

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa

A Partnership between the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the American Samoa Department of Commerce

Superintendent's Report April – June 2013



National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Honors Representative Su'a Alexander Eli Jennings

Representative Su'a Alex Eli Jennings, was honored June 4th, 2013, at a Leadership Awards Dinner, hosted by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) in Washington, D.C., for his tireless commitment to marine conservation in American Samoa. Guests at the Leadership Awards Dinner included members and staff of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives; Administration officials; ocean luminaries, scientists, and academics in marine conservation; and representatives from conservation organizations and ocean-related industries.

Su'a was one of 14 individuals across the National Marine Sanctuary system nominated for the foundation's Volunteer of the Year award. The recognition is part of Capitol Hill Ocean Week, an oceans-focused annual conference coordinated by the NMSF, a private non-profit organization supporting NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

"Representative Jennings has been instrumental in recognizing the value of people and place that is represented by the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa where it fosters meaningful partnerships to aide benefit to the Territory," said Genevieve Brighthouse, sanctuary superintendent. "He has a vision for the future of American Samoa and believes that strategic conservation programs, coupled with education and outreach, and community involvement can help protect natural resources and enhance the livelihoods of our Samoan people."

The Superintendent's Report highlights major activities that have occurred at the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa (sanctuary) between April 2013 and June 2013. It also includes an overview of upcoming events, activities, and priorities over the next six months.

Cultural Heritage and Community Engagement

Sanctuary Wellness

The Sanctuary Wellness Program has been a great success at promoting healthy living and sharing information about the importance and benefits of national marine sanctuaries. Education/Outreach and Community Coordinator Veronika Mortenson leads the sessions that include interactive opportunities to inform participants about the sanctuary system. The Sanctuary Wellness Program is taught twice a week at the Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 3pm-3:45pm. On rainy days, the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA) has offered the use of their car port. Approximately 50 people have participated in each session including visits from HC Lemanu Peleti Mauga Lt. Governor of American Samoa and representatives from Department of Public Service (Marine Patrol), AS-EPA, DOC, and Faga'alu residents.

Festival of Sites

On May 4, 2013, the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, in partnership with the American Samoa Department of Commerce, launched the "Festival of Sites" - bringing the 'village-to-visitors'. The showcase of the six sanctuary units, (Fagatele, Fagalua/Fogama'a, Aunu'u, Ta'u, Swains & Muliava) led by the residents and families gave tourists a preview of the special

qualities and traditions of our Samoan life but most importantly why these sanctuary units are special and unique. The connection between tourism and communities was made! Special guests to the *Festival of Sites* were First Lady Cynthia Malala Moliga, Lt. Governor Lemanu Peleti & Pohakalani Mauga.

During the event, our sanctuary communities provided visitors with hands-on experience of coconut husking, hat weaving, grating and squeezing coconuts to get the famous coconut milk, and tasting some of our very own Samoan delicacies. Proceeds made during the event went directly to the families and communities, which is a wonderful economic development opportunity for our sanctuary units.

The *Rhapsody of the Seas* cruise ship and local residents who joined us for the launch brought more than 600 visitors to the Ocean Center! The *Festival of Sites* is the first of many planned visitor programs led by the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa. The program works towards connecting tourism to communities in an effort to showcase and display unique traditions and cultural values that make the special underwater units national treasures



Sanctuary Wellness



Festival of Sites May 4th 2013

of the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa.

Marine Conservation Science

Community Based Climate Change Adaptation Training

Veronika Mortenson represented the sanctuary at the Community Based Climate Change Adaptation Training which was organized by the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources and facilitated by Meghan Gombos and Scott Atkinson for the Pacific Islands Managed and Protected Area Community (PIMPAC). The five-day training provide members of the various

sectors in American Samoa with the necessary skills to effectively communicate climate change concepts and foster adaption planning implementation at the community level. Additionally, participants looked at appropriate ways to integrate vulnerability assessments and adaptation actions into existing community based planning processes. Time was also used to allow participants to develop and practice key messages in Samoan to establish a unified vocabulary to use when speaking to communities.

Hollings Scholar Climate Project:

Hollings scholar Sarah Seabrook has arrived in American Samoa and begun

working her summer research. She is using information from current climate change studies combined with nearshore surveys and fish observations to project the potential future impacts of climate change on the composition of coral and fish communities in sanctuary sites. Sarah is working with local intern Charles Miller and Research Coordinator Wendy Cover.

