



# Press Release

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## Local Advisors Suggest Fishery Development, CMSP Actions for American Samoa

UTULEI, AMERICAN SAMOA (7 March 2011) Fisheries development, coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP), and climate change ranked high among the concerns of the Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committee (REAC) and the Advisory Panels for the American Samoa and Pacific Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs), which met in Utulei on March 4 and 5, respectively. These American Samoa groups advise the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council on management of fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) surrounding American Samoa and other US Pacific Islands. Their recommendations will be considered by the Council from March 8 to 10, 2011, at the Gov. Lee Auditorium in Utulei.

Revitalizing American Samoa's small pelagic fishery and ensuring the success of the territory's fish processing facilities were a main focus of the advisory bodies, which made the following recommendations:

- Modify the longline limited entry program to provide the American Samoa community the priority to obtain permits
- Halt development of the Lyon's Park boat ramp and reassess using alternate boat ramps such as Leone, Asili or Fagaalu
- Directly support small local companies (e.g., ice making companies) or subsidize costs incurred by fishermen
- Identify a place on the west coast of Tutuila that could be used as a fish market
- Identify other ways to export fresh fish out of American Samoa, including liaising with airlines
- Develop training programs on vessel financing, vessel safety, fishing and fish handling techniques
- Expedite efforts to secure disaster relief funding given the current opportunities for fisheries development
- Improve energy production efficiency in American Samoa to benefit American Samoa residents and businesses and help ensure the continuity of the tuna canneries.

Regarding CMSP, the REAC and the Advisory Panels differed on their recommendations regarding the large vessel prohibited area, which currently restricts vessels larger than 50 feet in length from fishing within 50 miles offshore of the islands throughout the American Samoa archipelago. The Council is considering reducing the closure to 25 miles offshore as well as adjusting the boundaries around Rose Atoll to make them consistent with the boundaries of the recently established Rose Atoll Marine National Monument. The REAC did not support making any changes to the large vessel prohibited area around Tutuila, the Manua Islands or Swains Island. The Advisory Panels, on the other hand, supported the option to reduce the area closure and also recommended a community development program be funded by levying a fee on large longline vessels that would be provided access to the waters from 25 to 50 miles offshore.

The advisory bodies also made several CMSP recommendations regarding the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary, especially its expansion plans to incorporate other sites:

- Provide clarification about the scientific process and rationale for the selected sites
- Evaluate potential safety issues of implementing additional no-take marine protected areas (MPAs), such as increasing the risk of drowning should fishermen be displaced to rougher waters

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- Submit an article in Samoan to the local newspapers to inform all communities about the upcoming actions and proposed sites
- Hold meetings in communities other than those with MPAs proposed directly off their coastline, as fishing pressure may move to these other areas and it may prohibit access to fishing grounds for which they currently have permission to fish from the other communities
- Assess impacts to non-commercial fishermen from the proposed no-take area off of Au'nuu
- Translate into Samoan the Sanctuary's management plan proposal to expand to other sites as well as the upcoming Federal Register Notice about this proposal

Other CMSP related recommendations made by the advisory bodies included the following:

- Request that the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission provide VMS information for all foreign vessels that may travel through the US EEZ around American Samoa and monitor vessels that transit close to areas with sensitive habitat such as Rose Atoll and Swains Island
- Submit an article in Samoan and English to the local newspaper describing the Federal Register notice (76 FR 4139) published January 24, 2011, that requests public comment on the National Ocean Council's draft strategic action plans, especially CMSP, and noting the comment period closure of April 29, 2011
- Hold a workshop to assess the different uses and users of Pago Pago Harbor, initiate a CMSP process to help address some of the existing conditions within the harbor and identify CMSP sites

The REAC also recommended that a climate change curriculum be introduced in American Samoa schools and that local community members be involved to monitor areas, gather information, and help create ecosystem models based on the American Samoa environment.

As part of the Council meeting, a free Fishers Forum will be open to fishermen and the general public from 6 to 9 p.m. March 8, at the Governor Lee Auditorium. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council was established by Congress to manage fisheries in offshore waters around Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the US Pacific remote island areas. Regulatory recommendations from the Council are transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval. For more information or the agendas, visit [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org); email [info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov](mailto:info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov); or phone (808) 522-8220.

**Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council:** Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI governors: Stephen Haleck, business owner (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); William Sword, recreational fisherman (American Samoa); Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Chair); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI) (Vice Chair); Frederick Duerr, resort and hotel consultant (Hawaii); Julie Leialoha, environmentalist (Hawaii); and Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii). Designated state officials: Ignacio Dela Cruz, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Mariquita Taitague, Guam Department of Agriculture; William Aila, Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources; and Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Michael Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Don Palawski, U.S. Fish and Wildlife; RAdm Charles Ray, U.S. Coast Guard 14th District; and Bill Gibbons-Fly, U.S. Department of State.