

FAGATELE BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 04, 2012

DOC Conference Room

1:00-3:30PM

Participants

Voting Members:

Dean Hudson

Henry Seseparasara

Netini Sene

Charles Birkeland

ASCC (represented by Ephraim Temple)

DOC (represented by Solialofi Tuaumu)

DMWR (represented by Domingo Ochavillo)

EPA (represented by Va'asa Simanu)

Non-Voting Members:

Fatima Sauafea-Leau

Gene Brighthouse (FBNMS)

Mike Reynolds (NPS)

Allen Tom (ONMS)

Public:

Tafito Aitaoto

Ioane Tomanogi

Tim Clark

Alice Lawrence

Siaumau Siaumau Jr.

Leafaitulagi Siaumau

Sailitafa Samoa

Tuifeleamato R.A. Tagovailoa

Josephine Siaumau

Minutes

Welcome, *Dean Hudson*

Welcome council members and members of the public.

We are here share comments from SAC members on the proposed Draft Management Plan. If we share some of the same recommendations we can decide to submit them as a collective body. If we disagree on some of the recommendations then you can submit comments on behalf of your agency or your constituents. The deadline for submitting comments is this Friday, January 6 so as a body we have the opportunity to send in a collective set of comments.

The SAC Charter indicates that decisions (e.g. recommendations) made by the council shall be made by majority vote of those present, provided there is a quorum (more than half of the voting members). Since there are 8 voting members here today we have a quorum. For a majority vote, 5 voting members will need to vote in favor of the comments.

We will listen to each comment on then vote on which comments we would like to submit as a collective body.

Thank you to the members of the public who have joined us here today. As previously stated the Sanctuary Advisory Council is meeting today to collect comments as a body on the proposed Draft Management Plan. If you would like to share your recommendations with us we will review them and determine whether we would like to submit your comments as a council. Regardless we invite you to submit your comments in online at <http://www.regulations.gov> or in writing to the sanctuary staff.

At this time I would like to invite the SAC members to share their recommendations on the proposed Draft Management Plan.

ASCC: No agency comments.

Education Seat: No constituent comments.

EPA: No agency comments at this time.

NOAA-PIRO: No agency or division comments at this time. PIRO may submit agency comments.

DOC: No agency comments at this time. DOC will be submitting agency comments before Friday.

NPS: Submitting comments separately from advisory council.

Given the public reaction to this document, generally speaking there seems that there hasn't been very good communication with the villages which has resulted in negative feedback on the process. If we go forward with the preferred alternative it will greatly hamper the ability of FBNMS to manage new areas. It will also impact other marine management agencies because of the negative sentiment. It would make sense to take a break and improve communication with the villages.

Make a greater attempt to dig deeper with the residents and village councils in the communities. It does seem like there has been a sincere attempt to do so but it has been a great challenge and it may not have been as effective as hoped.

Improve communications with some of the partner agencies that are involved and impacted by this decision. More analysis of how these partnerships will look after this expansion. Not clearly communicated in the Draft Management Plan.

DMWR: The Department will be submitting agency comments. Staff will be submitting individual comments. We commend the agency for coming up with this initiative. We have two programs mandated for managing marine areas so we understand the challenges. We believe that MPAs are very important conservation tools but they are very tricky and they require a lot of work. We believe that the selection of sites is critical.

We need to improve on the communication process. There was a lot of negative feedback from the community. In the end we don't just manage the resources but also the resource users.

It is critical to have support from the other departments in the territory.

Need to reassess the sites and the area. FBNMS is 0.25 square miles and the expansion is quite significant. We would like a justification for how the area was derived. In the past 25 years there has been a lot of advancement in MPA design and we would like those models applied to the management. There is a lot of biological and socioeconomic data that has been underutilized. We would like to recommend the use of these models.

There is a need to improve the economic analysis of the sites. Rose atoll had a zero value and we would like to see economic valuation models of marine areas.

