



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

189th Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

AMERICAN SAMOA ISLAND REPORT

1. Island Fisheries Update

Only 2 Pago-based alia engage in commercial fishing at this time - one trolling, the other long-lining with occasional bottom-fishing for subsistence. The long-line alia lands an average of 400 pounds weekly, to supply restaurants. The 1 alia dedicated to commercial bottom-fishing is still inoperable.

All other fishing activity involves bottom-fishing and trolling trips for subsistence or recreation. Only 3 alia engage in sporadic trolling and some light bottom-fishing in coastal waters. Yellowfin tuna and skipjack are the predominant species landed by trolling. Occasional catches of *masimasi*, wahoo or rainbow runners biting lines.

Eight Manu'a-based alia currently engage in mostly bottom-fishing near-shore with the occasional trolling trip. The Manu'a alia fleet generally fish for subsistence with a small portion of the catch sold or given away to cover operational costs. There is little export to Tutuila, the main island.

About 500 pounds of fresh reef fish is caught weekly and supplied to some stores or is sold roadside by a dozen spear-fishermen.

Rough sea conditions plague the calendar and keeps many boats tied up. Floating docks in Malaloa remains unsafe and in a state of disrepair. In addition, the wharf in Ta'u, Manu'a desperately needs floating docks for their 10 active alia. Unsafe conditions there increase the risk of damage to boats and injury to the crew.

2. Super Alia Update

On November 24, 2021, ASG's Chief Procurement Officer awarded the contract to build 4 "Super Alia" Fishing Vessels to Armstrong Consolidated Inc., based in Port Townsend, Washington. According to ASGDOC spokesman, the contract to build and purchase the 4 vessels, hauling truck and trailer has been consummated and the Notice to Proceed is expected to follow.

The first complete turn-key vessel is expected to arrive in Pago Pago on April 2022. The remaining 3 'Super Alia' will follow, fully completed with multi-purpose commercial fishing gear on-board. The cost of the government assets is Three Million Forty Four Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety Six Dollars (\$3,044,996.00). This program/project is funded by the USDOC Economic Development Administration.

According to ASG-DOC fishery spokesman, the shelves of American Samoa are very narrow and do not promote high fishery yields, but can be monitored. Thus, bottom-dwelling fish and shellfish are not found in great abundance in-shore. However, the off-shore banks are not being fished commercially, and there is a large population of fish stocks presents there. It would be beneficial for the 'Super Alia' fleet to fish the off-shore banks, with monitoring and data collection to be part of the extension plan.

3. Fishing Tournament

SOPAC Inc. hosted the annual Buds and Suds Fishing Tournament 2-day tournament during Thanksgiving weekend. More than 15 vessels signed up for the event.

Category Winners

1. Marlin- only one caught
2. Yellowfin- 127 lbs
3. Sailfish- 90 lbs
4. Wahoo- 40 lbs
5. Dogtooth- 18 lbs
6. Masimasi- 22 lbs
7. Bottomfish
8. Misc.

One boat brought in over 300 pounds of yellowfin tuna on the first day.

4. Palolo Harvest

The 2021 Palolo Harvest for Tutuila in October was very poor, likely due to unfavorable weather. Many harvesters stayed on shore for safety and a few reported a light showing of low quality palolo. The much anticipated "November showing" was also a bust.

The Manu'a Islands had more favorable weather and did much better in October with an average palolo harvest. No palolo was observed in November in Manua.

5. Twin Tragedies

October 2021 was tragic month and filled the local community with horror as 2 fishermen lost their lives in 2 separate incidents. The first fatality was reported on Oct. 14th, when the body of a spear-fisherman was found at the Vatia shoreline. Investigators suspect the victim suffered a shark attack. Another death occurred on Oct. 28th, when a 48-year-old father drowned seeking palolo near the end of airport runway. Bad weather and strong currents swept the victim into open water. A companion tried to help but was also taken by the current. Others in the area attempted to rescued both men, but only one survived.

6. Orca Sighting

A sighting of an Orca, or "Killer Whale", near the Manu'a Islands was reported recently. An alia fisherman from Ofu, Manu'a made the rare sighting during a fishing trip with his son. He recounted the day when he spotted a curled-over dorsal fin projecting out of the water, but he paid little attention to it. But when the large, black and white mammal appeared next to his double-hulled boat, he gave the Orca his undivided attention. A previous sighting of Orca in

Samoa waters was in 2019. Two large and 2 small Orca were photographed a few miles off the coast of Savai'i.

7. Status of Fishing Aggregating Devices (FADs)

Only two FADs are currently deployed in American Samoa. Fishermen reported catching mostly skipjack, and occasionally bill fish at FAD B. FAD E have been difficult to locate by fishermen in *Fagasa*. DMWR staff working on fabricating FAD C after FADs A and C were lost to vandalism. FAD D is still missing.

8. CARES Act

The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission has confirmed that the CARES Act funding distribution for Guam was completed in November, and they have started the process for American Samoa. Many of the local applicants did not satisfy the requirements as provided for in the Act. Nonetheless, those that did not qualify or meet the requirements for Round 1 may apply for relief in Round 2. The application process for CARES Act Round 2 will be publicized once the distribution for the first tranche has been completed.

9. Cannery Update

Starkist Samoa has started its second shift in late November, after several months of being able to only man a one-shift operation due to a labor shortage. A recruitment of guest workers from Samoa has been the main catalyst for returning to two shifts, albeit production volume is still not at full planned capacity. ASG has approved the request from the cannery for continued guest worker recruitment, and work is ongoing. COVID impacts to flights and transportation continue to hinder this recruitment process.

The cannery is planning its annual 2-week maintenance shutdown, from December 18th to January 2, 2022. This is an annual planned shutdown that not only allows for maintenance, but also offers an opportunity for cannery employees to spend some quality time with their families. 2022 cannery production will commence on January 3, 2022.