Ocean Literacy

Outreach to Tafuna High School

Dalen Jennings and Michelle Johnston were guest teachers for five marine science classes at Tafuna High School. Students learned about the National Marine Sanctuary



Outreach to Tafuna High School

Ocean Swimming Ocean Science Class

Department of Interior Director of Insular Affairs Visits NMSAS

System, the sanctuary and the marine life found within the management areas, current research, and threats facing the ocean and these special places. Trivia questions were asked to test the students on what they learned and knowledge of simple things they can do to help protect the ocean. Students will participate in a follow-up field trip to the Ocean Center.

Reaching Out to Local High School Students

Approximately 400 students participated in an interactive school presentation followed by a visit the Ocean Center to have an enhanced learning experience in ocean conservation. The National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa's Outreach & Communications Coordinator provided an interactive presentation to nearly 400 students at Leone and Tafuna High Schools in preparation for the students' visit to the Tauese P. F. Sunia Ocean Center. The presentations were based on a unit or concept that the classes were learning on "Marine Conservation in American Samoa" and taught how each individual can make a difference in conserving and preserving our cultural connections to ocean resources.

Ocean Swimming/Ocean Science (OS/OS) Class Field Trip to Fagatele Bay

Nineteen students from the Ocean Swimming Ocean Science class (OS/OS), coordinated by the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa participated in a field trip to Fagatele Bay and the National Park Service Visitor Center. The students have spent the past semester learning about fish, corals, ocean conservation, and how to swim and snorkel. The field trip kicked off at the National Park Visitor's Center where educators spoke about the park, fruit bats, coral reefs, and invasive species. Students then traveled to Fagatele

Bay where they hiked, snorkeled, and practiced fish identification with sanctuary staff and American Samoa Aquatic Agency lifeguards. The students completed their semester at the 2013 Youth Ocean Summit. The OS/OS program helps enable students to become proficient swimmers and effective ocean stewards.

Partnerships and Interagency Collaboration

Department of Interior Director of Insular Affairs Visits NMSAS

Gene Brighthouse, Sanctuary Superintendent, led a tour of National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa at the Tauese P.F Sunia Ocean Center for the Department of Interior Director (DOI) of Insular Affairs, Nikolao Pula, during an official visit from Washington DC. The discussions on partnerships with DOI were very positive and included information on collaborations of the sanctuary and National Park of American Samoa including working on crown of thorns removal, education and outreach, dive safety drill, and trail development program in the new sites. Mr. Pula was appreciative of the work that was shared and wanted to be kept in the loop as a strong collaboration with DOI is a must in a place like American Samoa where resources are limited.

Outreach Collaboration between NMSAS and NPAS

The Outreach Division of the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa (sanctuary) and the National Park of American Samoa (NPAS) met in April to discuss plans of outreach to local schools before they dismissed for summer break and to the communities during the summer. Schools visits took place in May. The collaboration works towards a common goal of preserving our natural and cultural resources.



Youth Ocean Summit 2013

On May 18th, over 150 government officials, students, parents and community members attended the Youth Ocean Summit at the Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center. Youth groups from various schools were able to learn, share, and value the importance of protecting our ocean and natural resources.

The event provided an opportunity for Samoana High School students that participated in a semester-long Ocean Science/Ocean Swimming (OS/OS) class to showcase what they learned to the broader American Samoan community. Each student group created a "Now What" video with topics ranging from describing the impacts of littering and pollution on the ocean, to highlighting the challenges presented by the crown of thorns starfish outbreak on coral reefs. A panel of judges awarded prizes to the top three student groups. A demonstration of the Science on a Sphere ocean education tool was also provided.

Additionally, participants of the Youth Ocean Summit took part in a Job Jamboree featuring the Le Tausagi Group (environmental/youth agencies) that provided information on potential job opportunities with local and federal agencies that could act as a springboard to future career paths.