It is important to illustrate what is being achieved at Fagatele Bay. The strong volunteer program is the core of village participation in the plan. There must be a way to recognize the unique social structure in American Samoa and incorporate into the management plan. We do not believe it is adequate at this point.

We support alternative 1.

There are more than one research platform in American Samoa.

Recreation Seat: Concerns from the Pago Pago Game Fishing Association and local fisherman will be submitted separately. There is a large concern over the no-take designation to the East of Aunu'u. It is something that we don't believe. Fishing for giant trawli and dog-toothed tuna. As fishermen we don't see the benefit of this. Fishing is dependent on weather and it is a very popular place for local people to fish. There are not a lot of options for people who go out fishing in small boats.

Concern about restricting fishing in Larson Bay. We do not believe there should be fishing restriction for the local people.

We think that 50 miles of protection is too large around Rose atoll.

The protection on Swains Island is determined by the family and we have no comment on that.

Fishing Seat: Not in our interest to be part of the group comments. Some of the areas included in the expansion are being opposed by the fishing community. There are local subsistence and

traditional fishermen who do not support the closing of these areas as well. I do not know if I support the SAC submitting as a group.

I have spoken on the radio to counter the Governor's comments on this expansion. I believe the Governor has been misleading in his support for this effort.

Fagatele Bay: No concerns about the site. Involved in original public hearing and one of the co-chairman. I think it has developed to a point where it is a really good educational place for our schools.

Fogama'a: Constituents do not want to close shoreline.

I think it would be an ideal place for expansion because they are next to each other. It is not really accessible by land except by boat. I would discourage any boat that would anchor and damage coral.

Aunu'u: Popular place for bottom fish fisherman. Very productive area. Fishing technique is traditional handline. It is not spearfishing. The species are different than near shore. We are consistently fishing the same amount of fish. I have not seen a decrease in abundance.

The concensus from the commercial and subsistence fisherman is that once it is restricted it will be restricted for life. Concern that it is not protected under DMWR. The villages are working well with DMWR to manage their own resources. They set their closing dates and dates that fisherman can catch. DMWR has the data of what species are there. In the past there were extensive resource surveys of the area. The fisheries biologists and DMWR and the scientists at DOC do not seem to be working together. It seems that there is data available that is not being used. I would rather see federal funds available to DMWR so they can work together to get things done the way they should be.

I do not think the two areas in Aunu'u should be included.

Manu'a: I support the management and control of the cultural areas so that people don't ruin the area. However fisherman from Ta'u fish around the giant coral. They are using traditional handline methods so there is no threat for overfishing.

Rose: The Manu'a chiefs are working together to try and have President Obama reverse the dedication of the area as a National Marine Monument. The procedures were not done correctly. None of the public hearings were held in Manu'a. The agencies involved in the management did not communicate among themselves. The fisheries management council had already created an 50 mile area for only local fisherman to catch. The federal government established total restriction. 50 mile created by the national monument is not the same as the 50 mile created by the fisheries management council. There are about 10 miles different so there is a mistake there somewhere. The closure for the indigenous fisherman took 22 years to establish. In a few weeks the President signed a dedication of this area as a monument. The council has representatives from various federal agencies. The Governor was drawn to sign this without proper procedures.

The ownership of the land extends from the land to as far as you can see. When the chief signed the deed of accession to the United States, they had the foresight to ensure that our land and shore are protected. This is what the chiefs are concerned about now. The land should be under the jurisdiction of the people. The American Samoa government can only regulate from shore to 3 miles. The widest reefs here are 60-70 feet. We don't have much area here to fish for consumption.

We are completely opposed to regulation of the East Bank. It is the number one area for subsistence and sports fishing. It is closer to us and we are guaranteed to get fish. The South Bank is also good but we rarely go there because it takes too much gas. That area is 400 feet deep and coral doesn't grow below 200 feet. Please do not ever consider the East Bank because it is our traditional fishing point.

Research Seat: No major comments on the process.

