

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

CITIZEN CENTRIC REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2025



ABOUT DFW

The Division of Fish & Wildlife was established in 1981 through CNMI Public Law 02-51 and later amended in 1997 through Public Law 10-57.

The DFW team includes dedicated technical and professional staff who work together on various projects to improve habitats, promote sustainable resource use, safeguard vulnerable species, and encourage public stewardship of the Commonwealth's unique natural heritage.

OUR MISSION & VISION

Our mission is protect, and improve the fish, game, and wildlife resources of the Commonwealth. We strive to achieve this with comprehensive and combined efforts through scientific research, monitoring, regulation, enforcement, planning, and management initiatives, all aimed at ensuring the sustainability and continuity of both marine and terrestrial wildlife resources.



DFW Sections & Programs

- Wildlife Conservation Research and Management Program
- Geographic Information Systems & Spatial Data Management
- Brown Tree Snake Program
- Conservation Enforcement
- Recreation Boating Access Program
- Aquatic Education & Outreach Program
- Fisheries Data Collection Program
 - Inshore Creel program
- Fisheries Research and Development Section
 - Program Management & Technical Guidance Support
 - Movement and Connectivity of Reef Fish Species program
 - Fishery Independent Surveys & Habitat Assessment Program
 - Fish Aggregating Device Program (FAD)
 - Fish Life History Analysis Program
- Endangered Species Program
 - Endangered Plants Program (Rota)
 - Mariana Crow Conservation Research (Rota)
 - Sea Turtle Conservation Program

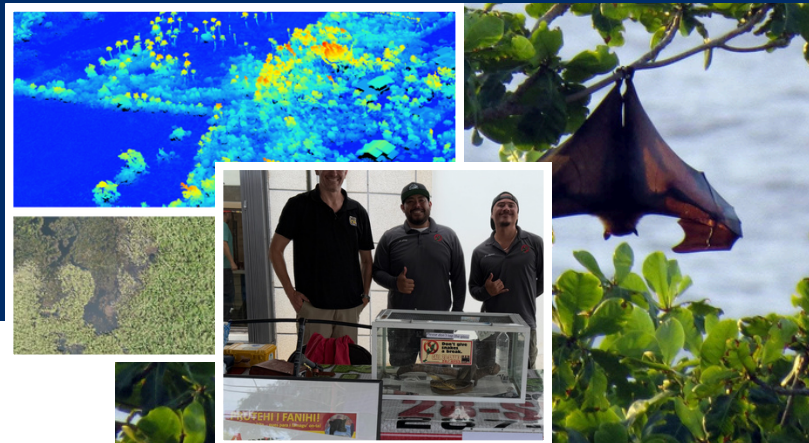


FY25 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Wildlife, GIS / Spatial Data Management, & Brown Tree Snake Program

The Wildlife Section actively participated in 14 outreach events, conferences, and workshops, and successfully completed over 475 site surveys, along with 444 technical guidance assessments as part of the Technical Guidance and Disaster Risk Management Project. The GIS Section developed forest canopy and structure metrics for Saipan, Tinian, and Rota using LiDAR data collected in 2019 to improve habitat and wildlife assessments. Additionally, the Section's Conservation Planner finalized the 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan. The Brown Tree Snake (BTS) Program conducted 2,827 inspections across seaport, airport, and warehouse facilities to ensure the CNMI remains snake-free. Saipan-based canine handlers continued to support operations on Tinian.



Endangered Species Program & Enforcement

Management and enforcement efforts continue to safeguard endangered species throughout the CNMI. The Sea Turtle Program carried out daily beach monitoring, outreach, and rehabilitation activities, totaling 120 surveys, 17 outreach events, and 13 responses to strandings with the support of the Enforcement section. On Rota, the Endangered Plants Program monitored and propagated six federally listed species, with roughly 450 planted individuals surviving in the wild. The Mariana Crow Program, in collaboration with the University of Washington, monitored both wild and captive-reared crows, estimating a total population of around 200 individuals.

Aquatic Education Program

The program managed to connect with a broad range of people by offering interactive learning experiences, accessible fishing activities, and educational outreach about aquatic conservation. A key milestone was the signing of the Proclamation and the launch of Senate Resolution No. 24-02, which marked the beginning of the first Fishers Recognition Week from June 1-7. This week honored both past and current fishers of the CNMI and promoted the enjoyment of recreational fishing. The event also sparked new partnerships, resulting in initiatives like the Metaw Initiative, Spearfishing Dive and Rescue Training, and a Kids' Shoreline Fishing Derby.



Fisheries & Boating Access

Five team members completed a grants management workshop through USFWS OCI. Additionally, the section enhanced its staffing capacity through the recruitment of three skilled professionals—a Fishery Biologist, a Coral Reef Ecologist, and a Technical Guidance Coordinator, who provided support on approximately 40 permit reviews, 10 development projects, 5 military-related projects, and participated in 20 organizational meetings. Staff conducted maintenance service on active FAD systems around Saipan and Tinian and installed new FAD systems as well. The Life History Program focused on in-house lab processing, analyzing over 500 fish samples (otoliths and gonads) of 10 target species for age and reproductive development. Further activity includes toxicity assessments of over 200 fish samples. The Data section conducted 108 creel surveys and supported 7 fishing events, resulting in 229 fisher interviews and the identification and measurement of 1,001 fish. The Smiling Cove Marina maintained its core operations and routine maintenance like dock upkeep, facility management.

