

PACIFIC ISLANDS REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Pacific Region Supports Interns in Marine Conservation Fields

The Pacific Islands Region is collaborating with partners to facilitate student interns working at regional sites. The University of Hawai'i's Institute of Marine Biology has begun collaboration on a new fellowship program that supports master's-level marine science students for two semesters. The students will work at a regional site and complete a two-month internship in a NOAA office in Washington, D.C. In addition, two graduate students in the NOAA Office of Education's Graduate Sciences Program have begun working for regional partners. Upon graduation, the students will then join the Pacific Islands Region team.

NOAA Preserve America Supports Projects in the Pacific Islands Region

The Pacific Islands Region was awarded two NOAA Preserve America Initiative Grants in 2009. One allowed the region to conduct a historical preservation project focusing on Lahaina's colorful history, and will be used to record oral histories and produce outreach products from that knowledge. A second grant supported a training for University of Hawai'i Marine Option Program students to learn marine archaeology survey techniques. The students trained were trained by regional maritime archeologists on O'ahu, then traveled to Lāna'i to survey a historic inter-island steamship wreck. In addition, the county of Kaua'i was designated a Preserve America Community, through a process supported by the Pacific Islands Region. This designation makes Kaua'i the second county in Hawai'i to achieve this status.

Rose Atoll Designated a Marine National Monument

On Jan. 6, 2009, Rose Atoll in American Samoa was named a marine national monument. Presidential Proclamation 8337, which established the monument, directs NOAA to initiate a process to add the marine areas of the monument to the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary under the National Marine Sanctuary Act. The Pacific Islands Region is supporting Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary as it addresses this issue through its management plan review process.

FAGATELE BAY SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Officers

Ocean Recreation: Dean Hudson (Chair)

Fishing: Henry Sesevasara (Vice Chair)

Education: Netini Sene (Secretary)

Other Non-Governmental Members

Research: Charles Birkeland

Community At-Large: Uiagatelelei Lealofi

Governmental Members

Territorial Government
American Samoa Community College/ University of HI Sea Grant: Ephraim Temple

American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife
Resources: Lucy Jacobs

Agency: American Samoa Department of Commerce,
Environment Division: Sarah Eminhizer

