

Sanctuary Advisory Council

Wednesday, April 3, 2013

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa

Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center

1:30-3:30PM

APPROVED MINUTES

Participants

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

1. Lelei Peau, Department of Commerce (DOC)
2. Ameko Pato, American Samoa-Environmental Protection Agency (AS-EPA)
3. Selaina Tuimavave, Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR)
4. Jim Bacon, National Park Service American Samoa (NPAS)
5. Charles Birkeland (Call in), University of Hawai'i (UH) Research
6. Charity Porotesano, Youth Seat
7. Netini Sene, Education
8. David Vaeafe, Tourism
9. Thomas Drabble, Business/Industry
10. Gene Brighthouse, National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa (NMSAS)

EXCUSED ABSENCES:

1. Dean Hudson, (Chair/Ocean Recreation)
2. Fatima Leau, (NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office)
3. Atapana Fili Fuimaono, Community At-Large (West Side)
4. Alexander Jennings (Swains Island)

SUBSTITUTES:

1. Edwin Seui, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) (attending for Kevin Painter)

PUBLIC

None

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) STAFF

1. Michelle Johnston, NMSAS
2. Veronika Mata'utia Mortenson, NMSAS
3. Isabel Gaoteote, NMSAS
4. Tanimalie Letuli, NMSAS
5. Alma Cornejo, NMSAS
6. Emily Gaskin (Call in), Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary
7. Joseph Paulin, (Call in), SAC Coordinator, Hawaiian Islands Humpback National Marine Sanctuary

Proxy Chair selection due to Dean Hudson's emergency – Lelei Peau, David Vaeafe and others elected to have Ameko Pato, Director of AS-EPA, chair the meeting.

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Welcome, *Ameko Pato, Acting SAC Chair*

- Words of welcome and fa'afetai!
- Lelei Peau to say Opening Prayer

A. Roll Call & Introduction

a. Status

i. Community Seat for Tutuila East Area

Gene Brighthouse assisted in providing information on the vacant seats on the Council. Seats are being advertised and your help is needed to spread the word.

ii. Community Seat for Manu'a Area

Gene Brighthouse assisted in providing information on the vacant seats on the Council. Seats are being advertised and your help is needed to spread the word.

Veronika: We cannot publish the recruitment process until the Federal Register is ready.

iii. Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) Member Bios

Gene Brighthouse: reminded SAC members about member bios to be submitted as soon as possible. These are for the sanctuary website and for public information on who is on our SAC.

B. Review of Minutes

Gene Brighthouse: discussed the meeting of February 14th when Dan Basta was in American.

Charity Porotesano: Are there other "special places" we are looking to add?

Gene Brighthouse: No additional places to be added. The term was used interchangeably to describe places and their uniqueness and how we can market & project the value and importance of American Samoa...place-based tourism opportunities.

Charity Porotesano: There are a lot of acronyms in the minutes which made it a bit difficult to understand some of the terms.

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Gene Brighthouse: Suggested inserting a glossary to future minutes to explain each acronym used.

Minutes passed and approved by unanimous vote.

C. Approval of Agenda

Approved and passed.

D. Presentation: 2012 NMS Advisory Council Summit

i. Recommendations and Next Steps

Gene Brighthouse: The Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit re-introduced advisory council representatives to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries *Campaign of Engagement* and ongoing efforts to highlight the critical role of sanctuaries in promoting strong, local economies and conserving resources for future generations. Advisory council representatives identified, through a facilitated discussion, tangible, near-term outcomes with the potential to foster a larger coalition of support for the National Marine Sanctuary System. Initial suggestions were vetted and grouped into seven results oriented recommendations, each with potential roles for national marine sanctuary advisory councils.

Recommendations:

1. Collaborate with Chambers of Commerce, Visitor Bureaus, Travel Advisory Boards, Trade Associations and other public/private partnerships to begin relaying to various constituencies or user groups the value national marine sanctuaries.
2. Engage youth, from elementary to post-college students, to redefine sanctuaries as “cool” places for education, outreach and professional opportunities.
3. Collaborate with other protected areas (e.g., NPAS, United States Fish and Wildlife Service) to develop relationships, leverage existing resources, and brand similar areas.
4. Diversify the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) constituent base by targeting audiences by cultural (e.g., coastal treaty tribes) and demographic (e.g., youth, 50-somethings) groups, and determine how this change will increase tourism (e.g., new seat on advisory council).
5. Increase positive interactions with recreational fishermen and communities, as well as other specific sectors of the community.
6. Assess liabilities, competing interests, and other difficulties to determine how these may be turned into assets that are leveraged for multiple “goods”.

