

**FAGATELE BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, April 5, 2011
DOC Conference Room
1:00-3:00PM**

Participants

COUNCIL MEMBERS

1. Dean Hudson, *Chair/Ocean Recreation*
2. David Vaeafe, *Tourism Seat*
3. Fatima Sauafea-Leau, *NOAA PIRO*
4. Lucy Jacob, *DMWR*
5. Mike Reynolds, *National Park Service*
6. Nate Ilaoa, *Department of Commerce*
7. Charles Birkeland (Call in), *Research*
8. Gene Brighthouse, *FBNMS*

PUBLIC

1. Alice Lawrence, *Coral Reef Advisory Group*
2. Doug Fenner, *DMWR*
3. Tafito Aitaoto, *DMWR*
4. James McGuire, *Public*
5. Tuifagatele S. Tanoa, *Tanoa Foundation*
6. Leua Aioto Frost, *Samoa News*

STAFF

1. Kevin Grant
2. Veronika Mortenson
3. Emily Gaskin
4. Tina Tapuai

Welcome, *Dean Hudson, SAC Chair*

Review of Minutes:

- Motion to accept (DEAN)
- Accepted (Unanimous)

Superintendent's Report Q&A, *Gene Brighthouse, Superintendent*

Introduction:

- Distributed to SAC Members last week
- Opportunity to review and comment

Mike Reynolds: How close are you to having your new hires?

Gene Brighthouse: FBNMS completed interviews for a Research Coordinator who we are hoping to bring someone on board this summer. The NOAA Commissioned

Corps Officer has been interviewed and approved. However the start date is on hold until we have a Federal Budget.

Mike: In the case of a government shutdown what are you going to do?

Gene: A government shutdown would only affect one person on our staff. Our office would continue to operate as normal.

Dean: What happens to NPS?

Mike: We would all get unpaid time off but we can't really close the park.

Status Updates

Dive into Education Teacher Program, *Veronika Mortenson*

The Department of Commerce sponsored five teachers following the Dive into Education event. Each teacher received \$500 to go towards the procurement of supplies to teach marine science in the classrooms. DOE has been very supportive of this effort.

NOAA Holling's Scholars, *Emily Gaskin, Policy Analyst*

This summer Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary will host three NOAA Holling's Scholars. The NOAA Holling's Undergraduate Scholars are highly qualified students majoring in a broad range of disciplines including biological, physical, and social sciences; mathematics; engineering; computer and information sciences; and teacher education.

The three Scholars selected to work at FBNMS bring a wide range of skills and experiences to the position:

- Bowen Burditt will be developing education and outreach program that illustrates the potential impacts of and potential solutions to ocean acidification in American Samoa.
- Victoria Szlag will be developing tour guide informational materials and interpretive sign content that illustrate how the use of traditional ecological knowledge has ensured the continuation of sustainable fisheries in the Samoan islands for thousands of years.
- Amanda Pruzinsky will be developing a greenhouse gas emissions inventory of Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary offices and site.

The Holling Fellows have been given work space at the PIRO office during their summer program with FBNMS. Each of the Scholars is involved in programs that may involve other offices in the Territory. Therefore the Scholars may be reaching out to other offices this summer for guidance and assistance. We would appreciate your support with their efforts.

Program Highlights, *Gene Brighthouse, Superintendent*

Bruckner Chase will be swimming from Aunu'u to Utulei as part of a multi-year effort to swim in sanctuaries throughout the nation and enhance understanding of and appreciation for the ocean. In your packets you will find registration forms for swim clinics. We can also send you the form via e-mail so that you can spread the word. The criteria is listed on the registration form. Bruckner wants essays from the applicants about why they think it is important to protect the ocean. The deadline for applications is April 29th. Please submit applications to Veronika or Tina at FBNMS. Bruckner will be here from the 6th to the 16th of May. While he is here he will be having Oceans Week which will include several public appearances. In your packet you have a schedule that highlights all of the events. We encourage you to participate in as many events as possible. In particular we encourage you to participate in the Ocean Forum on Tuesday Morning. Fagatele Bay will also be celebrating our 25th anniversary.

In late May we would like to ask the SAC members to participate in an education and outreach working group. We would also like advice on communication for the DRAFT management plan. We would like your advice nominating a volunteer of the year. In the past all nominees have travelled to Washington, DC. This year only the winner will be travelling to DC. We invite you to nominate someone on the nomination form in your packet.

Dean: Would it be possible to have an extension for 24 hours on VOY to allow other SAC members the opportunity to nominate volunteers.

Gene: All right.

David: Could we publicize the May Events to a wider audience through international media outlets? I think in general you could think about promoting the program though out the region. I can certainly provide you with a list of media contacts. Could you broadcast the press conference live on the web and then you can record it and put it on the website.

Fatima: For the E&O Working Group do you need volunteers?

Gene: Yes.