Marine Patrol responds to divers in distress



Marine Patrol conducts initial assessment of diving injuries



EMS transports divers



Diver enters hyperbaric chamber at LBJ Tropical Medical Center

Dive Safety Drill

On May 23, 2013 a Dive Safety Drill was conducted in Pago Pago Harbor in American Samoa. The drill was a terrific learning experience for all participants and is a tremendous step forward in operational response cooperation for the territory. Coordinated by the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, this preparedness drill was designed to evaluate the response capabilities of area search and rescue and health care providers, in the event that an actual SCUBA diving emergency occurs. On the days prior to the drill, important skills for first responders, including first aid, CPR, and O2 administration, were reviewed and practiced. Over 50 participants from the local community participated in the training with instructors from the NOAA Dive Center, Cardinal Point Captains, the National Park of American Samoa, and EMS. The intent was to enhance awareness, safety, and communications of marine and emergency professionals through the planned exercise to meet three primary goals:

- 1) Demonstrate human and technological capabilities, integrating across programs for the common goal of protecting human life and coastal natural resources;
- 2) Develop individual skills in program management, coordination, contingency planning, emergency response, health and safety; and
- 3) Build relationships across the public and private sector that foster long-term collaboration to protect the environment.

The drill was very successful and is the starting point for more safety drills in the future. Participants included: American Samoa Community College, American Samoa Department of Commerce, American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency, Cardinal Point Captains, Coral Reef Advisory Group, Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, Department of Public Safety - Marine Patrol and Fire Department, Emergency Medical Service, Industrial Gases, LBJ Tropical Medical Center, National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, National Park of American Samoa, NOAA Dive Center, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Office of Homeland security, Pago Marine Charters, and United States Coast Guard and Auxiliary.

American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency's Drinking Water Fair

On May 31st 2013, the sanctuary outreach team participated in the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency's (AS-EPA) finale to Drinking Water Week. Environmental agencies were invited to put up exhibit booths to showcase their purpose, goals, and missions in addition to sharing educational materials with the public. This is one of the many exhibit fairs that sanctuary has participated in to strengthen and build partnerships with other agencies and reach out to the public to promote ocean conservation.

Sanctuary visited by Indonesian Government Officials

On June, his Excellency Dr. Sinyo Harry Sarundajang, Governor of North Sulawesi Province and delegation visited the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa. Directors from the Departments of Commerce, Visitors' Bureau, Youth and Womens' Affairs, Chamber of Commerce, and the Energy Office, each presented on their roles, responsibilities, and future plans that could help boost the economy of American Samoa. Gene Brighthouse, Sanctuary Superintendent, presented on "Sanctuaries Mean Business" – a commitment to support communities developing economic opportunities. Following department presentations, Dr. Sinyo and his delegation were taken on a tour of the Ocean Center. A demonstration of the Science on a Sphere was presented to highlight an exhibit developed by NOAA used to visually showcase worldwide data and information on the importance of the ocean to people, places, communities, and economies and the need to protect it. Interpretive signage on our natural and cultural resources were also viewed and discussed.

Inter-agency Collaboration

Research Coordinator Wendy Cover met with partners in NOAA Pacific Island Regional Office, Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR), and Coral Reef Ecosystem Division (CRED) to plan for a joint Coral Reef Conservation Program proposal that will help to fund monitoring in the new sanctuary management areas and train staff at DMWR and National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa (sanctuary) in CRED/National Coral Reef Monitoring Program protocols to enable continued monitoring. If funded, this will be the first research collaboration between DMWR and sanctuary, and will set the stage for both agencies to use identical survey methods, bolstering the scope and usefulness of monitoring in the territory. Discussions on the Science Plan have continued with a meeting with the Coral Reef Advisory Group lead.

Coral Reef Advisory Group – American Samoa

Joe Paulin, Conservation Ecology and Policy Specialist, met with Kristine Bucchianeri, Coral Reef Initiative Coordinator, Coral Reef Advisory Group American Samoa, to discuss current projects and potential opportunities for collaboration. Topics of discussion included the sanctuary advisory council, the Two Samoas Initiative, interagency coordination, village-based marine protected areas, climate change and threats to local marine resources, education and outreach, staff capacity building, and project funding and upcoming grant opportunities. Strong interagency coordination works towards identification of common goals and priority issues, community engagement, and more effective natural resource conservation.

Summer with the Sanctuary



Charles Thomas Miller (22) is an Education Assistant who began interning with the sanctuary in 2011. He supervises new interns with their summer projects, leads visitor tours at the Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center, assists with youth outreach programs, has instructed swimming for ocean science ocean swimming classes, and conducted survey research. Charles attends the University of Hawai'i at Hilo where he studies marine science.



