

American Samoa Archipelago

202nd Council Meeting Motu Lipoti

This report provides an update on current issues and events related to fisheries in American Samoa.

Fisheries Issues/Events in American Samoa:

Economic Development & Sustainability:

A fishing education and business incubation program was launched by the Department of Commerce in American Samoa in January 2025, funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Fishing Education and Business Incubation Program: The Department of Commerce in American Samoa launched a fishing education and business incubation program in January 2025.



- The program aims to revolutionize commercial fishing in American Samoa by introducing advanced techniques and state-of-the-art vessels. It is designed to enhance safety, sustainability, and profitability for local fishermen.
- The program features the Super Alia, a high-tech fishing vessel capable of extended trips and equipped with cutting-edge technology to meet modern fishing demands.
- Offers classroom instruction and hands-on training on the water, led by experienced fishermen, including Captain Joe and master fisherman William Chute from Fiji, who bring decades of expertise in tuna longlining and deep-sea bottom fishing. The program is open to individuals 18 years and older interested in pursuing a career in commercial fishing. Applications are free and available at the Department of Commerce office at the Fagatogo Marketplace.
- The program will promote commercial fishing as a viable career option to high school and college students through community outreach.
- Participants will learn essential skills while adhering to federal regulations to ensure sustainable fishing practices and environmental stewardship.

- **Start Date:** January 28, 2025
- **Location:** Fagatogo Marketplace for application pick-up
- **Eligibility:** Must be 18 years or older
- **Cost:** Free
- **Super Alia Updates:** They are currently working on finalizing the vessel fishing tackle and MPlotter programs while also completing the setup of the training center. Additionally, they've provided a draft curriculum for the training and education program, which is under review and involves collaboration with stakeholders and partners to support workshops and seminars.

Rising Food Costs

According to the Department of Commerce, the price of fresh fish dropped 2.2% in January.

General Increase in Food Costs:

- The Basic Food Index for January showed a **0.9% increase**, continuing an upward trend since August 2024.
- Ten food commodities contributed to this increase.

Specific Food Price Changes:

- **Eggs:** Experienced the highest increase, rising by **15.1%**. The price of a dozen small eggs rose from \$3.32 in November to \$4.35 in January.
- **Other Increases:** Rice, bread, sugar, and butter also increased in price.
- **Decreases:** Taro, fresh fish, corned beef, pork spare ribs, and chicken prices dropped in January.
 - **Fresh fish dropped 2.2%.**
- **Unchanged:** The prices of water, saimin, and tuna remained unchanged.

Passport to Fishing

The "Passport to Fishing" program occurred on February 15, 2025, achieving its objectives despite occasional rain. The event successfully introduced youth to fishing and conservation principles, supported by community collaboration, and are intended as the first of multiple junior angler programs.

The event aimed to educate youth on ethical fishing and conservation, targeting students from Faga'itua High School, Olomoana Elementary, and Alofau Elementary School.

Grants from the International Game Fish Association, Fatoata, and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation's Ocean Odyssey funded the program. In-kind donations came from Godinet Rentals and the American Samoa Department of Marine & Wildlife Resources.

Volunteers from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary - American Samoa, ASG Marine Patrol, and the Pago Pago Game Fishing Association (PPGFA) executed the event. PPGFA members Pila Apted, Vee Simona, Melissa Pue, and Tepora Toliniu led the coordination.

The program featured educational booths on knot tying, led by Captain Will Sword, and baiting/casting, taught by Captain Nate Sagapolutele and Ropate Delana. Students applied these skills during a fishing trip on the ASG Marine Patrol cutter and PPGFA vessels: "Double Trouble", "Double Hooked", "Tava'e Ula", "Devorah", and "Amana".

Awards were given for First Fish, Best Cast, Best Conservationist, Best Steward, and Best at Knot Tying, recognizing student participation. Arrianna Auvaa contributed by producing a video and conducting interviews.

