

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY OF AMERICAN SAMOA
Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting Notes

Wednesday, March 26, 2014
Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center/Sanctuary Room
1:00-3:00PM

Participants

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Dean Hudson, Chair, Ocean Recreation/Eco-Centered Tourism
Alex Jennings, Community-at-Large (Swains Island)
Atuatasi Lelei Peau, Department of Commerce (DOC)
Thomas Drabble, Business/Industry
Charity Porotesano, Youth Seat
Fatima Sauafea-Leau, NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office
Kelley Anderson, American Samoa Community College (ASCC)
Kevin Painter, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement
Jim Bacon, National Park American Samoa (NPAS)

SUBSTITUTES

None

PUBLIC

Vera Simona Talamoa

SANCTUARY

Gene Brighthouse, National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa (Sanctuary)
LT. Charlene Felkley, Sanctuary
Isabel Gaoteote, Sanctuary
Tanimalie Letuli, Sanctuary
Alma Cornejo, Sanctuary
Dr. Wendy Cover, Sanctuary
Joseph Paulin, Sanctuary
Apulu Veronika Moilo'o Mata'utia Mortenson, Sanctuary

- I. **Welcome**, *Dean Hudson, SAC Chair*
 - A. Roll Call & Introduction
 - B. Review and Approval of June 25, 2013 Meeting Minutes
 - Motion to Approve (Atuatasi Lelei Peau)
 - Seconded by (Thomas Drabble)
 - Passed - Unanimous

C. Approval of Agenda

- Unanimous approval

D. Reminders: Joseph Paulin

i. Council Member Recruitment:

- The next recruitment of members will be from May 15, 2014 to June 30, 2014

ii. Appointment of Alternates for (Voting) Governmental Representatives

- Governmental representatives are reminded to submit the name of their official alternate in writing to Sanctuary Superintendent Gene Brighthouse

iii. Council Officer Elections

- Elections for council chair, vice-chair, and secretary will take place at the next council meeting

II. **Presentations**

A. Kristine Bucchianeri, Coral Reef Advisory Group (CRAG) – Crown-of-Thorns Starfish (COTS) Eradication:

Topics discussed in the presentation included size, diet, outbreak and locations of the COTs:

- Unusually large sea stars that are red, to green in color and covered in Poisonous spines
- Natural in Small numbers – Outbreaks ~ 100 years
- Last outbreak in American Samoa =Late 70's-early 80s
- COTS feed on living coral particularly fast growing *Acropora species*.
- White patches of exposed coral skeleton are left behind after the COTS feed on the coral.
- Natural Predators to crown-of-thorns starfish are the Napoleon Wrasse & Triton's Trumpet snails
- The last alamea outbreak in American Samoa was in 1977, and despite the removal of 480,000 starfish, many more remained on the reef and consequently over 80% of the Territory's corals were estimated to have been killed. The cost of this removal effort was \$73,000, issued through a bounty system of \$0.15 per starfish which in today's currency is equivalent to \$300,000. Following the outbreak there was a noticeable impact on fish populations, and unfortunately, the coral reefs in American Samoa still haven't completely recovered to the levels they were at before the outbreak.

- Local response is to activate an assessment & rapid reef response plan and to establish a COTS working group.
- There is ongoing eradication efforts put forth by local and federal agencies. Education and outreach in schools and communities continue.

B. Film – Penina Tutasi – Amerika Samoa

- Selling American Samoa as a destination.
- Highlighting the importance of people and place.

III. Status Updates

A. Campaign Clip (Gene Brighthouse): A new clip highlighting that a process has begun to nominate new national marine sanctuaries.

B. Swains Expedition (Alex Jennings): Briefly explained his determination during the MPR to ensure the inclusion of Swains Island as part of the sanctuary. He is grateful that Swains is now included in the sanctuary. The exposure Swains has now due to it being in the sanctuary is amazing. With Jean Michel Cousteau paying attention and making promotional films about this pristine/untouched place can be one selling point for American Samoa.

C. Hokule’a World-Wide Voyage (Gene Brighthouse & Veronika Mortenson):

The Hōkūle’a will visit the sanctuary in August 2014. A student from Ta’u and a student from Tutuila will have the opportunity to learn from the world renowned crew of the Hōkūle’a and will attend the Navigation and Voyaging summer training in Hawai’i.

D. Village Liaisons (Veronika Mortenson): Liaisons from Aunu’u, Fagatele, Fagalua/Fogama’a now assist the sanctuary in coordinating, facilitating and performing education/outreach to community members. They work closely with their community to address concerns, provide information about the sanctuary including allowable and prohibited activities, and address ecotourism and responsible economic development opportunities compatible with resource protection efforts.