Meghan Tanuvasa (18) is currently helping to coordinate the "OCEAN STAR" summer youth program. She was one of the first volunteers here at the Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean center. Meghan has helped conduct visitor tours and assisted with multiple research surveys. She is currently attending American Samoa Community College where she is studying liberal arts, pre-law and marine science.



Havasinia Oliver Mortenson (21) is currently helping to coordinate the "OCEAN STAR" summer youth program. He also conducts tours for students and visitors at the Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center. He graduated from American Samoa Community College (ASCC) spring semester 2013 with an A.A degree in Marine Science and is planning to attend University of Hawai'i at Hilo for fall semester 2013 to continue his study in the same field.



Arletta Tuigama'atoe (22) is currently helping to coordinate the "OCEAN STAR" summer youth program. She also conducts tours for students and visitors at the Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center. Arletta graduated from American Samoa Community College (ASCC) with an A.A degree in Liberal arts and will attend the University of Hawai'i at Manoa for fall semester of 2013 semester majoring in biology.



The sanctuary welcomed the Ernest F. Hollings Scholar Sarah Seabrook, of the University of South Florida to the team this summer. Ms. Seabrook is double majoring in environmental science and policy, and environmental biology.

Good Luck



Dalen Jennings (19) graduated from Faasao Marist High school in 2012. He interned at the Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center for 6 months under the direction of Gene Brighthouse. Dalen served as an outreach and education assistant which gave him the opportunity to conduct tours for residents and tourists. He also visited schools around the island from 7th grade to high school. Dalen is now heading to college in New York City to study communications.

Future Plans

Swains Island Expedition – August 2013

NOAA's Maritime Heritage Program and partners will support a six-day heritage and archaeology expedition to remote Swains Island. The primary focus is the search for evidence associated with the island's pre-western contact period, its role as a voyaging waypoint and Polynesian settlement. The secondary focus is the search for historic 19th-century period features and artifacts revealing the island whaling contacts and copra activities. The survey combines the efforts of three related teams: a maritime archaeology team, a terrestrial archaeology team, and a cultural navigation team.

Coming Events

Sanctuary Wellness - Tae Bo Fitness

The Sanctuary Wellness Program has been a great success at promoting healthy living and sharing information about the importance and benefits of national marine sanctuaries and is taught twice a week at the Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 3pm-3:45pm. On rainy days, the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA) has offered the use of their car port.

Ocean Star Summer Youth Program: July 2 – August 1, 2013

Le Tausagi Camp: Maun'a: July 15 -18, 2013; Tutuila July 23-25, 2013

Festival of Sites: August 23, 2013

Swains Island Expedition: August 24, 2013

Ocean Swimming/Ocean Science Class 4th Semester: August 2013

"PALS" People, Air, Land, and Sea: DOC Week November 4 – 8, 2013

- Sanctuary Wellness
- Sanctuary of the South seas Film Festival
- Our Ocean Our Treasure Tours- Ocean snorkel excursions & Ocean Center tours

Sanctuary Staff



The National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa wishes all the best to Dr. Michelle A. Johnston. The sanctuary team was fortunate to have Dr. Johnston, Research Ecologist for Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, as the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa Acting Deputy Superintendent for the last six months. During Dr. Johnston's stint in American Samoa she spearheaded the Emergency Preparedness Skill Review & Dive Drill, Crown of Thorns Starfish removal, assist with the Research Action Plan and most importantly fostered relationships between marine related agencies in the territory. As we say in Samoa, until we meet again.

The National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa welcomes Joe Paulin to the team as the NMSAS Conservation Ecology & Policy Specialist. He will be coordinating the sanctuary advisory council, working on policy, climate change and enforcement and resource protection issues, and is currently developing a project with the University of Michigan, Institute for Research on Labor, Employment, and the Economy.



THE NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY OF AMERICAN SAMOA
HONORS
NASA ASTRONAUT
Christina Hammock
AS GUEST SPEAKER
THURSDAY, JUNE 27TH AT 10:00A.M.
TAUESE P.F. SUNIA OCEAN CENTER
PUBLIC WELCOME
AUTOGRAPH SIGNING TO FOLLOW