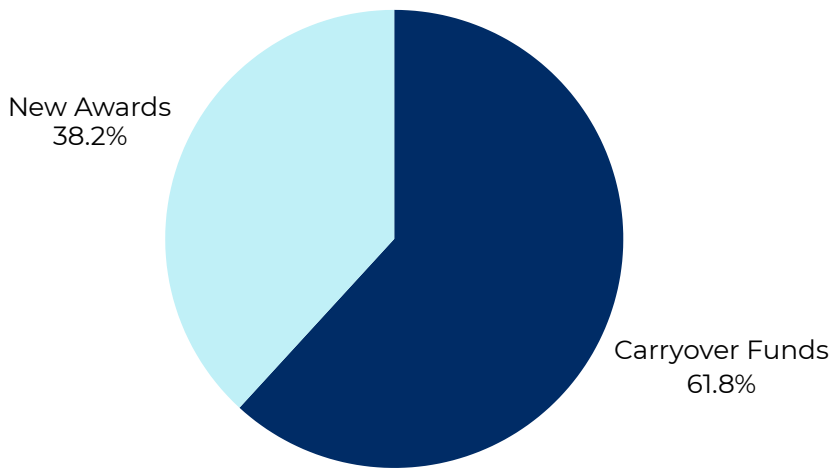
DFW FINANCIAL ANALYSIS



DFW managed 56 federal awards, 1 special account (9053A), and 1 revolving account. In FY25, DFW was awarded \$5,677,169.49 in new monies and managed \$9,188,323.74 in carryover funds for multi-year research projects. The DFW expended an estimate of \$8,997,969.14 in FY25, leaving the balance of unused funds for ongoing projects. While the largest federal awarding agency was the Office of Conservation Investment (OCI), DFW also received funds from USFWS Section 6, OIA, NOAA, and DOD.



FY25 FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES



Office of
CONSERVATION INVESTMENT

Partnering to fund conservation and connect people with nature



Program operations are mainly supported through federal and local funds, with additional revenue collected from other services provided such as:

- Scientific Research Permits
- Biological Importation/Exportation Permits
- Fishing Permits
- Collection Permits
- Hunting Licenses
- Smiling Cove Marina Vessel Operations
- Special Event Permits



MOVING FORWARD



Wildlife, GIS, & Brown Tree Snake Program

The Wildlife section will resume the study and management of terrestrial wildlife and wildlife habitats within the CNMI with support from GIS and through the use of drone/unmanned aerial systems (UAS) with thermal imaging cameras to assist in monitoring wildlife populations and collecting habitat information. The Brown Tree Snake Program plans to secure a permanent canine handler for Tinian to keep carrying out inspections throughout all ports and additional access points and engage in more educational outreach events and sustain effective training operations.



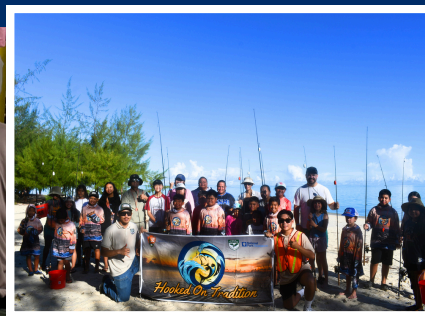
Endangered Species Program & Enforcement

The Sea Turtle Program will continue monitoring, outreach, and rehabilitation efforts with help from the Enforcement section in response to stranding incidents. The Endangered Plants program will focus on further propagating and out planting federally listed plant species. The Mariana Crow Program will continue rearing, studying, and monitoring the endangered Åga on Rota. The Enforcement Section will continue to conduct regular patrols and surveillance to monitor compliance within marine sanctuaries, fishing areas, and other protected zones. It will also maintain efforts to prevent illegal harvesting activities and enforce environmental laws in collaboration with partner agencies.



Aquatic Education Program

The Aquatic Education and Outreach Program strives to further enhance the understanding and appreciation of aquatic ecosystems, promote responsible fishing practices, and encourage engagement in fishing and conservation efforts across all age groups through more community outreach events, fishing clinics, and to establish a steering committee to carry out the Fishers Recognition Week event once again.



Fisheries & Boating Access

The fisheries section will continue capacity building for team members, technical guidance support for key projects, and research efforts through data collection, sampling, toxicity assessments, FAD maintenance and in shore creel surveys. The Smiling Cove Marina Dredging Feasibility Study will advance efforts to identify sustainable solutions for maintaining navigational depths and improving vessel access. Ongoing projects include the Sand Spit Project to remove sand and sediment buildup at the marina entrance to enhance navigation and water flow as well as the Tinian Marina Dock Replacement Project, and maintenance and repair of the Rota West Harbor Marina.