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7. Consider re-examining the composition of advisory councils to determine whether they work well with regard to the Campaign of Engagement and the respective audiences that ONMS is attempting to engage.

Ameko Pato: Who takes the lead on these? Which group is responsible to spearhead this effort?

Gene Brighthouse: Refer to Action Items at the bottom of agenda – these recommendations need to be galvanized by a group.

Ameko Pato: Prepare outreach programs for the villages. Use our media outlets and the youth.

Gene Brighthouse: Project the value of people and place.

Ameko Pato: Do we have a committee that will market these for us?

Gene Brighthouse: Tourism and Recreation Working Group can help us.

I. Status Updates

A. Crown of Thorns (COT) Starfish Removal, *Michelle Johnston*

We are experiencing an outbreak of crown-of-thorns starfish right now.

Presentation on Crown-of-Thorns Starfish:

- Starfish with up to 21 arms and the entire surface of their upper bodies are covered in long venomous spines.
- Females can produce 60 million eggs in one spawning season –this is associated with high nutrient run-off (leaky septic tanks, sewage outfalls) and sediment runoff.
- They are voracious predators and can consume up to 65 square feet of living coral reef per year. 1000 starfish, they can decimate an entire coral reef.
- The coral reefs of American Samoa are currently experiencing an uncommon increase in numbers of these coral-eating starfish mainly at Taema Bank, the Airport reef, and the area near the Fagaula/Fogama'a unit of the NMSAS.
- Last alamea (crown of thorns starfish) outbreak in American Samoa was in 1977, where starfish ate and killed over 80% of the coral.

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- Fish population declined after the outbreak.
- Removal efforts have begun in the hopes of reducing numbers before the next breeding season. (NMSAS, NPAS, DMWR)
- Two different management strategies are currently being utilized.
 - Alamea are being injected with sodium bisulphate, as well as physically removed from the water. While effective, manual removal is time consuming and potentially dangerous, as divers risk being stung by the poisonous spines of the starfish. It is important to note that the **whole starfish** should be removed, because if the middle part remains on the reef, it can regenerate and grow into a new starfish.
- Scientific divers from the NMSAS and the NPAS are currently injecting alamea with sodium bisulfate which kills the coral eating starfish, but does not harm the reef. Injecting alamea is fast and reduces the risk of divers being stung by the starfish. After a day or two, the starfish die and their soft body tissue disintegrates.
- Killed 250 starfish last week.
- Divers are also taking size measurements of all the starfish removed or injected, as well as conducting surveys, to see how many crown-of-thorns starfish are currently on the reef in American Samoa.
- With a coordinated effort, the use of new technology, and learning from lessons and experiences locally and worldwide, American Samoa has a realistic opportunity to reduce this potentially serious threat to our coral reefs.

David Vaeafe: This looks like a long-term campaign.

Michelle Johnston: Yes it is. We are trying to get a lot of people, divers especially, to assist with the removal.

Netini Sene: How often are you planning on going back to remove star fish?

Michelle Johnston: At least every week someone from (DMWR, NMSAS, and NPAS) try to get out. Some issues we face are with the boat.

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Lelei Peau: I appreciate the effort put forth by the different agencies. This problem is an invasion to the coral habitat. In the long term, we have to control sediment runoff from nearby villages. We need to include Office of Samoa Affairs (OSA), American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA), and AS-EPA. The core of the problem is land-based. We need to make the same presentation to these agencies. Perhaps through Selaina of DMWR, she can request of her director to do a follow up of the problem and elevate it to the national level as we do not have the capacity or the capability to combat the invasion.

Netini Sene: This would be an opportunity for students to continue on their research. We need to provide students with evidence of what had taken place already. Need data for students to get buy-in....Department of Education can then send students to assist with the removal efforts while learning about the environment.

