



190th Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

AMERICAN SAMOA ISLAND REPORT

1. COVID Update

American Samoa confirmed community spread of COVID-19 on February 20, 2022. ASG issued a memo stating that territory has entered Code Red (highest risk level). Businesses were restricted to limited operating hours. Roadside markets were not permitted to sell fish and produce during the first two weeks. At the time of this report, there were 1,495 positive cases, and 8 current hospitalizations. 82.1% of the total population fully vaccinated (90.3% of eligible population fully vaccinated). Businesses are allowed to operate from 5:00am to 8:00pm. A 9:00pm curfew is being enforced.

Travelers from the US are no longer required to quarantine but are ordered to home isolation for 10 days. Inter-island flights are banned after Western Samoa confirmed its first positive case on March 17th.



2. Island Fisheries

Only 1 Pago-based alia engage in commercial fishing at this time. The long-line alia continues to land over 200 pounds weekly, to supply restaurants.

Four alia engage in intermittent fishing for subsistence or recreation. Yellowfin tuna and skipjack are the predominant species landed by trolling. Dogtooth and rainbow runners are also caught with very little masimasi (dolphinfish).

Six 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. Manu'a fishermen have reported catching lots of yellowfin, rainbow runners, and blue marlin.

Spear-fishermen continued to supply some stores in the last quarter, although two weeks during CODE Red made it impossible for spear-fishermen to sell their catch along the roadside. Residents observed the shortage of fresh fish at the local stores during COVID-19 restrictions.



3. Fishing Tournaments

Six boats participated in the first Pago Pago Game Fishing Association (PPGFA) bottomfish species tournament. Despite the unexpected rough weather, an impressive total of 35 different species were caught. It was difficult to deep drop with the wind, so most fish were from shallower waters, and no giants. DMWR crew assisted in identifying, measuring, and weighing the catch.

Tava'e Ula = 700 points, Double Hooked = 400 points. and Sau Ia! = 200 points.

1st place Heaviest fish - Michael Marsik, Tava'e Ula (10.2 lb Kusakara Snapper)
2nd place Heaviest fish - Sally Asafo, Double Hooked (9.6 lb Kusakara Snapper)
3rd place Heaviest fish - Andy Wearing, Double Hooked (8.8 lb Black Jack)
3rd place Heaviest fish - Alden Tagarino, Tava'e Ula (8.8 lb Rusty Jobfish)

1st place Grand Slam - Tava'e Ula (22 species)
2nd place Grand Slam - Sau Ia! (19 species)
3rd place Grand Slam - Double Hooked (9 species)

The Annual Flag Day DMWR Fishing Tournament is canceled due to COVID-19.

4. Cannery Update

StarKist Samoa is back to normal operating hours after the cannery stopped production during Code Red. The cannery closed on February 21st and reopened on March 11th, with



recommendations from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) medical experts who traveled to the territory. No federal programs are available at this time to provide financial assistance to employees who were laid off during CODE Red shutdown. Banned inter Samoa flights make it difficult for the cannery to keep bringing in workers from Samoa to make up for the worker shortage.

5. AS Bottomfish Data Workshop for Fishermen

Twelve bottomfish fishermen attended the Tutuila data evaluation workshop to review datasets and analyses proposed to inform the 2023 assessment for American Samoa BMUS. The workshop in Manua was attended by 25 fisherfolks, 5 of whom are chiefs. Fisherfolks expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to be part of the evaluation process. Fisherfolks agreed that most of data does not reflect their experience. Data available for each species was reviewed by fishers. All fishers reported that they often engaged in mixed fishing between bottomfishing and trolling, depending on target species. Fishermen also asked the Council and PIFSC for programs to teach fishers the science behind fisheries management.

