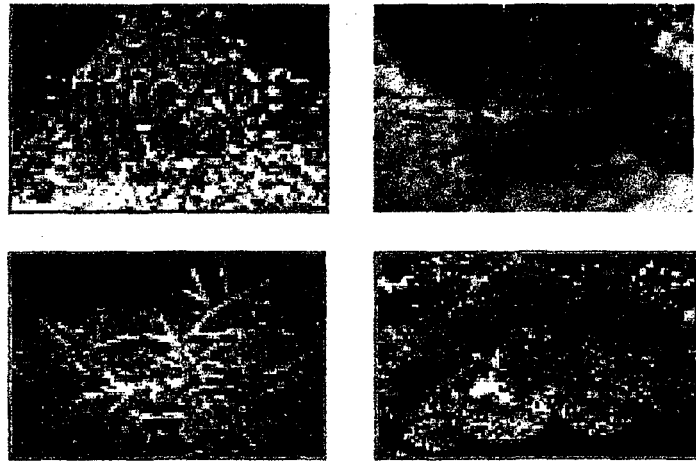


Marine Protected Areas in American Samoa



Status of current efforts
and analysis of needs

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1. TERRITORIAL DESCRIPTION

American Samoa is a group of seven islands (five volcanic islands and two coral atolls), located in the South Pacific. The land area of the islands is approximately 76 square miles. The five volcanic islands, which are the major inhabited islands of American Samoa, are Tutuila, Aunu'u, Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u. Tutuila, the largest island, is also the center of government and business. Aunu'u, a small island, is situated one mile off the southeast coast of Tutuila. The three islands of Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u, collectively referred to as the Manu'a Islands, are 66 miles east of Tutuila.

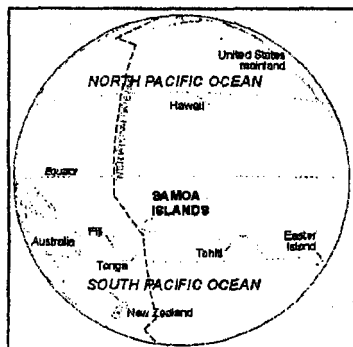
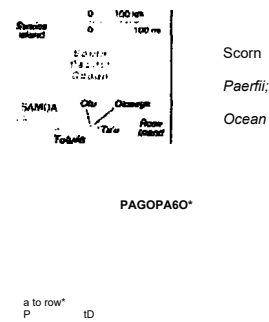


Figure 1. Location of the Samoan Islands



Figure!. American Samoa

2. COASTAL MANAGEMENT

American Samoa is fortunate to have a variety of means and methods of managing its coastal resources. The Territory does have a coastal management program (ASCMP), as in other U.S. coastal jurisdictions, and there are several agencies, both local and federal, that contribute to the success of management endeavors.

To this end, the Governor's Coral Reef Advisory Group (CRAG) was established to harmonize and coordinate the activities of five agencies in American Samoa; the American Samoa Department of Commerce (which houses ASCMP), the National Park of American Samoa, the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency, the Community College of American Samoa, and the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. The purpose of this coordination is to protect and preserve coral reef ecosystems while attempting to balance and satisfy development needs of the people and the fe'asamoa (Samoan way of life). CRAG is a voluntary entity and its financial needs are federally funded. The collaboration that CRAG provides, as well as the need to work cooperatively with traditional resource users, makes American Samoa unique in the coastal management community.

Resource management of the Territory's fragile coastal and marine assets is an on-going challenge for CRAG agencies. The need to have innovative tools and creative negotiation mechanisms to inform landowners, fishermen, children, tourists and cultural leaders on the importance of resource preservation is highly required given the limited economy and landmass in American Samoa. Our limited natural resources are threatened by expanding

population growth, wetland loss, overfishing, and coral reef habitat destruction. Coral ecosystem planning is concerned with population pressure, land use, overfishing, global climate change, and monitoring.

3. CURRENT MPA EFFORTS

American Samoa has several MP As in a three-tiered hierarchy. While the western definition that incorporates legislation as a key element cannot be applied to all, village protections, such as taboos, help fill this gap.

3.1 Federal

There are three federal protected areas that meet the definition of an MPA.

3.1.1 Fagetele Bay National Marine Sanctuary

The National Marine Sanctuary Program (16 U.S.C 1431) was established by Congress in 1972 to protect nationally significant marine areas for their ecological and historical value. The Program is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration under the Department of Commerce, and utilizes comprehensive resource management strategies as well as education and awareness activities to increase public understanding and facilitate use of these marine areas.

Fagetele Bay National Marine Sanctuary was designated in 1986 in response to a proposal from the American Samoa Government to the National Marine Sanctuary Program. The Sanctuary comprises a fringing coral reef ecosystem nestled within an eroded volcanic crater on the island of Tutuila, American Samoa. This smallest and most remote of all the National Marine Sanctuaries is the only true tropical reef in the program. It provides a home to a wide variety of animals and plants, which thrive in the protected waters of the bay. The coral reef ecosystem found in the Sanctuary contains many of the species native to this part of the Indo-Pacific biogeographic region. Turtles, whales, sharks and the giant clam all find refuge in this protected area.