

Sanctuary Advisory Council

Tuesday, June 25, 2013

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa

Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center

1:00-3:00PM

Participants

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Va'amua Henry Seseapasara, Vice-Chair, Commercial Fishing

Netini Sene, Education

David Vaeafe, Tourism

Atapana Fili Ulufale, Community-at-Large (West Tutuila)

Alex Jennings, Community-at-Large (Swains Island)

Atuatasi Lelei Peau, Department of Commerce (DOC)

Kelley Anderson, American Samoa Community College (ASCC)

Kevin Painter, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement

Jim Bacon, National Park American Samoa (NPAS)

Eric Roberts, US Coast Guard

EXCUSED

Dean Hudson, Chair, Ocean Recreation/Eco-Centered Tourism

Charles Birkeland, Research

Thomas Drabble, Business/Industry

Charity Porotesano, Youth Seat

Dr. Ruth Matagi, American Samoa – Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (AS-DMWR)

Ameko Pato, American Samoa-Environmental Protection Agency (AS-EPA)

Fatima Sauafea-Leau, NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office

Allen Tom, Office of National Marine sanctuaries (ONMS) Pacific Islands Region (PIR) Director

Taule'ale'ausumai La'avasa Malua, Samoa Government

SUBSTITUTES

Fa'amao Asalele, AS-EPA

Dr. Domingo Ochavillo, AS-DMWR

SANCTUARY

Gene Brighthouse, National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa (Sanctuary)

Apulu Veronika Mata'utia Mortenson, Sanctuary

Isabel Gaoteote, Sanctuary
Tanimalie Letuli, Sanctuary
Alma Cornejo, Sanctuary
Dr. Wendy Cover, Sanctuary
Joseph Paulin, Sanctuary

- I. **Welcome, *Alex Jennings***
 - A. Roll Call & Introduction
 - B. Review and Approval of April 3, 2013 Meeting Minutes
 - C. Approval of Agenda
 - D. Reminders:
 - i. Next Council Member Recruitment:
 - ii. Appointment of Alternates for (Voting) Governmental Representatives
 - iii. Council Member Bios for the Website

II. **Presentations**

A. **Dr. Domingo Ochavillo, Department of Marine Wildlife Resources**

Dr. Ochavillo discussed the following topics:

- Current DMWR initiatives
- Community-based management plans
- Marine Protected Areas
- Biological hot spots in American Samoa
- Coral Reef Fisheries Assessment
- Research projects including a life history of reef fish
- Fish Aggregation Device Program
- Reef ecosystem health status
- Coral restoration
- Marine Debris Program
- Technical assistance of schools
- National and international forums

The council thanked Dr. Ochavillo for the presentation and commended the work of the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. A discussion took place about fish that are shipped in from Samoa and size limits. There are monitoring efforts for fish that come in from Samoa. DMWR is in the process of developing size limits for fish caught in American Samoa.

B. Mr. David Vaeafe, Executive Director, American Samoa Visitors Bureau

Mr. Vaeafe discussed the following topics:

- American Samoa is 20 years behind other countries in tourism development
- The American Samoa Visitors Bureau is working on packaging tourism opportunities
- There are unique attributes to attract people to American Samoa such as the sanctuary and national park
- There are opportunities to showcase the sanctuary sites and adjacent villages
- American Samoa and the sanctuary can be marketed through travel shows, hosting travel agents, and advertising
- The sanctuary can work with the private sector on offering tourism opportunities
- Tourism will be the number one economic driver in American Samoa in the next 10 years or less
- American Samoa can benefit from tourism dollars like Samoa
- A private/public sector partnership could lead to success

The council commends the work of the Visitors Bureau in marketing American Samoa as a destination. A challenge that may exist is the local population embracing a visitor-friendly environment. The Visitors Bureau could work with the Office of Samoan Affairs to develop strategies.

Every year the Visitors Bureau increases marketing and will support local organizations through sponsorships to develop events.

A question was raised about tour boats that were scheduled on Sundays - ships that come on Sunday encourage visitors to attend church services, visit the beach, and business that are open.

II. Status Updates

A. Capitol Hill Oceans Week & Volunteer of the Year, Alex Jennings

Alex Jennings discussed his experience at Capitol Hill Oceans Week in Washington DC. He talked about a presentation that was given about the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and how previously they experienced public opposition. However, as time has passed and the local community has worked with the sanctuary, community members have embraced the sanctuary.

B. Swains Expedition, Gene Brighthouse & Alex Jennings

Gene Brighthouse and Alex Jennings discussed the upcoming expedition to Swains Island scheduled for August. The expedition will include, among others, Jean-Michel Cousteau and a team of ONMS maritime archeologists. An update on the expedition will be presented at the next council meeting.

C. Festival of Sites, Tanimalie Letuli & Apulu Veronika Mortenson

Tanimalie Letuli and Apulu Veronika Mortenson provided an update on the *Festival of Sites* that took place 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 management areas, (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 management areas 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.