E. Sea Education Association (Charlene Felkley): In August of 2014, the Sea Education Association is sailing the *SSV Seamans* from the Phoenix Islands Protected Area to Pago Pago, American Samoa. Arrival in American Samoa on August 13th, 2014 will mark a five week stay for the vessel and her crew. During these five weeks, the sanctuary will be organizing and hosting alongside the SEA crew, several days of programs for the benefit of the American Samoan community. The vessel will undergo routine maintenance, then depart American Samoa for Samoa and Fiji on September 25th.

F. Outreach – Ocean Star and Media Coffee Chat (Isabel Gaoteote):

Ocean Star Summer Program: The Ocean Star Summer Program, hosted by the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa is a four week hands-on learning, active discovery and student engagement. The program serves to inspire and encourage children of ages 10-12 to learn and discover all that they can about the ocean in order to develop appreciation of their natural and cultural resources. Students cover the following topics: introduction to coral reefs; importance of coral reefs; threats to coral reefs; what can you do to save our ocean.

Media Coffee Chat: The sanctuary hosted their first "Media Coffee Chat" which is an overview of events/programs and activities, highlights for newsworthy coverage. The first coffee chat highlighted sanctuary work for the first quarter of 2014 (Jan-Mar). This "chat" enabled the media to give feedback on how to work collaboratively with media/communication leads from sanctuary to ensure our community is well served. Communication/Outreach Coordinator Isabel Gaoteote and Education Outreach/Community Coordinator Veronika Mortenson presented on Sanctuary Wellness, Ocean Swimming/Ocean Science program, Festival of Sites, One NOAA meetings, promoting the Hōkūle'a Student Competition, and crown-of-thorns starfish eradication efforts.

G. One NOAA (Charlene Felkley):

A One NOAA Group has been created here in American Samoa. All NOAA offices are included: OLE, PIRO, the NWS, PIFSC and ESRL. The objectives of this group will be to collaborate on outreach events, keep each NOAA office abreast of events and milestones, and save time and money ensuring efforts are not 'doubled up' on NOAA outreach efforts. Activities thus far include an American Samoa 'One NOAA' brochure describing each NOAA office with contact information, taking more of an active stance in the territory-wide science fair, and supporting outreach events such as Rip Current week.

H. Crown-of-Thorns Removal (Wendy Cover & Joe Paulin):

Sanctuary Team members are coordinating with representatives from the National Park American Samoa, American Samoa Coral Reef Advisory Group, and Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources on an upcoming crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) removal effort at priority reefs and sanctuary management areas in American Samoa. Planning has included pre-operation tow-board and drop surveys to identify areas with the highest densities of COTS so removal efforts can achieve maximum success as well as team roles and agency participation for all phases of the effort. The mission involves local, regional, and national collaboration and also includes team members from the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, and NOAA Dive Center.

I. Cruise Ship & Village Based Tourism (Tanimalie Letuli /Joe Paulin):

Sanctuary Team members met with Pago Pago Tradewinds Tours, who coordinates international cruise ship tourism in American Samoa. Pago Pago Tradewinds has added the sanctuary Ocean Center to cruise ship promotional materials. The Ocean Center is now a highlight finale to one of the offered tours. Additionally, village-based tours are being developed for management areas on Tutuila and Aunu'u. Coordination meetings are currently being held with sanctuary communities. All tours will showcase marine and cultural resources found in the special places that make up the sanctuary.

J. Research Update (Wendy Cover):

Research Coordinator Wendy Cover presented a one-pager on the science expedition to the Valley of Giants in Ta'u. The large coral, Big Mamma, was measured and documented, with core plugs in place. Surveys for COTS and reef health were conducted.

Current research in the sanctuary includes work by Dr. Tom Oliver and team from UH studying the thermal tolerances of corals around Tutuila. The sanctuary team supported the ASCC QUEST program with a lecture on reef ecology and panel discussion. Coral Reef Watch presented at the Ocean Center on their bleaching products. Future research includes contaminant studies and collaborations with USGS on land-based sources of pollution.

K. National Program Updates (Gene Brighthouse): Gene Brighthouse discussed national program initiatives including the upcoming this summer including Capitol Hill Oceans Week (CHOW) and the Sanctuary Advisory Council Chairs' Summit.

L. Council Charter Revisions (Joe Paulin): Sanctuary advisory council charters are updated every 5 years. A charter provides background on the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) and the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa. Charters describe the objectives and roles of the council's activities, procedural requirements regarding the appointment of council members and officers, requirements for the conduct of council members and meetings, and other requirements. All council activities must be conducted pursuant to the charter. Revisions include an additional fishing seat, diving seat, and community-at-large Aunu'u seat. Revisions also included term limits and the establishment of an Executive Committee.

IV. **New Business:**

The council voted to support proposed changes to the revised sanctuary advisory council charter.

- Motion to Approve (Atuatasi Lelei Peau)
- Seconded by (Thomas Drabble)
- Passed - Unanimous

V. **Public Comment:**

None

VI. **Concluding Remarks, *Dean Hudson***

Dean Hudson thanked all the members for their participation and meeting was adjourned at 3:18pm.