



Press Release

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Contact: info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or 1 (684) 770-1049

Students Learn about Sustainable Fisheries and Ecosystem Management

UTULEI, AMERICAN SAMOA (7 March 2011) Nearly 60 students, teachers, administrators and parents participated in the Student Symposium on Sustainable Fisheries Development and Ecosystem Management held March 5 at the Governor Rex Lee Auditorium in Utulei. Hosted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, this six-hour event provided high school students with an opportunity to learn about marine resource issues in American Samoa in an informal environment similar to a professional conference.

The students took note of presentations by invited speakers Iolani Kauhane, University of Hawaii, on Native Hawaiian marine resource management and Lucas Moxey, NOAA Ocean Watch in Honolulu, on watershed monitoring. They also learned about recent research and fishery development projects in American Samoa funded by the Council through grants from the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program and the American Samoa Marine Conservation Plan. The research projects included coastal circulations around Tutuila and their effect on fish larval dispersal delivered by principal investigator Phil Wiley of the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency and population surveys of the humphead wrasse presented by Marlowe Sabater, a former biologist with the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) who now works for the Council. Ueta Fasili, former director of the Western Samoa Fisheries Department who is now contracting with the Council, discussed the importance of private fishermen and government agencies working together to develop the territory's fisheries. The Council is supporting the development of boat ramps and a fish market on Tutuila and fuel storage and an ice house in the Manu'a Islands. Rounding out the presentations were Selaina Vaiatutola, DMWR, who spoke about the community-based marine protection program, and Mark Mitsuyasu from the Council who introduced students to the online fishing and ecosystem monitoring tool found at www.fishbox.org.

The students also enjoyed hands-on demonstration on biosampling conducted by Domingo Ochillo and the DMWR staff; the making of oka by Paul Salofa and the Public School Lunch Program staff; and the American Samoa traditional lunar calendar by Apisaloma Toleafoa of Samoan Studies Institute; as well as display booths staffed by the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the National Resources and Conservation Services. Fishing rods and reels were given to the winners of the student poster contest: first place Travis Pavihi, grade 10, Tafuna HS; 2nd place Nila Faalavelave, grade 9, Samoana HS; 3rd place Ruta Faalavelave, grade 11, Tafuna HS; and 4th place Fia Vaeoso, grade 11, Samoana HS. GPS units, water sampling kits and other educational resource materials were awarded to the teachers with the most students in attendance: 1st place Claire Bacus, Nuuli Voc-Tech HS; 2nd place Batta Siatu'u, Samoana HS; 3rd placed (tied) Jan Brugmen, South Pacific Academy, and Leetha, Tafuna HS. The day ended with students who demonstrated the knowledge they learned during the day being awarded fishing poles, masks and snorkels, cooler bags and measuring tapes that will help them conduct biosampling. The students also enjoyed viewing a video of the 2010 summer high school course on marine fisheries and resources, which was funded by the Council in partnership with DMWR. The video was produced by John Wasako, publisher of the local magazine *BusyCorner*.

A similar program as the student symposium was presented to the Matu'u and Faganeanea community on March 4 and the island's mayors on March 7 at the Office of Samoan Affairs. Fishermen and the public are invited to participate in the final Sustainable Fisheries and Ecosystem Management program at the Fishers Forum, 6 to 9 p.m., March 8, at the Gov. Lee Auditorium. For more information, call Fini Aitaotao at 731-0224.

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