

Sanctuary Advisory Council UPDATE: January - August 2015

CULTURAL HERITAGE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



In **February** 2015, the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa (sanctuary) launched American Samoa "Get into Your Sanctuary (GIYS)" campaign that will run through October 2015. The campaign highlights communities, partnerships and the special places of the sanctuary. Additionally, the campaign includes community and outreach events as well as eco-tours led by sanctuary community members.

GIYS LAUNCH: Over 200 government leaders, community members, local residents, and students filled the Ocean Center for the February **launch** of the "Get into Your Sanctuary" Campaign where 200 students from 13 different schools pledged "Ta'iāla mo le Sami" (Ocean Action Initiatives) to further efforts to conserve natural and cultural resources for a better tomorrow for American Samoa. Richard Vevers, Executive Director of **Catlin Seaview Survey**, presented on the recent global coral bleaching event that impacted the Territory's reefs. He also compared bleaching imagery from February with pre-bleaching 360 degree imagery captured during a visit in December 2014.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 3rd @ 9am

Ocean Center - Google Street and Catlin Seaview Survey Launch

September 4th @ 9am

Ocean Center - Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting

September 19th @ 9am - 12pm

Malaloa Dock – SSV Robert C. Seamans Open House



GIYS SITE EVENTS: In **March** the **Fagatele Bay** event drew more than 200 visitors that explored the wonders of this ocean treasure and its unique surroundings. Tours included information on sanctuary programs, birds, vegetation, an umu/weaving/traditional food tasting and hike down to the bay. 200 people participated in the **Aunu'u** "GIYS" event in **April**. The day included programs headed by village council members. This was followed by guided tours by village sanctuary team members. At the end of the tours, visitors were treated to a tasting of Aunu'u taro. In **May** the sanctuary education and policy teams traveled to **Ta'u** to talk with community members about sanctuary management areas, programs and the "GIYS" campaign. The team presented on/answered questions regarding allowable and prohibited activities. Over 200 students and faculty were reached at 8 presentations at Fitiuta and Faleasao Elementary and Manu'a High Schools. In **June** 2015, sanctuary staff held an event at Veterans' Memorial Stadium on Tutuila (relocated last minute due to weather). The event, part of a **National GIYS Day**, joined the Fa'a Samoa Initiative led by Troy Polamalu, retired NFL player for the Pittsburgh Steelers. More than 1,000 participants were reached by the sanctuary through traditional *fa'ausi* preparation, coconut husking, dive equipment demos and a photo booth where youth could dress up and use props (a big hit with students). Following the event Mr. Polamalu visited the Ocean Center to learn more about the sanctuary.

"The (GIYS) campaign highlights communities, partnerships and the special places of the sanctuary."

CONT...CULTURAL HERITAGE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

YOUTH PROGRAMS: **June** and **July** were dedicated to sanctuary Ocean Science/Ocean Swimming (OSOS) and Ocean Star summer youth programs. 65 middle and high school students became more aware the ocean ecosystem, the importance of its health and of the human impacts from land that affect ocean and natural resources. The swimming safety portion of the program also proved to be a huge success. After several in-water sessions, students showed noticeable improvements in their comfort level in the water and their knowledge of water safety. Hands on activities and discussion groups allowed students to get to know and work well with one another. The program also worked on cultivating student interest in marine science through hands-on activities, field-excursions and visits from professionals working in the marine fields. At the closing of the OSOS program students presented their **'Now What'** projects at the 2015 **Youth Ocean Summit** in July. Most group projects were live performances with music and creative imagery that focused on pollution and marine debris. The younger Ocean Start students participated in a fashion show with all fashion being made from trash and recyclable materials.

NEW OUTREACH MATERIAL AVAILABLE

Fact Sheet: "Sanctuary Management Areas – Allowable and Prohibited Activities."

The sanctuary worked with ONMS headquarters to clarify sanctuary-wide & management area-specific regulations. This is part of an effort to increase sanctuary community awareness of allowable and prohibited activities and facilitate voluntary compliance. The goal is to produce easy to understand outreach materials to clarify allowable fishing methods for the sanctuary management areas.



