

## Minutes for the 2023 Winter Island Caucus Meeting, 27 January 2023

**1. Ian Sears kicked off the introduction of the Island Caucus Meeting at 8:40 am. He identified isolation as a key characteristic of the islands and of Alaska Islands.**

2. Caucus members in attendance were:

American Samoa (Elinor Lutu-McMoore +2); CNMI (Joey Dela Cruz, Chip Guard), Guam (Denille Calvo, Chip Guard); Hawaii (Leah Boisvert, Ray Tanabe, Eric Lau, Chip McCreery, Kwok Fai Cheung); Puerto Rico (Wildaomaris Gonzalez-Ruiz, Victor Huerfano, Christa von Hillebrandt-Andrade); Virgin Islands (Regina Browne, Roy Watlington); Alaska (James, Dave.)

Several other members of the MES, MMS, WCS, and invited agencies also attended the meeting.

**3. Ian turned the meeting over to Wildaomaris Gonzalez-Ruiz, Island Caucus Co-Chair, who provided an overview of the meeting. Island Caucus members voted on the new Co-Chair early so she could help run the meeting. Ian Sears informed he had received the nomination of Elinor Lutu-McMoore of American Samoa it was seconded by Chip Guard. With a hand-raised vote, she was unanimously elected.**

4. Wilda then initiated a review of the old business. She recalled that a Workshop was needed to address the National Plan to Investigate Post-Tsunami Events and that there needed to be a better way to get feedback from the islands. She also noted the Tsunami Ready discussion which was to be discussed later in the meeting.

**5. Most of the Caucus discussion revolved around three main topics: Sirens, TsunamiReady, and warning communication and dissemination issues involved with both.**

**a. Siren issues were mainly divided into two areas: keeping the siren systems operational due to shipping, maintenance and repair delays, and communicating siren-related information to the public.** There were many extended delays in getting supplies in for new sirens as well as repairs. In American Samoa (AS), the siren system was down for almost 2 years, and occasionally, the sirens would activate themselves. For real events, AS Emergency Managers turned to sending police out to ring bells (bells were often old hanging scuba tanks). Ian indicated he was heavily involved with the challenges of getting parts to islands. He will provide a link to information on sirens. Joey of the CNMI identified shipping difficulties as playing a role in their inability to acquire a fixed siren system as well as the need for education based on natural warning signs. Elinor of AS also reminded the meeting attendees that sirens were not good for local tsunami warning. Puerto Rico representatives further reminded of the importance of recognizing natural warning signs and their importance for local source tsunamis, and the need for redundancy of warning for tsunamis. The Guam MES member indicated that both fixed and mobile sirens have general wear and tear, and preventive maintenance is essential. Alaska identified the need to communicate post-siren activation to the public.

Puerto Rico also mentioned that for exercising EAS/siren activation, people need to be told ahead of time what is going to happen. Continuity and standardization are important; use same

siren tones for exercises and real events, and always confirm exercises. Guam indicated that its Joint Information Center communicates well, providing frequent updates and announcements of siren activation tests. Puerto Rico asked PTWC if it could recommend siren activation as part of its messaging for warnings. The PTWC Director indicated that they don't do that except in Hawaii for local earthquakes where they have the authority to activate sirens.

**Alaska strongly recommended that we should have some general guidance on siren activation. The NTHMP Administrator suggested that we catalogue how each location activates sirens, see if there is some general guidance that can come out of the information, and then share strategies.**

**b. The TsunamiReady Program discussions looked at Program status, challenges, and achievements. Many locations are recovering from the challenges of COVID.** [Note: Rather than identify individual people, I will indicate the inputs by jurisdiction.]

The CNMI expressed the need to create a tsunami culture in order to better educate the public. CNMI conducted a massive tsunami school drill involving 12 schools in the tsunami zone with a total of 2000 students. Guam reiterated the importance of “closing the loop” by providing feedback to the community that will get it involved and strengthen the tsunami culture. **There was general agreement to conduct After Action Reports after exercises, make recommended improvements, and inform the community of results. In general, community and media feedback were lacking in many cases.** It was also deemed important to develop an Emergency Plan for the family and discuss/exercise it.

Guam and the CNMI work closely to share best practices and to minimize confusion among the two island territories during tsunami events. The Virgin Islands expressed the importance of updating outdated materials, and noted that interaction with the media is important, but that they have not taken full advantage of social and traditional media.

Guam indicated that parts of the TsunamiReady program have deteriorated with time, and thus, more imagination is needed to inspire partner interest. The program used to have recognition ceremonies with food--serving food at such events is a cultural expectation. The fact that NTHMP funding cant be used is a problem.

Alaska indicated that it is difficult to implement building codes in many areas, and this, in some cases, limits Grant assistance. Things don't work in the islands/AK as they do in many states.

**PTWC encouraged the group to pick AS's brain since the territory has a very active seismic zone. There have been 3 events in the past year.**

Hawaii stressed that they need to focus on most vulnerable populations, and that that is a big challenge.

**The new co-chair recommended that the Caucus hold periodic virtual meetings to develop and address action items. It was decided to have quarterly meetings.**

**Wilda adjourned the meeting at around 1015 am.**

**Minutes compiled by Chip Guard**

## **Summary for the Coordinating Committee Meeting on 27 January 2023**

**Ian Sears kicked off the introduction of the Island Caucus Meeting at 8:40 am. He identified isolation as a key characteristic of the islands and of Alaska. Wilda Gonzales-Ruiz, Co-Chair, provided an overview of the meeting Agenda. Island Caucus members voted on the new Co-Chair. Elinor Lutu-McMoore of American Samoa was unanimously elected.**

**Most of the Caucus discussion revolved around three main topics: Sirens, TsunamiReady, and warning communication and dissemination issues involved with both.**

**Siren issues were mainly divided into two areas: keeping the siren programs running due to shipping and maintenance delays, and communicating siren-related information to the media and public.**

**Alaska strongly recommended that we should have some general guidance on siren activation. The NTHMP Administrator suggested that we catalogue how each location activates sirens, see if there is some general guidance that can come out of the information, and then share strategies.**

**The TsunamiReady Program discussions looked at Program status, challenges, and achievements. Many locations are recovering from the challenges of COVID.**

**There was general agreement to conduct After Action Reports after exercises, make recommended improvements, and inform the media and community of results. In general, community and media feedback could be improved in many cases.**

**PTWC encouraged the group to pick American Samoa's brain since the territory has a very active seismic zone. There have been 3 events in the past year.**

**The new co-chair recommended that the Caucus hold quarterly virtual meetings to develop and address action items.**

**Wilda adjourned the meeting at around 1015 am.**