The day culminated in a thrilling fishing trip aboard the ASG Marine Patrol cutter and a fleet of local PPGFA vessels, including:

- "Double Trouble" – Captained by Chris Banse and Pafuti Tupua
- "Double Hooked" – Captained by Andy Wearing and Sally OlafaatasiAsafo
- "Tava'e Ula" – Captained by Brian Peck and Mike Apted
- "Devorah" – Captained by Emanuele Pue, Aaron Pue, and Andrew Pue
- "Amana" – Captained by Nathan Sagapolutele and Ropate Delana

The "Passport to Fishing" program marked a significant step forward in engaging American Samoa's youth in ethical fishing and marine conservation. The collaborative efforts of funders, volunteers, and community members ensured its success, laying the groundwork for future junior angler programs.



Pago Game Fish Association also conducted a species tournament held on February 25, 2025. Five boats participated: Double Trouble (3 crew), Mumua (4 crew), Amana (3 crew), Devorah (4 crew), and Vaimalu (2 anglers). The tournament was led by angler Andrew and Captain Manny, secured first, second, and third places in the Yellowfin category with catches of 56.6 lbs, 20.6 lbs, and 18.2 lbs, respectively; no Wahoo were caught. Team Double Trouble nearly won with a Masi catch but fell short. The February event concluded with food and fellowship, it has encouraged members to prepare for future tournaments, submit catch cards, and renew memberships (\$100/family, \$75/individual).

Species	Weight (lbs)	Date	Angler	Captain	Boat
Marlin					
Sailfish					
Masi	34.20	1/12/2025	Sally Asafo	Andy Wearing	Double Hooked
Wahoo	30.60	1/12/2025	Sally Asafo	Andy Wearing	Double Hooked
Yellowfin	56.60	1/26/2025	Andrew Pu'e	Emanuele Pu'e	Devorah
Dogtooth					
Giant Trevally					
Misc					
Juniors	56.6 (Yellowfin)	1/26/2025	Andrew Pu'e	Emanuele Pu'e	Devorah
Ladies (Masi)	34.20	1/12/2025	Sally Asafo	Andy Wearing	Double Hooked
Line Class	70.75 (56.6/ 80 x 100)	1/26/2025	Andrew Pu'e	Emanuele Pu'e	Devorah
Bottomfish					
Points	Angler		Points	Boat	
1500	Andrew Pu'e		1500	Devorah	
900	Sally Asafo		900	Double Hooked	

New StarKist President and CEO

Congresswoman Uifa'atali Amata welcomed StarKist's announcement of their new President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Eunhong (Edward) Min. According to the announcement:

- Min has vast international experience and leadership from global conglomerates including Procter and Gamble, and Dongwon Industries.
- As CEO with Dongwon Industries, StarKist's parent company, Min spearheaded transformative initiatives integrating science and technology into the maritime industry.
- He has also served as Executive Vice President at Dongwon Industries and Dongwon Systems.
- Min holds a business degree from Yonsei University and completed the Advanced Management Program at Seoul National University.



DMWR Directorship Updates



Timothy Jones's path to becoming the Director of the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) in American Samoa involved several key events and considerations:

- **Initial Nomination and Earlier Rejection:** Jones was nominated for the DMWR director position by the governor and had also been turned down for a director position of the Territorial Energy Office previously.
- **Senate Confirmation:** Before the House's final rejection, the Senate had confirmed Jones as Director of the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources with a vote of 13-3. Senator Tuaolo Manaia Fruean mentioned campaigning to his colleagues to approve Jones, who he referred to as the only "white man" in the proposed cabinet.
- **House Rejection and Reconsideration:** Despite support from some representatives, the House initially rejected Jones. However, a motion for reconsideration was passed, allowing a second vote. Ultimately, the House voted against Jones's confirmation with 7 yes votes and 10 no votes, which did not meet the 11 votes needed for confirmation.
- **Qualifications & Experience:** Jones highlighted his extensive time spent on the water as a commercial and private fisherman and his personal relationships with DMWR staff. During the confirmation process, it was noted that his background was primarily in marine resources, while DMWR also has responsibility for wildlife resources. To address this, Jones stated that the department includes wildlife biologists who could offer guidance on forests.
 - Jones stated that he was encouraged to apply for the position by DMWR staff members. He said that the staff felt unsupported by management and needed a "champion".
 - Priorities: Jones said his main priority was to support the existing staff and he expressed his commitment to the government's mandates, emphasizing cooperation among all parties.

