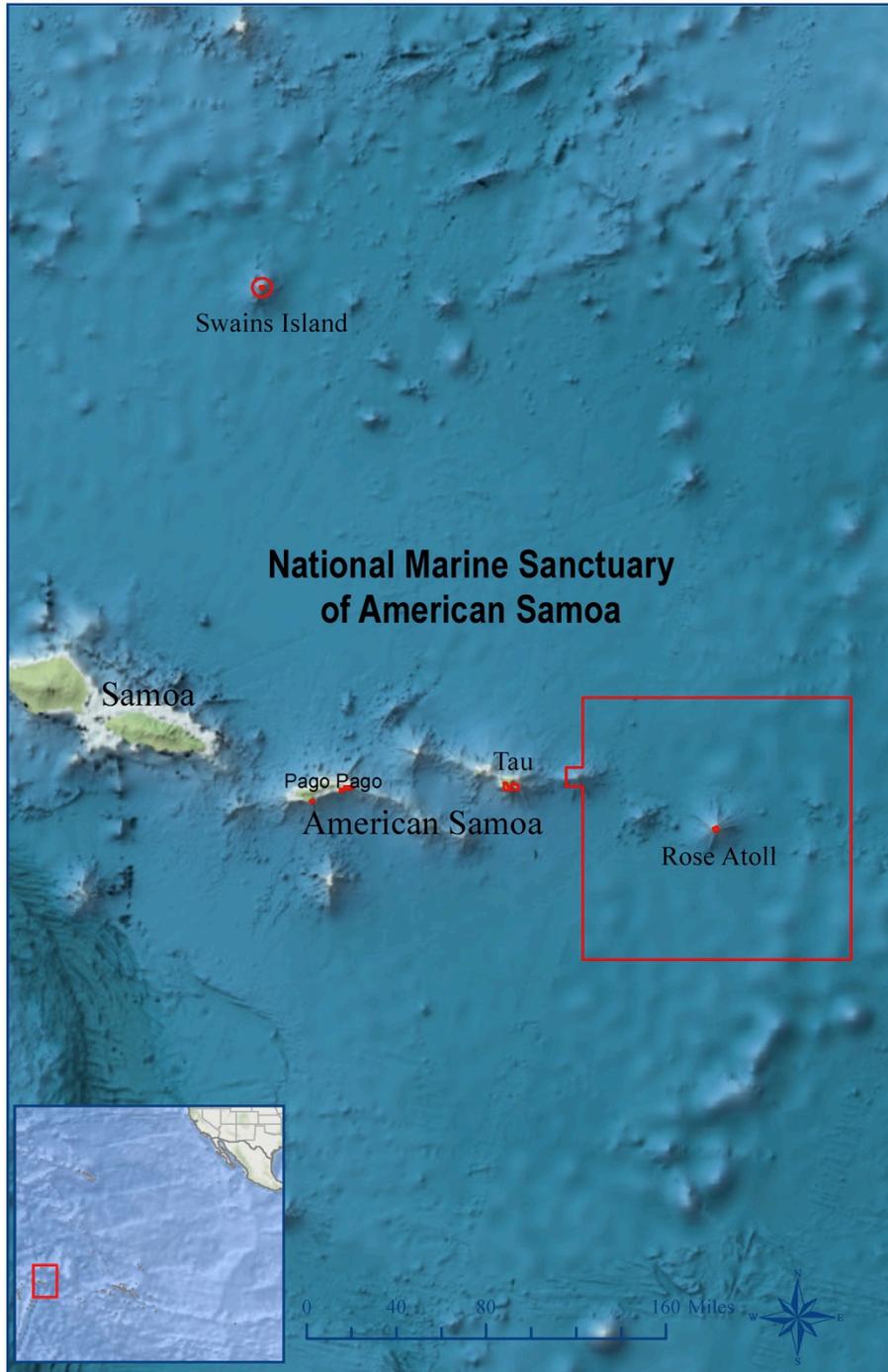


FY19 Accomplishments



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 14 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.



National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa



Photo: Nerelle Que/NOAA

Over 100 participants engaged in the inaugural Fautasi Heritage Symposium from April 10-12, 2019.

Inaugural Fautasi Heritage Symposium and Exhibits

In collaboration with the American Samoa Historic Preservation Office, National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa hosted the first ever Fautasi Heritage Symposium. The event included distinguished guest presentations on fautasi history, sport, tourism, and craftsmanship; oral history breakout sessions; and a new exhibit with guided tours featuring the largest formal collection of fautasi historic images. This is one of the most important sanctuary efforts to preserve American Samoa's maritime connections to the ocean, as part of an ongoing maritime heritage program initiative.

Underwater Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROV) Program & Competition

Less than a year since the introduction of ROVs to the classroom, the first underwater ROV competition in American Samoa was held. Teams from 11 high schools were challenged to design and build their ROV, and test its capabilities through mission tasks modeled after real case scenarios. The success of these ROV programs is possible through key partnerships between the sanctuary and the American Samoa Department of Education, STEAM Initiative working group, Stockbridge InvenTeam, and Marine Advanced Technical Education Center.



Photo: Nerelle Que/NOAA

Students representing 11 high schools participated in the first underwater ROV competition in American Samoa.

Advanced Scientific Partnerships

The sanctuary advanced two major scientific partnerships. Working with multiple agencies, the sanctuary established the only "sentinel" site for ocean acidification in the southern hemisphere. In addition, Ocean Exploration Trust's *E/V Nautilus* conducted its first cruise in American Samoa, targeting unexplored priority sites in the sanctuary. A total of 10 ROV dives yielded 18 fish and benthic transect surveys, 19 photogrammetry imaging, 123 biological samples, and the discovery of a new hydrothermal plume at the Vailulu`u Seamount.



Photo: Nerelle Que/NOAA

Local partner agencies have worked with the sanctuary to conduct bi-monthly ocean acidification monitoring.

Looking Ahead to FY20

- National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa will develop a Condition Report. A site visit of Muliava (Rose Atoll) as well as the establishment of annual research monitoring in Tutuila, Aunu`u, and Ta`u sanctuary management areas are planned as part of this goal.
- The 4th annual Fagota Mo Taeao Open Fishing Tournament will be held to increase awareness of sustainable fishing methods, continue public and private partnerships, and engage with local fishing communities as ocean stewards.
- The sanctuary will publish the Fautasi Heritage Magazine to document the maritime cultural heritage landscape in American Samoa and to provide essential visitor resources such as trail signs, brochures, maps, and guide books.