



## OFFICE OF SENATOR SABINA FLORES PEREZ

Chairperson

Committee on Environment, Revenue and Taxation, and Procurement

*I MINA'TRENTAI SINGKO NA LIHESLATURAN GUÁHAN*

35<sup>TH</sup> GUAM LEGISLATURE

### PRESS RELEASE

#### **Senator Perez Introduces Bill to Combat Fisheries Collapse by Banning Scuba Fishing**

*Guam, February 26, 2019* – Senator Sabina Perez introduced Bill 53-35 to protect Guam’s reefs and vulnerable fisheries by ending SCUBA fishing in Guam’s waters. The bill is co-sponsored by Senator Ridgell and Speaker Muña Barnes.

Studies show that SCUBA fishing allows for the targeting of reef fish at greater depths, and at greater efficiency, than traditional fishing methods. This relentless practice prevents struggling fish stocks from regenerating, which are essential to the health of coral reef ecosystems. In extreme cases, SCUBA fishing can contribute to fisheries collapse.

In a recent study of 832 coral reefs in 64 localities, two stood out for having fish biomass low enough to constitute fisheries collapse: Papua New Guinea and Guam. “We must act now if we hope to save our fisheries from collapse, which would have negative repercussions to our coral reefs,” said Senator Perez.

Two species, once prevalent in Guam’s waters, are particularly vulnerable to SCUBA fishing: *Atuhong* (Humphead Parrotfish) and *Tanguisson* (Humphead Wrasse). Both require the ability to grow large in deep waters before returning and repopulating reefs. However, with the advent of SCUBA fishing, the largest of these fish are now being targeted in deep waters with startling efficiency. Data compiled by Guam Department of Agriculture shows that all recorded catches of *Atuhong* and eighty-five percent of recorded *Tanguisson* catch were caught by SCUBA fishing.

The ban proposed by Bill 53-35 has been adopted in 63 nations/jurisdictions, including the CNMI and most Pacific island nations, and seeks to end the damaging practice of SCUBA fishing in Guam in an effort to protect reducing fish stocks.

Local groups support the SCUBA fishing ban, which spans fishermen to our youth. “Many fishermen are seeing first-hand the impacts SCUBA fishing are having on their catch. These responsible fishermen are frustrated that our laws fail to regulate a damaging, unsustainable practice that threatens their livelihoods,” said Senator Perez.

George Washington’s Marine Mania officer, Gabriel Jereza, stated “our club, Marine Mania, is excited that this bill is being introduced. One of our visions is to promote the awareness and well-being of Guam’s environmental health, specifically relating to our ocean.” “We, Marine Mania are more than glad to be a part of this big step towards protecting Guam’s finite resources.”



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“We must act now to save our vital marine resource and restore the environmental stewardship that has sustained us for generations,” added Senator Perez.

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