D. Youth Ocean Summit, Isabel Gaoteote

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.

E. Dive Safety Drill, Gene Brighthouse

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.

F. Research Update, Dr. Wendy Cover

Hollings Scholar, Sarah Seabrook is working on an assessment of how climate change will impact our sanctuary reefs, including effects on particular corals. She is conducting surveys and doing extensive literature reviews as well as compiling previous survey data. Sarah is also helping with a climate monitoring project by retrieving and redeploying small reef-based temperature loggers.

Crown-of-thorns starfish - We will continue to participate with other agencies as able, and are grateful to NPAS for inviting us to join when they go out.

Several proposals are in the works including survey training and monitoring with the NOAA Pacific Island Fisheries Science Center - Coral Reef Ecosystem Division (CRED). We have been discussing protocols, now applying for funding for a joint training session with DMWR.

NOAA PIRO is working on a project to look at sea level rise modeling in coastal villages using the recent Lidar data. The project will include villages that are adjacent to the sanctuary management areas. Results can be used to create outreach tools for understanding climate change impacts.

Land-based sources of pollution – a proposed contaminant study to look at heavy metals, pesticides/herbicides, organochlorides, PCBs, etc... coming from dump sites around sanctuary management areas and in priority watersheds is being developed. The project will be in coordination with Cheryl Woodley of the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) Coastal Environmental Monitoring.

G. IRLEE, *Joseph Paulin*

The National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa is developing a project with the University of Michigan, Institute for Research on Labor, Employment, and the Economy. The project will explore strategies that can be implemented to increase responsible economic development associated with the sanctuary and how to build better partnerships to address community needs while protecting marine and cultural resources. The project is being informed by a similar study conducted at our sister sanctuary, Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, and adapted for the needs of American Samoa.

H. *Sanctuary Classic Fishing Photo Contest, Joseph Paulin*

The *Sanctuary Classic* is a free summer-long fishing and photo contest featuring all of the National Marine Sanctuaries across the United States, including American Samoa. While the primary purpose of the National Marine Sanctuary System is to protect the resources of these areas, their legislation also calls for allowing compatible uses which includes many types of recreation including fishing. Photos should demonstrate all or a combination of: Kids Fishing, Kids and Family Values, Kids in the Outdoors, Kids in the Sanctuaries and Kids' Conservation. The sanctuary will be planning an event in the coming year.

I. *Campaign of Engagement, Gene Brighthouse*

Gene highlighted sanctuary programs and how national marine sanctuaries work with and help support local communities in resource protection and working towards healthy livelihoods. The sanctuary works to raise awareness about people and special places. She discussed ideas to increase awareness of the sanctuary such as providing inflight promotional videos for Hawaiian Air and working with partners to promote

the national *Sanctuary Classic* fishing photo contest next year. Gene went on to discuss the *Festival of Sites* events to bring the village experience to visitors when cruise ships visit American Samoa. The sanctuary is working on marketing and promotion in local and national film festivals. The sanctuary *Ocean Swimming/Ocean Science* and *Tour Guide Program* were also discussed in addition to the Ocean Center that has already hosted over 6,000 visitors.

J. NMSAS & TBNMS Sister Sanctuary Community, Gene Brighthouse

Gene discussed the possibility of a process for sanctuary branding. Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary went through a branding process that resulted in a brand of “Sanctuary of the Great Lakes – Marine, Body, and Soul.” The process took over a year, involved many partners, and helped to increase the number of visitors to the area. A brand is what others think of you, not necessarily what you think of yourself. A brand is a promise and a good brand is a promise that is kept. An initial idea was shared, “Sanctuary of the South Seas.” The council Tourism Working Group discussed the idea of branding the sanctuary as a tourist destination. Another idea was shared about the possibility of branding the sanctuary as a unique scientific laboratory to attract researchers that provides opportunities for student research. The group will work on developing recommendations for the council.

III. Action Items Follow-Up

A. Council Working Groups

1. Tourism and Recreation Working Group

The working group met prior to the council meeting and discussed the idea of sanctuary branding, similar to the initiative that took place at Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The group discussed developing recommendations for council consideration.

2. Conservation Science and Resource Protection Working Group

This working group can review and provide comment on, and quality control, for sanctuary products/programs on various resource protection issues including:

- Developing science facts for interpretive guide trainings
- Input on how to approach/work with communities on resource protection issues such as the basis for regulations
- Community-based resource protection through education and outreach and a process for community engagement
- Input for researchers on interacting with communities and transferring research results back to the communities where the studies are conducted

IV. New Business

A selection committee was established to review applications for the next council member recruitment. The committee includes David Vaeafe, Atapana Fili Ulufale, and Kelley Anderson.

V. Public Comment

There was no public comment

VI. Concluding Remarks, *Alex Jennings*

Alex Jennings thanked all of the council members for their participation and the meeting was adjourned.