- Views on Regulations: Jones expressed his view that regulations often impede business operations and profitability, advocating for a balance between regulations and their economic impact.
- **Position on Marine Sanctuary Expansion:** Jones stated that his position on the expansion of the Pacific Marine Sanctuary would align with the governor's policies.
- **Rejection:** Despite the support and the motion to reconsider, the House ultimately rejected Jones's nomination as Director of DMWR.

Congressional Corner: Uifa'atali Amata Radewagon

Coast Guard Cutter

Congresswoman Amata has been advocating for a Coast Guard Cutter to be stationed at Pago Pago Harbor. She believes that stationing fast cutters in American Samoa would be a powerful statement of U.S. commitment in the South Pacific, especially during a time of Chinese influence and concerns about illegal fishing.

Congresswoman Uifa'atali Amata has been advocating for a Coast Guard cutter to be stationed at Pago Pago Harbor. She believes that Pago Pago Harbor is ideally suited to be a station for one or more Coast Guard cutters.

- **Executive Order:** Her suggestion follows President Trump's Executive Order regarding the placement and activities of Coast Guard vessels to protect U.S. maritime borders.
- **Coast Guard Response:** The Coast Guard, in a public statement by Admiral Kevin Lunday, identified American Samoa and its territories as key coastline protection areas. The Coast Guard stated it would "immediately surge assets to increase Coast Guard presence and focus" in these areas, in response to the presidential order.
- **Strengthening Capabilities:** Amata emphasized the need to strengthen the Coast Guard's capabilities, including increasing the number of cutters and their deployment to the Pacific.
- **Strategic Importance:** Stationing fast cutters in American Samoa would send a powerful message of U.S. commitment to the South Pacific, especially given China's regional efforts and influence, as well as concerns about illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.
- **Call to Action:** Amata encouraged the Trump administration and Coast Guard leadership to collaborate with Governor Pulaalii Nikolao Pula to facilitate a stationed presence operating from Pago Pago Harbor.
- **Rhode Island Senator Support:** Senator Sheldon Whitehouse also argued for tariffs to sanction illegal fishing fleets, companies, and countries of origin. He stated that these

fleets often conduct business for Chinese intelligence and the military. Whitehouse's call to action was welcomed by Amata.

- **Protecting U.S. Interests:** Reopening regional fishing access, rebuilding the U.S. commercial fishing fleet, and enhancing the U.S. Coast Guard presence with fast cutters in American Samoa are important steps for defending U.S. interests and demonstrating a stronger U.S. commitment to the Pacific.

China's Role in the Pacific

Amata has cautioned Pacific Islands nations about signing agreements with China for economic interests, pointing to a visa exemption agreement between Samoa and China and the potential costs to U.S. and other democracies' economic and security interests in the region. She suggests that the U.S. should reopen regional fishing waters and enhance the U.S. Coast Guard presence to counter China's influence.

House Foreign Affairs Committee: Congresswoman Amata will serve on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs for the 119th Congress, including as Vice Chairman of the Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific. She aims to bring the perspective of American Samoa and the Pacific Islands to the committee, focusing on the U.S. commitment to the region and addressing challenges and policy decisions related to China's activity.

- **Fisheries Act:** Amata co-sponsored the FISHERS Act, which supports NOAA in providing rapid responses to restore fisheries after emergencies.
- **USAID Hearing:** Congresswoman Amata took part in a hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) on the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), seeking expert witness testimony on U.S. priorities, aid, and support in the Pacific Islands, especially the commitment to the Compact of Free Association (COFA) allies and the role of the Development Finance Corporation.