

**SAMMY A. MALVAS**  
Chairperson, FMA 12 MB  
Regional Director, BFAR 4A