MARINE CONSERVATION SCIENCE & MONITORING

ASRAMP Cruise Targets New Sanctuary Management Areas: During February and March 2015, scientists from NOAA's Coral Reef Ecosystem Division (CRED) conducted surveys throughout the territory of American Samoa as part of the ASRAMP. This cruise marked a new partnership between CRED and the sanctuary to conduct intensive monitoring in sanctuary management areas that will provide needed information on fish and coral populations, reef health, oceanographic properties and climate change indicators. Survey efforts were targeted at **Fagatele Bay, Fagalua/Fogama'a, Aunu'u, Ta'u, Muliāva (Rose Atoll)** and Swains Island management areas. Data collected on this cruise will be compared with previous ASRAMP cruises (since 2002) and with other jurisdictions throughout the Pacific, providing important comparisons for managers. Sampling will be repeated every three years.

Rose Atoll Marine National Monument and American Samoa Ecosystem and Fisheries Research Workshop 2015: In May, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) held a two day workshop in American Samoa. The workshop was planned by NOAA Fisheries: Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) and Pacific Island Regional Office (PIRO) in consultation with a planning committee of local scientists and resource managers from various agencies in American Samoa. Participants included the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR), United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, American Samoa Community College, Office of Samoan Affairs, American Samoa Alia Association and other respected leaders of the fishing community of American Samoa. The Rose Atoll Marine National Monument was a focus of many of the discussions. Recommendations will be used to then develop a 2017-2022 fisheries research plan for Rose Atoll Marine National Monument and American Samoa.

CONT...MARINE CONSERVATION SCIENCE & MONITORING

Catlin Seaview Survey & Google Street

View: In the past 30 years, 40% of all corals on earth have been lost. The Catlin Seaview Survey "is a unique global study, working with...the world's leading scientific institutions, dedicated to monitoring this change ...communicating it to the world." Catlin has captured 360 degree underwater imagery around Tutuila, Aunu'u, Manu'a and Rose Atoll. Google Street View imagery was captured on land in the areas surrounding the sanctuary. Collectively, [American Samoa now has one of the largest visual imagery data sets in the world](#). This imagery provides an important baseline that can be compared over time. The official launch is Sept. 3rd.



*A flattened panorama of the SVII-S camera on expedition in the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa.
Photo Credit: Catlin Seaview Survey*



2015 COTS Program Summary: In March - April, 2 weeks of crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) eradication efforts took place in American Samoa. The program, a follow-up to previous effort in 2014, was again headed by the sanctuary team. The need for longer and deeper dives than can be conducted on SCUBA, called for specialized rebreather divers from the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and the NOAA Dive Center. Additionally, an experienced vessel operator was recruited from Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. This outbreak poses a threat to the corals surrounding American Samoa. During the project, 5 divers surveyed 18 sites, covered 8.6 miles of coral, spent 186 hours underwater, and killed close to 200 COTS. This collaboration of ONMS, NOAA Dive Center, CRAG and DMWR partners is a shining example of how offices are able to share skills and resources to accomplish a common mission.

Sanctuary Team Participates in QUEST: College students interested in underwater biological surveying had an opportunity to develop skills at the course Quantitative Underwater Ecological Survey Techniques (QUEST). The program is annually offered by the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant Program in collaboration with ASCC's Marine Science Program. The sanctuary team helped out with this year's program by providing real-life examples of how these skills are used and through providing safety support while doing in-water research skills. The sanctuary has previously shown great interest in, and support to, QUEST graduates through paid internships and scholarships to encourage marine science studies.

Texas National Marine Sanctuary - Lionfish Removals: The National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa Research Coordinator joined the dive team of Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary on a research cruise to remove invasive lionfish in the sanctuary. Teams conducted surveys of lionfish and removed lionfish at east and west Flower Garden Banks and at Stetson Bank. Sharing divers increases capacity for research and natural resource protection efforts within sanctuaries.