Federal Government

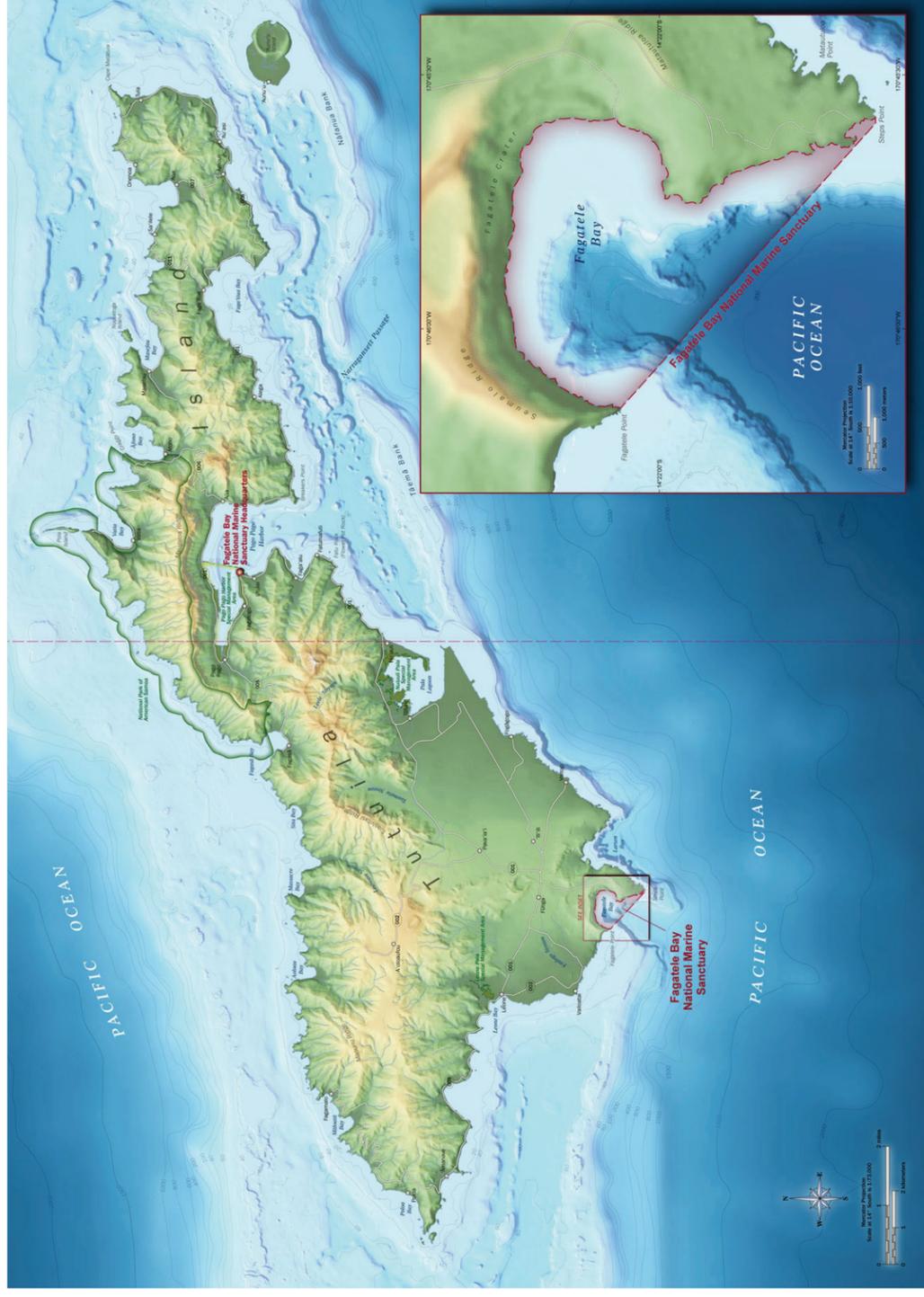
National Park Service (non-voting): Mike Reynolds

NOAA Pacific Services Center (non-voting): Bill Thomas

NOAA Fagatele Bay NMS (non-voting): Gene Brighthouse

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (non-voting):
Kevin Painter

2009 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Ben Carroll, DMWR

Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary embraces a fringing coral reef ecosystem contained within an eroded volcanic crater in American Samoa. Fagatele Bay is the nation's smallest marine sanctuary at one-quarter square mile and its only true tropical reef. Hundreds of species of corals, colorful reef fish, algae and other invertebrates can be found in the warm waters of the sanctuary, along with sea turtles, dolphins, sharks, giant clams and migratory humpback whales. Established Apr. 29, 1986.

Management Plan Review in American Samoa

Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary is revising their management plan and identifying additional sites for possible sanctuary designation. This process provides an opportunity for sanctuary staff and the public to shape the future direction of the sanctuary. Fagatele Bay staff worked closely with their territorial partner agency, the American Samoa Department of Commerce, to host a series of public scoping and agency meetings to receive input on the management plan and identify potential new marine sanctuary sites. In August, the governor of American Samoa met with the director of Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to recommend that the sanctuary system proceed with the site designation process at seven of the nine proposed locations.



Establishing a Hyperbaric Wound Care Center

Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary staff has been working with Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary to establish a Hyperbaric Wound Care Center in American Samoa. Treating diabetic wounds and preventing amputations would help allow residents who might otherwise be incapacitated due to amputation to continue working and contributing to the community. In November 2008, the Thunder Bay team visited American Samoa and met with more than 30 local stakeholders to help promote the project. Through these meetings, Fagatele Bay staff received very positive feedback, including possible financial commitments from the National Park of American Samoa and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Sanctuary staff continues to work together to identify additional funding sources, including applicable federal grants. This hyperbaric chamber would serve American Samoa and the entire Pacific region with specialized treatment for scuba diving-related injuries and non-healing wounds caused by diabetes.