At this time, I will vote in favor of most of the recommendations (e.g., Opposition to the no-take designation to the East of Aunu'u) because we cannot put such operations in motion until the public is all behind it. This will require putting communication and education first. People who have been scuba diving in American Samoa in the late 1970s and early 1980s (e.g., Dick Wass, Alison Green, myself) are very aware that the big fish are, by comparison, almost gone. Some local residents believe all is fine and we do not need reserves to maintain a breeding stock of large fishes. Before we begin such a program, we need to bring the local residents on board through communication and education.

The diversity of small fishes is still spectacular, just as good or even better than most areas of the central Pacific, so we cannot blame pollution or habitat loss for decline in large fishes that are targeted by fishers and for overall decline in fish biomass. Figure 20.20 (page 757) of the attached chapter on American Samoa was compiled by Peter Craig and indicates that the biomass of coral-reef fishes on American Samoa is roughly a third of what would be expected. This illustrates the "shifting baseline". As the population becomes dominated by younger fishers who have never seen the fish populations in the past, they believe everything is normal and fine. We need to communicate more clearly the present day circumstances in order that they find the proposed program compelling.

When the large fishes are taken, the fecundity or reproductive potential of the fish populations declines exponentially. As the larger fishes are overharvested, then there is less reproductive potential for sustaining future harvests. For the fish populations to recover, we need to protect a few of the larger individuals, but in order to do this, we must first bring the public on board to support this program.

Although I support "Opposition to the no-take designation to the East of Aunu'u", I could not support the rather extreme "Opposition to any management in the Manu'a Islands". Over the years I have heard from elders in both Palau and Hawaii, "The resources of our island do not belong to us, we are borrowing them from our children and our future generations".

A minor side point was about Rose Atoll (Muliava) being thought of as a potential site for reseeded the downsteam sites on American Samoa. Recent studies in Hawaii and elsewhere

have been showing that even though larvae of some species spend weeks or months in the plankton, most of the stock replenishment is from local populations. Long-distance population establishment happens, but on the average, only over long times scales. The long-distance dispersion influences species distributions, biogeography, and evolution. But stock replenishment for sustaining harvesting should be planned in terms of local reproductive stocks, even with species with long periods in the plankton. We need a few large fishes on each island.”

Public Comments

Siaumau Siaumau Jr.

I have submitted my comments in writing to DOC and NOAA particularly on Fogama’a (Larson Bay). I strongly oppose the management of this area. Henry brought up an issue that concerns me. If there is restriction on this area it will be forever. The recommendation to delay a little bit makes me feel more comfortable. It would be easier for us for the federal government to negotiate a deal with the village chiefs and the village council. Not all the village chiefs own titles on this land. Part of this meeting as the chairman brought up is to delay a little bit. I don’t want the land where this bay is belongs to me. My great-grandfather worked on the plantation on that land. We have a different feeling than the Governor so we ask you to delay.

Josephine Siaumau

that there are good intentions however we were never approached by anyone from NOAA in regards to this proposal. We learned about it from Samoa News. At the hearing we read through the proposal and we read that Fogama’a and Fagatele were identical. While they are right next to each other, if it is only for research purposes and the two bays are identical we do not understand the need for expansion. Our family has managed the activities in the area without any federal grants. We do not need additional assistance. It is already relatively secluded and difficult to access. We keep close tabs on the people going to the bay and we take care of it. I am not saying you haven’t achieved anything you have achieved a lot. It is where a lot of the school children go to learn about the ocean. You have a very important job discussing these sites. We own that land and the bay is part of that land. We feel like we have not been included in this process. We have submitted comments and included contact information but we were not contacted about our comments.

All the fisherman go to the bay at Fogama’a because it is safer than the area by the cliff at Turtle and Shark. I do not think the proposal is necessary and I think the Bay is good as it is. I would like the program to work with the villages and hold off on this proposal until we can sit down and work things out.

