

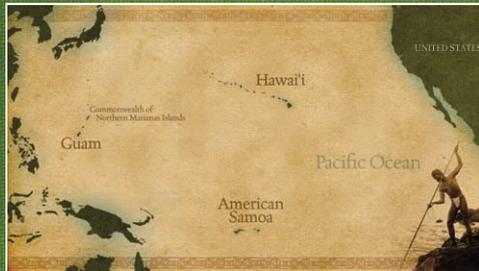
Indigenous US Pacific Islanders

“RELYING ON TRADITION”

Pacific Ocean

- 70.1 million square miles
- One third of the Earth's surface
- Larger than all of Earth's land area combined

The US Pacific Islands comprise about 1.5 million square miles and account for half of the United State's exclusive economic zone.



Calling the Pacific home are the indigenous Pacific Islanders of the State of Hawai'i and the US territories of American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands. They migrated to their separate archipelago homelands and have survived for millennia on small, isolated islands, each evolving into unique cultures, languages and traditions. Seafaring people, they share a common bond and made oceanic voyages, visiting and trading with each other.

Guam and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands

The Chamorro have inhabited the Mariana Archipelago for nearly four thousand years. The archipelago includes the 15 islands that make up the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the largest, southernmost island of Guam. These islands are also home to the Refaluwasch, indigenous people from the Caroline Islands who have interacted with the Chamorro from ancient times.

Waves of Western colonization began in the 1500s by Magellan and later included Germans, Japanese and Americans, which had a devastating impact on the Chamorro. Yet they continue their ancient practices and their intimate relationship with the land and the ocean, keenly observing minute changes in the environment and adapting to them.



Talaya is a traditional net fishing method on Guam. "Strung the fish and getting ready without carrying them to the land or port", said fisherman Juan Remonetti. Photo by grand-daughter Leana Reyes.

American Samoa



Lava fishing is a community event in Pago Pago, American Samoa. Fishermen are seen together with a bumper-wreck hauler of catching land to pack the fish tonight shore.

American Samoa, the southernmost territory of the United States, consists of five rugged, volcanic islands and two coral atolls. Indigenous Samoans make up 90 percent of the population. The traditional language and culture thrive.

Fa'a Samoa means everything is done the Samoan way, centered in the aiga, the family. If anything happens to one family or one village, everyone else is affected. Fa'a Samoa makes the culture strong.

Hawai'i

Hawai'i is the northernmost island group in Polynesia. While it is the eight main islands that are known to most visitors, the state actually encompasses an entire volcanic chain of dozens of islands, atolls and shoals spread over 1,500 miles.



On the windward side of Oahu, Native Hawaiians are working to restore the fire and wetlands, using traditional, organic farm fields. Using a combination of traditional science and cultural practices, the project addresses food, conservation and the climate change impacts of rising sea levels, increased drought and flooding.

The Hawaiian people populated this archipelago between thirteen hundred and three thousand years ago, developing traditions and practices that address the environment and ecosystem that are uniquely part of Hawai'i. For native Hawaiians, there is a strong spiritual and physical connection to the 'aina (land), moana (ocean) and all the elements that make up our world.

Through their deep understanding of their families, their history and their traditions, the indigenous US Pacific Islanders are uncomplicated by modern technology. Stories passed down to children and grandchildren for generations provide an understanding about where they came from and the place around them. This knowledge is reliable, held internally and based on millennia of intimate relationships with and direct observations of the land and the sea.



About the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

In 1976, the US Congress established the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council to manage fisheries in the US EEZ waters (generally 3-200 miles offshore) surrounding the State of Hawaii, US Territories of American Samoa and Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the US Pacific remote island areas. This area of nearly 1.5 million square miles constitutes about half of the entire US EEZ. The Council fosters opportunities for indigenous island communities to participate in fishing and fishery resource management.