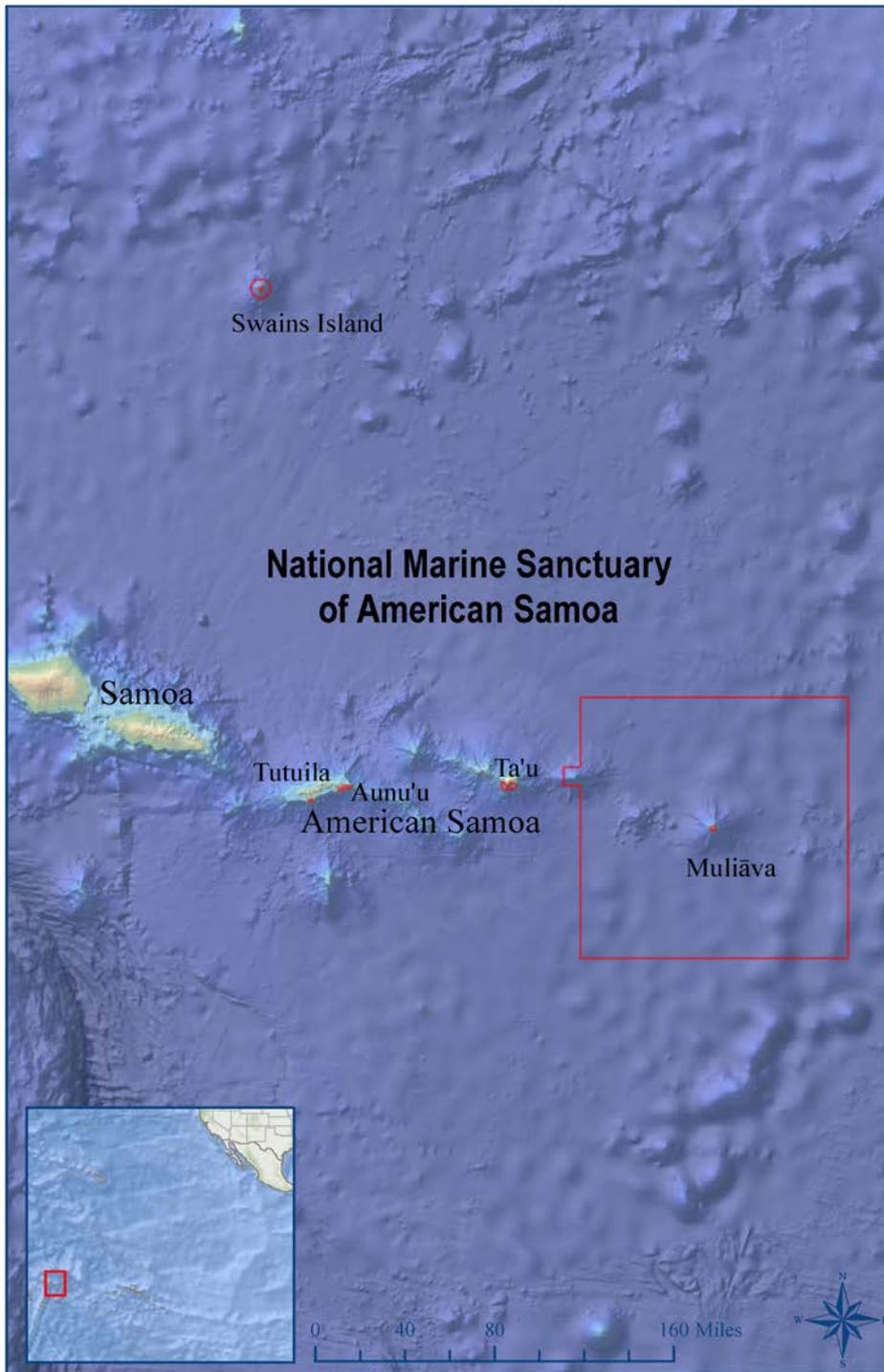


## FY16 Accomplishments



### BACKGROUND

In 2012, five discrete geographical areas were added to the existing Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary (designated in 1986) and the name of the sanctuary was changed to National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa. The sanctuary protects extensive coral reefs, including some of the oldest and largest *Porites* coral heads in the world, deep-water reefs, hydrothermal vent communities and rare marine archaeological re-sources. The sanctuary is located in the cradle of Polynesia's oldest culture and sanctuary is comprised of six protected areas, covering 13,581 square miles of nearshore coral reef and offshore open ocean waters across the Samoan archipelago.

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa is part of the National Marine Sanctuary System, which is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. National marine sanctuaries are managed for the conservation of their natural and cultural resources, while supporting sustainable recreation, tourism and compatible commercial activities. The network includes a system of 13 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.



Photo: NOAA

Tourists from the cruise ship *Marina* enjoying the cultural performance from the Fa'asao Marist High School dance troupe.



Photo: NOAA

Local partners complete another day of preparation for removal efforts.



Photo: NOAA

Crew members of the Dorado fishing "alia" pulls in the heaviest catch (113.2lbs) to win first place for the *Yellowfin* Category.

### Festival of Sites – Bringing “village-to-visitors”

In March 2016, the Festival of Sites “Village-to-Visitor” program welcomed passengers from the cruise ship *Marina* to American Samoa. Led by National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, the program helps visitors understand the broad cultural heritage of American Samoan traditions and lifestyles (fa'a-Samoa). Cruise ship passengers were welcomed with a cultural experience and were able to meet representatives from each village within the sanctuary community. Festival of Sites helps promote cross-cultural understanding and sustainable tourism that supports local economies.

### Demonstrating the value of sanctuary protections

Resource protection is a critical function of National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa. In April 2016, a fishing vessel grounded on the reef off Aunu'u Island in one of the community's important fishing areas. Through working closely with Aunu'u community leaders, the private sector, the American Samoa government and federal agency partners the vessel was removed in August. The collaboration served to eliminate additional damage to the reef and build local capacity to enhance response capabilities to future threats.

### Building a stewardship ethic through recreational fishing

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa facilitated events to help raise awareness of allowable fishing practices in the sanctuary and encourage responsible recreational fishing in the area. Recreational fishing is both a cultural cornerstone and an economic driver across the National Marine Sanctuary System and is allowed in the sanctuary, with the exception of Fagatele Bay. Over 200 students, 100 anglers and 17 recreational and alia boats participated in multiple Aloha Maid Fishing derbies and a Buds and Suds Open Fishing Tournament. While highlighting traditional fishing practices, these events demonstrated that the sanctuary is a great place for families to explore and provided opportunities for sanctuary staff and fishermen to discuss and participate in sustainable fishing techniques. All of the fish caught during the events were donated to a local charity, the Hope House.

## National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa Looking Ahead to FY17

- A summer course will be held for students from the sanctuary villages in Tutuila, Aunu'u, and Ta'u, to enhance youth understanding and appreciation of the marine environment.
- Several cruises of the NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer* will utilize remotely operated vehicles for deepwater mapping operations in American Samoa, including work in both National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa and Rose Atoll Marine National Monument.
- The sanctuary team, in partnership with South Pacific Distributors/Aloha Maid will hold several fishing derbies to encourage responsible ocean recreation activities and raise awareness about sustainable fishing opportunities in the sanctuary.