

FY18 Accomplishments

BACKGROUND

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa was established in 1996 to protect 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 resources. 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.

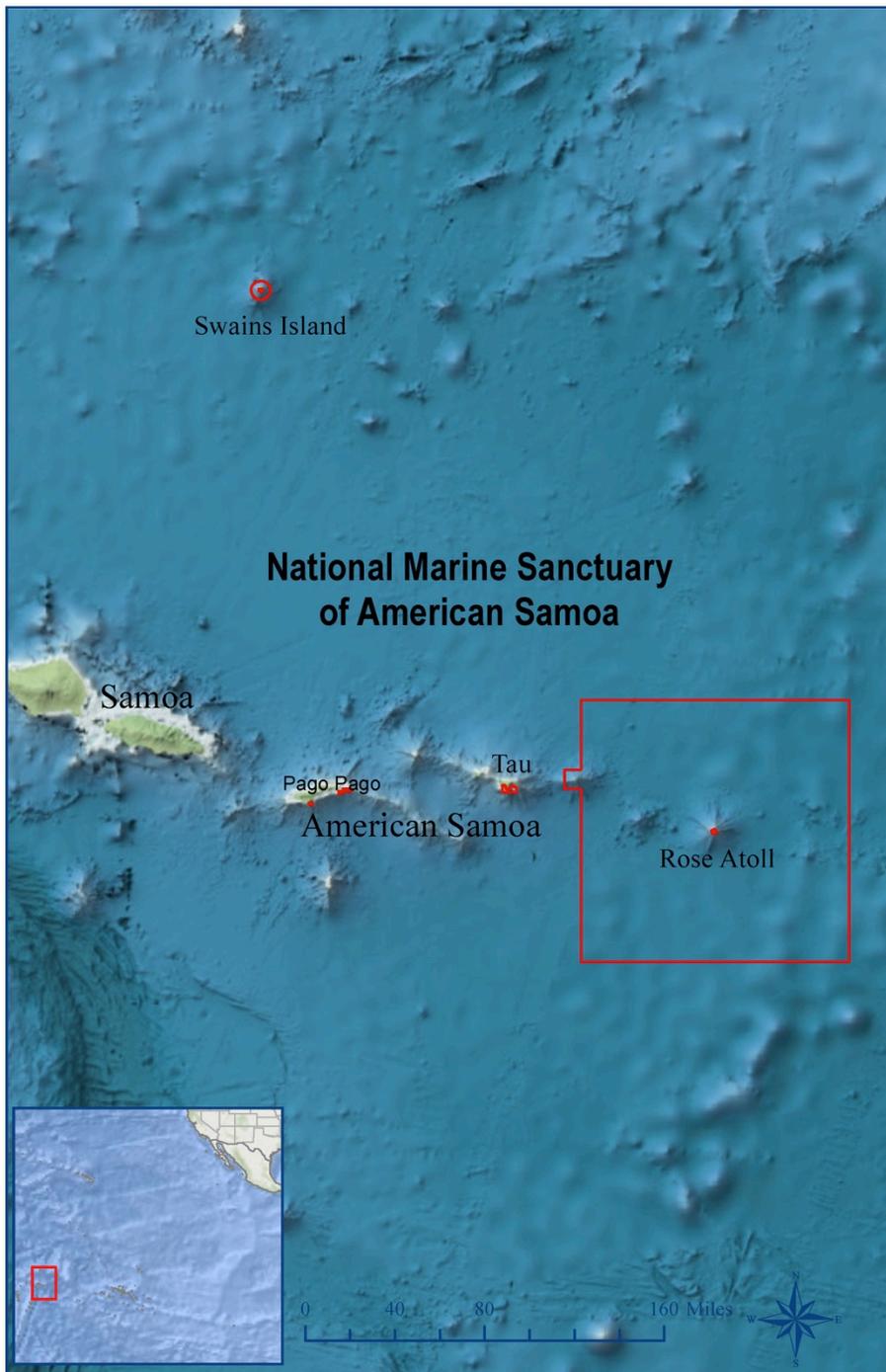




Photo: Courtney Tierney, NOAA

A student takes a virtual dive and explores the ocean surrounding her Sanctuary village



Photo: NOAA/NMSSAS

Stakeholders are engaged in the inaugural Conservation Research Science Round Table



Photo: Mareike Sudek, NOAA

A picture taken aboard the Research Vessel Hi'ialakai of the slope at Rose Atoll showing the beautifully purple CCA (crustose coralline algae) that makes the atoll so special.

Ocean Exploration through Virtual Dives

The National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa Foundation and NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries sponsored the creation of the "Virtual Dive Expedition Kit" to engage students, residents, and visitors through guided virtual tours of sanctuary waters. This interactive kit uses the Google Expeditions platform and includes a sanctuary-specific lesson plan. It has been used as a classroom learning tool by the American Samoa Department of Education and a precursor to the Sanctuary Summer Science in the Village program. It was also featured in the island-wide launch of "Get into Your Sanctuary Day".

American Samoa's First Conservation Research Science Roundtable

Scientists, educators, and policymakers came together for the inaugural "Conservation Research Science Roundtable" hosted by National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa. 22 stakeholders from local government, federal agencies, and non-profit organizations identified top research priorities concerning coral reef restoration and watershed management in the American Samoa national marine sanctuary and incorporated a research science network committed to developing collaborative strategies to benefit American Samoa. The meeting was an important step in identifying needs and opportunities with the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa.

Hi'ialakai Research Voyage and Ship Tour

A Rapid Assessment and Monitoring Program, which included a focused survey in sanctuary management areas, was conducted across American Samoa by the National Marine Fisheries Ecosystem Sciences Division in collaboration with the Research Vessel Hi'ialakai. This research cruise is a major contributor of invaluable data on fish populations and coral reef health and represents continued partnership, which is vital to sanctuary management plans. More than 120 community members and sanctuary partners were invited to tour the ship and learn first-hand about the cruise's research and key findings.

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa Looking Ahead to FY19

- Develop an Underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) program in American Samoa by collaborating with Michigan's Stockbridge High School's world class robotics team and the American Samoa Department of Education.
- Promote awareness of allowable and prohibited fishing methods in sanctuary waters by involving 'alia subsistence fishermen and recreational fishers in an annual Fagota Mo Taeao (meaning Fishing for Tomorrow) open fishing tournament, led by the sanctuary's advisory council.
- Highlight the significance of fautasi longboat canoeing as part of American Samoa's unique marine cultural landscape by working with partners to host a Fautasi symposium, connecting traditional stewardship with preservation of culture and environment.