Designation of Rose Atoll Marine National Monument

Rose Atoll is located approximately 240 kilometers east-southeast of the island of Tutuila in American Samoa. Rose Island and the surrounding lagoon are composed of some of the most unique habitats on earth. The marine environment supports a dynamic reef ecosystem that is home to a diverse assemblage of species, several of which are threatened or endangered. Presidential Proclamation 8337, signed Jan. 6, 2009, designated Rose Atoll a marine national monument. The proclamation directs NOAA to initiate a process to add the marine areas of this monument to Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.



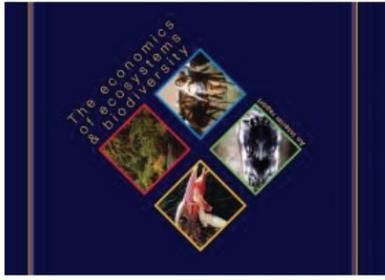
Humpback Whale Research Aids Management

Staff from Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary and the Center for Marine Studies, continued research from previous years and conducted multiple surveys of Southern resident humpback whales that come to American Samoan waters to breed and calve. The goal of the research was to define the local humpback whale population, to clarify its relationship to other parts of Oceania and to identify its Antarctic migratory destinations. Significant contributions have been made to understanding these populations and the management implications of these findings.



Developing a Climate Change Action Plan for American Samoa

Sanctuary staff began work on a Climate Change Action Plan to help inform climate change adaptation strategies throughout American Samoa. A socioeconomic assessment of perceptions of climate change threats and solutions among community members was completed in 2009. The study will help inform community-based climate change adaptation strategies and identify specific education and outreach needs in American Samoa. The study was presented at the International Union for Conservation of Nature's regional environmental economists meeting, held in Fiji in September, for inclusion in the second report on the Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity. The report which will cover the role, relevance and usefulness of economics in resource and environmental management, was published online and in hard copy in December 2009.



Students and Visitors Gain Knowledge through Guided Tours

Guided hiking tours along the Fagatele Bay trail were led by sanctuary staff. Student groups ranging from elementary through college participated in educational sessions and hikes to learn about the value of protecting special ocean areas in American Samoa. Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary staff also offered guided hikes to off-island visitors including tourists, federal staff and visiting delegations. In some cases, visitors were also given the opportunity to snorkel in the Fagatele Bay sanctuary to observe the near-pristine coral reef ecosystem.

Environmental Education Continues in American Samoa

A group of government environmental educators called Le Tausagi collaborate on environmental education and outreach programs throughout American Samoa. Le Tausagi continues to support the EnviroDiscoveries camps held every summer in American Samoa to encourage students to learn about the marine environment through interactive games and activities. This group also supports Earth Day, Arbor Week and Coastweeks activities that occur throughout the year. Through these partnerships, Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary has been able to reach audiences throughout the territory and promote the importance of marine conservation in American Samoa.



Sanctuary Staff Assist in Tsunami Recovery

On Sept. 29, 2009, a magnitude 8.3 earthquake struck 190 km southwest of American Samoa and generated a tsunami that devastated shorelines throughout the region. Following these events, the sanctuary worked with territorial partners to assist with the recovery efforts. On the ground, Fagatele Bay staff worked to remove marine debris. The sanctuary also collaborated with local agencies to prepare a Post-Tsunami Coastal Impact and Damage Assessment Report to identify the areas that incurred the most damage. In November, a NOAA team further determined areas to focus on and was able to remove about 8,500 pounds of debris from the reef slope using a combination of freedivers and SCUBA divers.