R/V Manumā & Marine Operations: 1. The sanctuary team successfully completed vessel operations and maintenance training with the new operator/mechanic. 2. The National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa's Marine Operations Coordinator participated in the 2015 NOAA Small Boat Summit in La Jolla, CA in February. Conversations and break-out group-work focused on how to build a more resilient small boat community, future initiatives and what to measure when determining success within the small boat community.

OCEAN LITERACY

Voyaging Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Teacher Workshops: The sanctuary team attended 3 STEM workshops organized by the Office of Curriculum, Instructions and Accountability (OCIA); Department of Education and Coral Reef Advisory Group. The goal for the series of workshops was to provide classroom educators with the tools, training and opportunities needed for them to be successful in STEM education. Over 40 participants discussed topics such as threats to reefs, ethno-math and ethno-science. The workshops encouraged integration in math and science curriculum through aspects of daily life and the Samoan culture.

Care for Your Sanctuary Student Exchange Program: In March and April 2015, more than 60 students from A.P. Lutali Elementary from the Island of **Aunu'u** and Leone Midkiff Elementary School took part in a student exchange program to discover and explore sanctuaries in their communities. Additionally, students from A.P. Lutali Elementary joined Leone Midkiff Elementary on an educational tour to **Fagatele Bay**. The sanctuary team discussed national marine sanctuaries and promoting ocean conservation. The students also participated in activities such as beach clean-ups.

The Sanctuary Team Participates in Career Day: The sanctuary team participated in the Faga'itua High School annual career day and talked with students about job opportunities within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Nearly 100 students learned about careers in NOAA and asked questions about future opportunities in marine science.

PARTNERSHIPS & INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

American Samoa Chamber of Commerce: 1. The sanctuary team hosted a general meeting of the American Samoa Chamber of Commerce. Sanctuary Deputy Superintendent presented on the [GIYS campaign and eco-placed business opportunities](#) with development in sanctuary communities. The Deputy described several recent community events and tours where hundreds of visitors traveled to sanctuary management areas at **Fagatele Bay** and **Aunu'u**. Additional business opportunities in development were discussed and an invitation for Chamber members to share their experiences. 2. Sanctuary Research Coordinator presented to the Chamber on [COTS outbreaks and eradication efforts](#). This was followed by a presentation on the [climate change and coral bleaching event](#) that is currently being monitored. Both topics connect to the local economy through income generating opportunities or threats to coral reefs that threaten the livelihoods of business owners and the people of American Samoa. Indonesian Ambassador HE Budi Bowoleksono provided remarks on the establishment of the Indonesian/American Samoa relationship.



Partnerships with Tour Operators: The sanctuary team met with representatives from Pago Pago Tradewinds Tours (PPTT) to discuss 2015 tourism-related initiatives. Discussions included expanding existing tours to develop “visitor-to-the-village” tours in the sanctuary communities around **Fagatele Bay** and the Island of **Aunu'u**. Currently, PPTT operates tours for visiting cruise ships that bring hundreds of visitors through the Ocean Center.

Strategic Planning for the Coral Reef Advisory Group: The sanctuary is an active participant in the territorial Coral Reef Advisory Group (CRAG), a coalition of agencies that manage reefs. CRAG underwent an extensive evaluation and strategic planning process that involved all groups coming together to discuss strengths and weaknesses, rewrite the mission and vision statements and gather ideas for a strategic operating plan. The meeting took place over a four day period and was hosted by the sanctuary at the Ocean Center.

Inter-Government Committee (IGC) Meeting: The IGC met in May in conjunction with the American Samoa Ecosystem and Fisheries Research Workshop. Present were representatives from the NOAA Pacific Island Regional Office (PIRO), National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), AS-Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources and AS-Department of Commerce. The IGC welcomed Brian Peck of USFWS back to American Samoa in his new capacity as the Rose Atoll National Wildlife Refuge Manager.