Tuifaleamato R.A. Tagovailoa

There is a breakdown here. Current conservation efforts of Larson Bay work. Fishing is restricted to hook and line. This defeats the purpose of traditional fishing. We go there to collect octopus, clams, sea cucumber, etc. Leaders of this country have lost touch with public life. They do not know what is going on. Concerned about the management in 25 years. We would like to have scholarship program to send students from ASCC to college to be marine scientists. We would like tangible educational programs.

The Insular Affairs Act delayed the minimum wage because of the state of the economy in American Samoa. People are losing their jobs and they need a place to feed their families. In US foreign policy we are self governing. There is no economic feasibility assessment. This should go to vote because we are different.

I prefer alternative 1 and manage Fagatele Bay properly.

Sailitafa Samoa

We are all stewards of where we live. The only need I see for federal involvement is when the local people are not doing what we need to do to protect the resources. I feel comfortable with the community based programs that already exist. I believe that we should not have governing agencies regulate. I believe the villages need to be involved before decisions are made.

Tim Clark

This needs village support to succeed. I don't think anything should be done without village buy-in because there will not be effective enforcement. The management plan discusses involving the Offices of Samoan Affairs and village mayors, but needs to go further and discuss the plan with the villagers. MPAs are a very good tool for fisheries managers. Fish biomass in American Samoa is very low compared to other more pristine locations in the Pacific (see Williams et al. 2011), so we can do better. MPAs are not meant to punish fisherman. The theory is that there will be spillover and increased larval production if there is an effective network. The IUCN/NOAA identifies what is needed for a good MPA network (see IUCN, Establishing Resilient Marine Protected Area Networks, 2008). These recommendations need to be incorporated into the management plan.

Collaboration with the territorial agencies is important. The management plan did not specify how this would be done.

Biodiversity needs to be included in the design. A very good biogeographic assessment was completed. A lot of these areas are fragmented areas. Fagatele/Fogama'a should also include Steps Point between the two bays. Avoiding fragmentation needs to be looked at to include entire areas and not just individual areas.

Protecting ecologically significant areas needs to be considered. Steps Point may be one of these areas.

Connectivity needs to be considered. DMWRs efforts need to be considered to look at all protected areas in the Territory.

Adult movement patterns need to be considered. Fragmented habitats can miss these areas.

MPA design needs to be incorporated better.

NPS has jurisdiction in Ta'u. The proposed overlay does not provide any additional protection. Adding that area will increase the bureaucratic burden at a time when the federal government is trying to reduce costs.

Impact of land based sources of pollution (chapter 5) proposals need to be better addressed with consultation with the villages. For example, in Aunu'u they would need a new sewage treatment plant to meet sanctuary water quality guidelines, estimated to cost \$7 million. Need to determine how this will be funded without severely impacting the village.

Public access needs to be considered. The sanctuary only protects the marine areas so the program needs to consider if and how the community will gain access to these areas.

Doug Fenner

It would benefit all of us to improve communication. The DMWR community based program gets good appreciation because they work so hard at communicating with the villages. They speak separately with the chiefs and the untitled men and women. It is incumbent on us if we want to propose change to people who have customary management over an area, to explain the benefits to them. These MPA areas have good prospects but we also need to tap into the huge body of indigenous knowledge. The ultimate purpose is to benefit both the people and the resource. If you come up with a plan that people agree you maximize the chance for compliance and the program has more legitimacy.

Action Item

SAC Members vote on comments to submit as a collective body.

The Council voted to propose the following:

1. Need to extend the timeframe for comment.
2. Additional outreach with the residents and village councils in the communities.
3. Additional communications with some of the partner agencies that are involved and impacted by this decision.
4. Revisit site selection incorporating MPA design and biological and socioeconomic data.
5. There must be a way to recognize the unique social structure in American Samoa and incorporate into the management plan.
6. Opposition to the no-take designation to the East of Aunu'u.
7. Opposition to the call-in requirement for Area B of Aunu'u.
8. No restriction on traditional non-destructive fishing in Fogama'a.
9. No restriction on traditional non-destructive fishing in Aunu'u.