

## FY17 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.



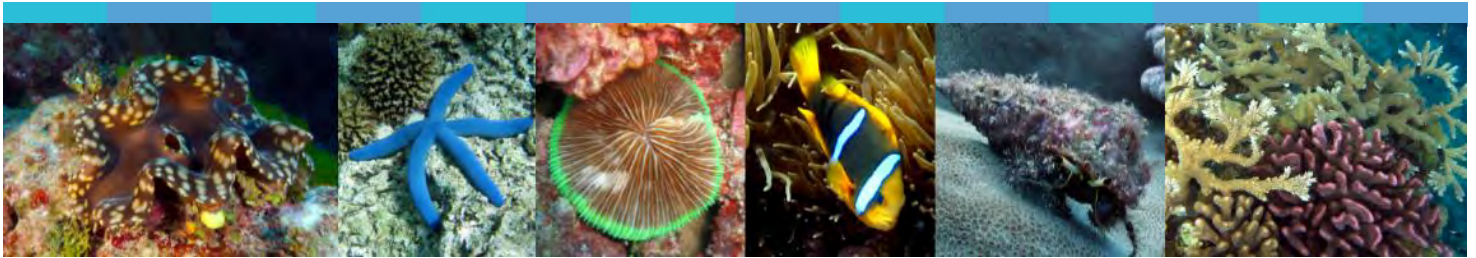


Photo: NOAA

Youth group performed cultural dancing for tourists/visitors from cruise ships.

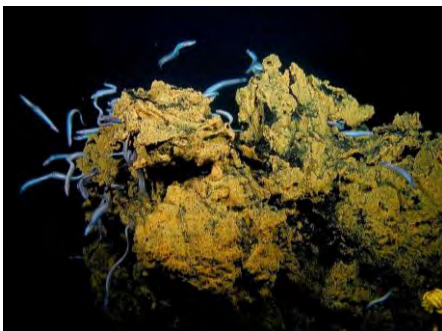


Photo: NOAA

Swarms of small eels, *Dysommia rugosa*, live in the crevices on the summit of Nafanua, nicknamed "Eel City."



Photo: Veronika Mortenson/NOAA

A coconut crab was observed by "Sanctuary Summer Science in the Village" students at the Fagalua/Fogama'a sanctuary site.

Festival of Sites: *Village-to-Visitor Program* - Projecting the value of people and place

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, NOAA's *Okeanos Explorer* staff, high school students, and the local community participated in the Festival of Sites "*Village-to-Visitor Program*," to mark the in-port visit of two cruise ships, *Sea Princess* and *Emerald Princess*. This event attracted more than 900 visitors who experienced cultural and learning activities, ranging from coconut husking to coconut scraping/straining, to basket weaving and dancing. Exhibits were used to showcase and sell local crafts, take virtual dives, and share information about deep ocean exploration.

#### Deep-sea exploration

Over three months, NOAA and partners conducted two telepresence-enabled ocean exploration cruises on the NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer*. The ship collected critical baseline information of unknown and poorly known deep-water areas in American Samoa, with an emphasis on Rose Atoll Marine National Monument and National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa. The crew mapped thousands of miles of seafloor, discovered various previously undescribed species, and collected many biological and geological samples.

#### Sanctuary Summer Science in the Village

The 2017 Sanctuary Summer Science in the Village program motivated, empowered, and engaged more than 150 students in thinking about conservation and health of resources as a value they need to maintain and sustain. A two-week science course within each of the four sanctuary management areas, **Fagatele, Fagalua/Fogama'a, Aunu'u, and Ta'u**, provided hands-on activities about ocean conservation. The importance of coral reefs, coral bleaching, ocean acidification, marine debris removal, and connection between land and ocean environment were all themes discussed during the partner agency presentations.

#### National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa

##### Looking Ahead to FY18

- In collaboration with federal partners, National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa will lead a Hyperbaric Chamber training to ensure the most efficient, safe, and comfortable use for divers/patients.
- To increase awareness of allowable and prohibited fishing methods in National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, the sanctuary has partnered with local fishermen and community to organize an open fishing tournament in sanctuary waters.
- In a collaborative effort to foster economic growth in the village community, the **sanctuary has partnered with Aunu'u Toloa Co-Op** to provide assistance to village-based visitor service programs.