Management Plan Review, Kevin Grant, Deputy Superintendent

Kevin Grant: We have given this presentation several times in Washington DC and to regional and national leadership, and to the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council's Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committee for American Samoa.

Gene: This is an opportunity to high light the management plan review process. We are almost at the end and we would like to provide an update from our last meeting. This presentation will give you information about the motivation and intention to work with the communities.

We are one of three sites in the Pacific Island Region. FBNMS is co-managed with AS-DOC. It has been 25 years since FBNMS was established. We are now reviewing our management plan and activities. Part of revising current management is to be relevant and address new challenges and opportunities. We have very limited resources so we are looking at ways to collaborate and partner with other agencies. It is particularly critical now in the face of budget cuts as well as natural hazards. We hope that the new management plan reflects the strategic direction of the national marine sanctuary program.

We have worked closely with our co-managers since 2009 on village consultations and meetings. AS-DOC has also been useful in advocating our relationship with the Office of Samoan Affairs (OSA). We have met with each village highlighted during the scoping meetings. Most of you were involved in the scoping meetings held in 2009. We have also involved SAC members in working group sessions. We provided SAC members with the opportunity to sit in as we reviewed the action plan content.

We feel very strongly that the management plan process incorporates Fa'asamoa into the ecological conservation. This is about building an opportunity for the people of American Samoa. There has been general agreement that the sanctuary should include other areas to reflect the culture and value of American Samoa. In the update report you will find letters of support from OSA and the Governor. The SAC blessed the guiding principles and goals in 2010. This management plan will guide the sanctuary over the next five years. The action plans will work towards meeting the guiding principles and goals.

Kevin: The management plan we are producing will be a combined document that will include the Environmental Impact Statement. Part of the EIS includes 4 alternatives including the proposed action.

We are currently looking at six proposed areas with the following preferred management:

- **Fagatele Bay** – Keep existing boundary but make completely no take.
- **Larson Bay** – Only hook and line fishing.
- **Aunu'u Zone** – Research Zone completely no take for research (particularly climate change research on coral reefs). Multiple-use zone will provide increased protection through a number of regulations.
- **Ta'u Unit** – NPS has expressed concerns about a sanctuary overlay of park waters. In our preferred alternative we have two options in alternative 3. Neither of the options overlays the park boundary. One option (3a) includes the large corals along the SW shore of Tau. The other option (3b) includes the large corals and the waters within the large bay from Si'ufa'alele point to Si'u point (excluding the waters from shore to ¼ mile offshore that are within NPAS boundaries). Alternative 4 includes all of this (3b) plus an overlay of the park boundaries. This will be analyzed in the EIS and we will highlight the options for Ta'u when this draft goes out.

- **Swains** – 3 Nautical mile circle for subsistence fishing only.
- **Rose Atoll** – All the marine areas of the monument with the exception of the lagoon within the wildlife refuge. However we are proposing to add additional an area outside of the monument to include the Vailulu'u sea mount. We are not proposing any fishing regulations at this time.

There are 21 proposed regulations. 1-13 are proposed for all sites.

We are currently wrapping up stage 3 of this process and we expect the federal register notice to be released in June of this year.

Gene: We feel very strongly with your support that we will achieve and compliment activities for marine conservation in the territories. We could not have done this without the village support.

Unknown: How will the document be available?

Kevin: It will be made available online. In addition hard copies and CDs will also be made available.

Lucy: To what extent do the villages have a say in the preferred alternative? We always work through the village council. If they don't agree will you continue?

Gene: We expect to go out to the villages and have conversations with the village council.

Lucy: Is there any paperwork that they have to sign?

Kevin: No we do not have contracts with villages.

Lucy : Would you proceed if the village council disagrees with you?

Kevin: Technically we could, but to date they have been incredibly supportive of all of our programs and we would try work out any differences.

Nate: On the land use side we are using this process to spread awareness.

Kevin: The relationship with the village is of paramount importance and we want to incorporate that into this process. The Secretary of Samoan Affairs sent a letter to DOC commending FBNMS for our process. The Secretary has volunteered his time on countless occasions and we are pretty confident with the process to date.

Mike : NPS followed a similar process 20 years ago. What we have found is the village can be a fickle thing. There are many different players and there are always continuing ongoing discussions in which villagers, pulenu'us and the village council disagree with each other, or feel left out of the process - that impact your ability to manage those resources. Especially when dealing with land, which is a particularly sensitive issue. It is fairly easy to get a group to agree to something, such as joining a National Park or Marine Sanctuary, but in the future if they change their mind, or feel they were not properly consulted, it can challenge your ability to manage the resources. Something that has helped us is having

signatures. These days we can use this document to explain the process to concerned villagers. This document is not legally meaningful but it is helpful to the fa'asamoa. My recommendation to the Sanctuary folks is to pursue some form of signed document, whether it is legal or not.

Dean: Where is the boundary to Aunu'u?

Gene: High water mark.