CONT...PARTNERSHIPS & INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

28th Pacific Islands Environment Conference: Sanctuary team members participated in this bi-annual event in June. At the event, Pacific Islands Government agencies and NGOs deliberated on environmental issues and examined how island approaches and strategies can assist participating jurisdictions within the three themed areas: ocean health, climate change and renewable energy sources. The sanctuary Policy Specialist presented the sanctuary's strategy for engaging partners and the community in research, outreach and conservation efforts. The sanctuary team offered a booth displaying flyers of the management areas as well as promotional materials for the 2015 GIYS events. PIEC off-island participants took a guided tour of the Ocean Center. The conference provided an opportunity to learn how the rest of the Pacific community addresses environmental issues with Island solutions.



The Goal being to “Encourage Professional Development, Improve Mission Efficiency and Meet Organizational Needs.”

Building CPR/First Aid/AED Capacity Among Our Partners:

In March, the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) put out a call for funding opportunities to support the following: 1) Encourage NOAA Corps Officer's Professional Development 2) Improve Mission Efficiency and 3) Meet Organizational Needs. The sanctuary was awarded funding to send their NOAA Corps Officer for training to become an American Red Cross (ARC) First Aid/AED/CPR Instructor. This was an urgent need for many organizations - CPR/First Aid/AED courses provide the Territory the ability to maintain this required certification, build local capacity and time to find a more sustainable solution for this training in the future. **Over 70 people have been certified** through this program including: **American Samoa Marine Patrol, AS Fire Department, local vessel operators, the Aunu'u Alia Captains and Eco-Tour Guides, ARC volunteers and school teachers.**

In-Reach with National Park Service of American Samoa:

The sanctuary hosted the National Park Service of American Samoa (NPAS) for an in-reach at the ocean center. The purpose of the meeting was to: 1) introduce the newly arrived NPAS Superintendent, Scott Burch, to the sanctuary team; 2) catch up on the programs currently being conducted at each agency and 3) discuss additional ways to collaborate to achieve common goals.

Meeting on Territory Dive Operations: The sanctuary hosted partners including marine and dive-related organizations and agencies to an open discussion on underwater operations and the collective capacity to handle dive emergencies.

Topics of discussion included: incidents that have taken place in the past two years and lessons learned; resources/training needs of agencies and divers; how to increase capacity to handle dive-related emergencies; and identifying resources currently available in the territory. This is the beginning of what the sanctuary hopes to be a long-standing safety focused, pro-active group on island. The future will bring a tour and demonstration of a private dive chamber newly available on island and an on-water dive drill in early 2016.



CONT...PARTNERSHIPS & INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

Regional Collaboration: The Sanctuary Superintendent participated in several regional and site meetings in Maui and Honolulu, HI. While in Hawai'i, the Superintendent presented to the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Volunteer Council on work in American Samoa and coordination of regional projects for the next year. Preparation of new program priorities was initiated. Meetings also took place with the Pacific Islands Regional Director and Pacific Leadership Team to discuss possible collaborations to maximize resources. American Samoa is the most isolated of the ONMS offices and connections with the regional team are important in implementing some of the specific needs of the sanctuary given limited resources.



Leadership Training: In an effort to bring more formal leadership development to the NMS of American Samoa, NOAA and partner agencies on island, the NMS organized a Leadership Course that took place from Aug 18th-Aug 21st. The course was conducted by NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations Chief Learning Officer, Mr. Scott Tessmer. It provided training and tools to assist with the demands of managing and leading people. The course included self-assessment exercises and covered the subjects of communication, leadership, team building and professional development. Representatives from the NWS, NOAA Observer Program, the local American Red Cross and the National Park of American Samoa joined the staff from the NMS for this opportunity.

TAUESE P. F. SUNIA OCEAN CENTER VISITOR COUNT AS OF JUNE 30th, 2015

The visitor count to the right represents the total number of visitors as of June 30th, 2015. August of this year marked three years of service for the Ocean Center. To date, the visitor center has welcomed over 29K people to learn about the people of and place of American Samoa.

SCHEDULED TOURS	VISITOR COUNT
Meetings\Conferences	1150
Government Agencies	815
Civic Groups	52
Teachers/Education	250
Private Sector	78
Village/Communities	2520
Families	323
Schools	8640
Cruise Ships	4715
Sanctuary Wellness	8245
Walk Ins	2895
TOTAL VISITORS:	29,683