Michelle Johnston: There is a joint database with NPAS, DMWR, American Samoa Community College-Sea Grant, Coral Reef Advisory Group (CRAG). This is a shared database that can be accessed by anyone. Planning to do a clean sweep in June. Watershed issue is a bigger problem that would need more people to tackle.

Ameko Pato: What is a permanent solution to this problem?

Michelle Johnston: The permanent solution is “no runoff.”

Ameko Pato: We need to connect with the Office of Samoan Affairs for assistance from the villages.

Michelle Johnston: A joint presentation from NPAS, DMWR, and NMSAS ought to be prepared.

Ameko Pato: This can no longer be brushed aside because it is someone else’s jurisdiction....it is everyone’s responsibility. (AS-EPA jurisdiction is land and ocean but there is a lot of overlap with other agencies). There is a project that AS-EPA is working on now that might help the town area with the water problem.

Selaina Tuimavave: DMWR is currently in the process of requesting the Governor to declare the invasion/outbreak of the crown-of-thorns starfish as problem which will in turn be addressed at the national level to get support to continue the removal efforts. We are at the moment working with communities in our marine protected areas and we have incorporated this information into our outreach efforts. Given the lack of resources, are other agencies including this information in to their outreach programs?

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Michelle Johnston: Bel and Nika have been discussing the problem in schools and during school visits to the Ocean Center. We have posted alerts on as many media outlets as we can in order to disseminate the information.

Thomas Drabble: Have noticed some crown-of-thorns just outside the hotel. What depths is the crown-of-thorns found in?

Michelle Johnston: From the shallow of 30ft-40ft all the way to our recreational limits of 120 feet. We are seeing them at 50ft-70ft range. Normally, these star fish live at very, very deep depths, but they come up when there is high nutrient loads in the water.

Charles Birkland: Back in the 1970s the COTs were really quite big and they were in very shallow water. Back in the days, Masefau ladies used to pick up COTs that were stranded on the beach. COTs were also coming in to snorkeling depths.

B. Dive Safety Drill, *Michelle Johnston*

- Planned for May, the week of May 20th – the week of the National Safety Week.
- There are 2 days of training and the actual drill on the 3rd day.
- There will be a simulation of a scuba diving emergency on the water.
- Working with Marine Patrol to have them respond to that emergency; activate EMS; take diver(s) to the hospital; fire up the hyperbaric chamber.
- Do we have the capacity to respond appropriately to a diving emergency?
- There is potential for a Dive Shop to open up later in the summer.
- CPR/First aid Review; Responds to open wound, stings, etc.
- Responds to lack of O2.
- Different agencies that have been invited – anyone that is working in the water.
- Day 3 – Hot wash and lessons learned and how to better move forward.

Jim Bacon: Applaud the sanctuary for putting this together and the NPAS is happy to be a part of it. This is an important endeavor for all of us to participate in in light of what was just discussed about COTs removal.

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Gene Brighthouse: Invites will be sent out in May.

C. Swain's Expedition, *Gene Brighthouse*

- The expedition was planned a year ago.
- Bringing attention to special places and people (from one of the SAC Recommendations noted earlier).
- The Swains Island Heritage Survey, unlocking the secrets of Swains' lagoon is an expedition that will be led by 2 teams:
 - 1) Survey of marine archaeologists – survey of the lagoon.
 - 2) The team to bring attention to Swains – led by Jean-Michel Cousteau...with Dan Basta. This has the potential to draw attention to American Samoa.

5-Minute Break to call back Hawai'i participants – phone line issues.

D. Festival of Sites, *Tanimalie Letuli & Veronika Mortenson*

Nika: Introduction of Festival of Sites - "Village-to-Visitors" during the *Rhapsody of the Seas* cruise ship visit to our shores on May 4, 2013. Sanctuary communities will have their customized tent where they can showcase specialties that are unique and special about their unit. Festival of Sites is basically like a mini-festival of arts and crafts: villagers may sell handicrafts, food items, etc. There will also be demonstration of coconut husking, coconut scraping, etc.

Long term plan is to have "Visitors-to-Villages"tourists/visitors can go out to the villages where they can be taken on guided tours, snorkeling, kayaking, etc., and villagers can charge the visitors rental fees.