Fatima: Will the Sanctuary consider including any existing village regulations pertaining to the site for the Sanctuary expansion such as

Kevin: We can certainly include existing villages regs (e.g., seasonal closures, etc.) as Sanctuary regs.

Lucy: Would you simply add them or would you go through a villages process?

Kevin: We've had numerous village meetings and incorporating their regs into Sanctuary regs has not come up. However, if this comes up during public scoping, then we would follow up with village meetings using our OSA approved approach.

Lucy: If someone violates both a territorial and federal regulation can they be processed under both?

Kevin: Legally both can be applied. The federal government has a higher penalty schedule, but if there were violations it would be considered among all agencies with jurisdiction and law enforcement to determine which would be applied.

Doug Fenner: I noticed that there was no take of crown of thorns? I think we would want to encourage the removal of them if there were to be an outbreak.

Kevin: One of the problems in the 70s was that people were breaking them up and throwing them back. However permits can be issued for otherwise prohibited activities (e.g., in the case of an outbreak) with certain stipulations.

Doug: I particularly appreciate that they are a hazard for humans. However if you cut up a sea star (with the exception of a blue sea star) you would have to have knowledge about how to cut it up for it to re-grow.

Doug: There are areas noted as relatively high fish. The highest abundance here are not high on a global scale. Comparisons to a pristine ecosystem the published data show that it is one third of those levels. On a broader aspect they are medium low.

Doug: The size of protected areas is critical. Our fish populations differ from the near pristine reefs that are known. About half of the biomass on a near pristine reef consists of the highest species of fish (i.e. sharks, parrot fish, etc.). However these species roam over very large areas often larger than MPAs. In my view probably the single largest effect that humans have done to the reefs here is the removal of large fish. If you want to have a protected area you need to consider this. The tool looks like it doesn't fit the job. If the justification for having MPAs is to protect against things that people do than that is a problem.

Kevin: Thank you for that. Most of this we can't do ourselves. That is why one of our guiding principles is to work with everyone we can to collaborate.

Mike: Given the changing nature of the environment what if you find out that fishing biomass drops in the sanctuary. How much flexibility do you have to change your regulations?

Kevin: We are not locked into these regulations forever, however this is a three year process so we would have to come up with some pretty strong justifications to change the regulations. Also, our management plan will be revisited every 5-7 years, so changes could be made at that time. If there is a drastic environmental change, we have the ability to change our regulations.

Alice: You discussed the overlay – what is the envisaged benefit?

Kevin: There are quite a few. First and foremost it will provide additional resources.

Tuifagatele : I know it is important to finish what you start. It is good to have community involvement and engage partners.

Action Items

Education and Outreach Working Group

Members needed to review Samoan translated documents

- Fatima, Tuifagatele, Leua

Volunteers needed during scoping process

- Dean, Nate

Public Comment

Jim McGuire: I think the public should be more involved. I have been here long before the sanctuary. You should look at a pilot program for kids to go to the Sanctuary.

Veronika: Thank you Jim. We are working closely with Lupelele Elementary school. We have also taken out numerous tour groups. We also hope that as the teachers train other teachers they will carry on with that.

Tuifagatele: I have a non-profit foundation. Is it possible for me to be more involved in the process? I would like to work more closely with you.

Jim: The Library is a great facility on the island. You should have management plans there so that it is available to the public.

Leua: I must commend you for writing in Samoan. This will come out in Saturday's issue. Anything I need to know I will contact you. I can come to help talk to the people and that way I can report straight. That will help out the report and the message.

Doug: I would like to provide an update on the reef in FBNMS. I have been in there since the hurricane. The hurricane moved rubble that was already rubble and broke off branches at the lower depths. The reef is showing very good resilience.

Nate: Back in November the Sanctuary team held a series of meetings during which we looked at the management plan draft. Several comments were made by the council.

Kevin: Some of these changes were quite straight forward. However we have not gone through these one by one because technically they go to the SAC. It is up to you to comment on them now.

Lucy: Is there a time frame?

Dean: Maybe if we could have some time to review it that would be good.

Jim: Now that Rose Atoll is off bounds can I go as a tourist? How can I get permission?

Kevin: USFWS now has a Refuge Manager on island. He would be the best person to answer that question.

Leua: Can I just go by?

Kevin: That would be a question for Frank (FWS Refuge Manager).

Lucy: What is the process for comments?

Nate: I will incorporate Alice's and send out to the Council.

Kevin: Anything that is given to this body is legally considered public information. The draft management plan has not been cleared by NOAA for public release, so we cannot give the council more than the activity and strategy titles. I read the descriptions during the meeting when questions were asked. The purpose of that meeting was that to get feedback from the working group on those activities and strategies. There are comments that do not contribute to activities and strategies that are not useful for us during this process.

Dean: The working group has come up with recommendations. Now you want general SAC comments on whether these are worth including in the management plan.

Closing Remarks, Dean Hudson, Council Chair