



## American Samoa Motu Lipoti 196<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting

### American Samoa Shipyard Authority

The American Samoa Shipyard Authority completed another project within their recently renovated dry dock facility. The vessel MV Fasefulu slated for sandblasting and painting was strategically positioned within the dry dock area. Workers positioned the vessel on a series of sturdy wooden blocks allowing the workers to safely access the hull and facilitating efficient sandblasting and painting processes.

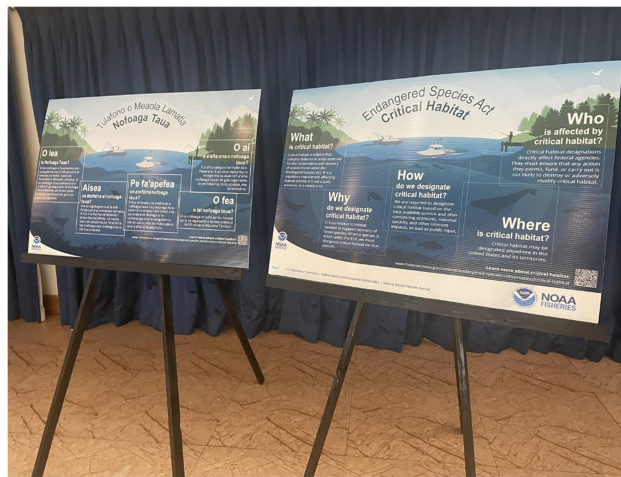
One of the initial steps in the preparation process involves the thorough removal of debris and marine growth from the underside of the boat. Photographs provided show workers diligently scraping and cleaning the hull's surface. To contain the sandblasting and painting activities and minimize the environmental impact, protective curtains have been erected around the work area. The installation of such curtains aligns with the shipyard's commitment to environmental responsibility and safety during the vessel maintenance process.

The project was completed on August 4, 2023.



## Green Sea Turtle Critical Habitat Public Hearing, American Samoa August 16, 2023

The public hearing brought to light several key concerns regarding the proposed critical habitat designation for the green sea turtle in American Samoa (AS). Tasi Mauga, an eyewitness to green turtles, questioned the basis for the turtle's endangerment in AS and inquired about the declining population's main predator. There were questions about the enforcement measures, fines, and penalties associated with the designation. Esther Fiatoa raised concerns about the limited scope of the meeting and the need to involve more islands in the discussion. Alex Jennings, representative for Swains Islands, emphasized the lack of consultation and consideration for AS's political status. Kelly Tagarino sought clarification on data sets and sea level rise impacts, while Carlos Sanchez expressed fears about the federal government's involvement and the impact of Chinese activities. Despite supportive voices like Aufai Areta and HTC Fiu Saelua, there was a shared concern about additional bureaucracy and potential impacts on ongoing projects, voiced by Taotasi Archie Soliai and Natalie Lote Palamo from DPA. NOAA Fisheries and USFWS acknowledged the concerns and emphasized ongoing collaboration and the importance of accurate data and science in decision-making.



## **ASG and NOAA Engage in Collaborative Dialogue Over Proposed Pacific Remote Islands National Marine Sanctuary**

Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga met with Dr. Richard W. Spinrad, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere & NOAA Administrator, in addressing President Biden's proposal for a new National Marine Sanctuary around the PRI. In attendance were other notable leaders such as NOAA Assistant Secretary Jainey Bashivi, Director of the Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs Makeda Okolo, Bettilou Taylor American Samoa liaison in Washington D.C., NOAA Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Director Lauren Wenzel, ASG Chief of Staff Loa Tuimavave Tauapai Laupola, ASG Attorney General Fainuulelei Alailima-Utu, Department of Marine & Wildlife Resources (DMWR) Director Taotasi Archie Soliai, GO Chief Counsel Kristi Thaxton and GO Counsel Terry VanEaton, Lafaele Keniseli, and Superintendent of the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa Atuatasi-Lelei Peau.

Governor Lemanu emphasized the need for inclusive dialogue and to consider the livelihoods of over 2000 cannery workers. Dr. Spinrad expressed commitment to an informed and inclusive decision making process and recognized the economic significance of the canneries to the territory. Assistant Secretary Bashivi also emphasized the importance of informed decision making on how to execute the President's initiative. Bashivi proposed hosting a workshop in American Samoa to have that dialogue with the local people. The meeting signified an important step for both entities towards collaboration in order to balance marine ecosystem preservation with the local economic well being of the territory. Many were skeptical of NMS promises by way of prior ignored commitments (no money for a marine lab) which questions their commitment to allowing all American Samoa fishing vessels from accessing the PRI all year round.