Malie: Festival of Sites Grant Application – one time seed money for each unit up to \$500 to assist with materials to showcase at the Festival of Sites.

Ameko Pato: Reiterate the importance of utilizing the Office of Samoa Affairs when it comes to engaging the village community.

Charity Porotesano: Applauded the effort – and things are really falling into place.

Gene Brighthouse: This will happen every time a cruise ship comes into town.

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David Vaeafe: Have flyers ready a week out of ship arrival so passengers are aware of these events they can visit.

Tom Drabble: Be warned that cruise ships sell tours.

Gene Brighthouse: Have our sanctuary film clips shown on the ships?

II. Action Items

A. Suggestion for Formation of 2 Working Groups

1. Tourism and Recreation Working Group

Gene Brighthouse: we are after a list of members for this group, representation that can work with staff to build on this opportunity. We have resources that can go to greater projects. (DOC, Visitors Bureau, NPAS)

2. Conservation Science and Resource Protection Working Group

Michelle Johnston: form a working group for things such as the COT's issue, community input; provide a forum on resource management, etc. to the SAC. (Youth, Education, NPAS, AS-EPA).

Selaina Tuimavave: DMWR can't be in a working group as it is part of many working groups already. There seems to be too many overlapping tasks with these extra working groups. Sounds like additional work.

Gene Brighthouse: These working groups are actually part of our Action Plan.

Lelei Peau: Recommends duplication – the more people doing the same things for conservation the better.

Ameko Pato: Can we use volunteers?

Lelei Peau: Yes.

Charity Porotesano: I want to get the community involved. SAC should not be just making decisions...we need to get out to share information.

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B. Letters for Endangered Species Act (ESA) Coral Listing by mid-April

Michelle Johnston: This is where a Conservation Science and Resource Protection Working Group could contribute for the SAC. Earlier this past year NOAA Fisheries proposed a listing of 66 coral species to be put on the Endangered Species Act. There is a public comment period that has been extended to the 6th of this month. Heighten exposure to the status of coral during climate change and ocean acidification. What can we or can't do if coral goes on Endangered Species Act? Permits to do research of coral? The council has the opportunity to write a letter on how they feel before the public comment period ends.

Jim Bacon: How does this interface with agency consultation already?

Lelei Peau: DOC and DMWR have prepared a draft for the Governor.

C. Rose Atoll Proposed Regulations (April 8th)

Gene Brighthouse: The SAC has the opportunity to make comment on proposed fishing regulations for the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument that were proposed by Western Pacific Fisheries Management Council. Proposed regulations are now in the Federal Register. The Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) provides input on Rose Atoll Marine National Monument. There are implications to the sanctuary unit Muliava with regards to these regulations.

Lelei Peau: Had advised both DOC and DMWR about this deadline.

Selaina Tuimavave: DMWR has taken a position on these proposed regs. American Samoa Government is actually for the proposed regulations.

Gene Brighthouse: This is why the working groups are important.

D. SAC Resolution on Tourism and Recreation

Gene Brighthouse: Program is about bringing attention to the people and place. Walk the talk – let's do things that count for people.

The working group could propose a resolution on tourism and recreation at the next meeting. This will allow the working group time to craft its programming for the communities to build livelihood around these places. (Guided experience).

Netini Sene: Enlighten members of the council if these are existing activities from within the sanctuary system. Let's not reinvent anything. Let's adapt and adopt what is already there.

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Gene Brighthouse: The council could adapt and adopt a resolution that's done by another site that is relevant to American Samoa.

Ameko Pato: We do not have to reinvent the wheel – why can't we borrow what is there?

Gene Brighthouse: Tom and David – you have been in the business of bringing people to the place. The opportunity to make things happen and have them tailored to fit this place is really important.

Selaina Tuimavave: Invitation to DMWR's Education Fair on May 3rd in collaboration with DOC at the Marketplace. Example of things that are happening on the ground.

Charity Porotesano: Asked about the curriculum with DOE about science.

Gene Brighthouse: In reference to Science on a Sphere (SOS) catalogue which is themed to adapt to teacher lesson plans.

III. **Public Comment: None**

Concluding Remarks, Acting Chair, Ameko Pato of AS-EPA

Thank you all for attending!