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## DMWR Fisheries Division First Quarter Report FY25 (Oct to Dec 2024) Report for Council

### 1. Shore-based creel program:

The Shore-based Creel Survey successfully completed a total of 119 runs, and accomplished 40 sampled surveys across 66 weekdays and 13 weekends/holidays in the first quarter. The monitoring team recorded 31 participation counts and gathered 31 interview catch data, including opportunistic interviews, to accurately estimate catch and effort data from October to December. This comprehensive data collection generates crucial expansion totals that clearly represent the estimated fish catch landings by gear type in the nearshore fishery. It is important to note that participation data from Manu'a is not included in this report, as the fishing activities there are more extensive than those on the main island of Tutuila. The results from this quarter are significant: the total expanded catch—with pooling—is estimated at 2,200 lbs.; the total expansion for gear per hour amounts to 2,414 lbs.; and the expanded total for catch per gear hour or CPUE stands at 0.91.

The expanded catch/ effort summary by gear methods:

2024	Rod and Reel	Throw Net	Spear-Snorkel	HandLine
Oct to Dec 2024	570 lbs	1,160 lbs	309 lbs	162 lbs

The catch summary also provides a list of species composition in total landings. The six dominant species for this quarter are listed below.

1. Bigeye scad/ <i>Selar crumenophthalmus</i> /Atule	701 lbs
2. Diamond scale mullet/ <i>Ellochelon vaigiensis</i> / Anae afa	298 lbs
3. Striped surgeonfish / <i>Acanthuruslineats</i> /Alogo	166 lbs
4. Bigscale soldierfish/ <i>Myripristis berndti</i> / Malau ugatele	163 lbs
5. Bluefin trevally/ <i>Caranx melampygus</i> / Malauli apamoana	148 lbs
6. Fringelip mullet/ <i>Crenimugil crenilabis</i> /Anae Fuafua	128 lbs

The Shore-based program is actively collaborating with WPacFIN on essential database updates and upgrades through regular emails and conference calls. In November, we faced a challenge when the Shore-based program vehicle was involved in an accident, impacting our field schedule. Furthermore, two technicians were required to take their excess leave before the calendar year ended. In December, we dedicated hours to reviewing the scanned data and updating the AmSam.archival system. We remain committed to overcoming these challenges and ensuring the success of our program.

## 2. Key Reef Species Program:

Monitoring Surveys have not been conducted to shortage of project staff divers as some of the divers are Off-island seeking medical assistance. Monitoring surveys will continue to 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter as we merge monitoring team. Staff assisted with Giant clam nursery in Faga'alu and assisted with Whale survey team to support Wildlife Division the whole of October. Staff assisted with upgrading to a larger enclosure for the giant clam nursery in Faga'alu and successfully obtain some biological whale samples around Tutuila.

Project staff were also involved with NOAA Water Quality and Benthic training and surveys (3 weeks from Nov to Dec) at Lyons Park Pala lagoon area. The training involved detailed water quality sampling methodology (in the field and laboratory) and benthic survey for water quality measures. Project Staff also conducted a fishermen's workshop regarding our Histology sampling program. Project staff was able to exchange project goals and sampling updates regarding the samples we have been collecting for histology. All the remaining samples were sent off to Poseidon Research for further analysis for the report.

Staff continue to work with Poseidon Research Fisheries (DMWR research partner) to collect tissue samples for the life history (age and size) of 5 coral reef fish in American Samoa. Additional collected samples were sent to Poseidon. Staff were trained on otolith grinding methodology and aging techniques. Staff were also trained on staging sex and maturity stages for the gonads collected for fish samples.



## 3. Sportfish Life History Program:

Staff continue to coordinate with the partner molecular laboratory, the Australian Genome Research Facility (AGRF), which is generating microsatellite population genetic data from the samples collected from Savaii, Upolu and Tutuila (for the bottomfish *Lutjanus gibbus*, *Lutjanus kasmira*, *Lethrinus rubrioperculatus*, and for the reef fish *Acanthurus lineatus*). New microsatellite markers have been developed for *L. rubrioperculatus*, and *Lutjanus kasmira*. Genotype profiles have been produced from limited fish samples collected from Tutuila in American Samoa and Upolu and Savaii from Samoa.

## 4. Fish Aggregation Device Program:

The overall goal of this program is to provide fishermen access to pelagic tuna fisheries through the deployment of Fish Aggregating Device (FAD). The main objective of this program is to maintain 5 deep-water FADs and conduct regular survey of their status and survey fishermen's who use these FADs. There are 5 FAD sites: FAD A off Aunuu, FAD B off the Pago harbor, FAD C off Vaitogi, FAD D off Tapu-tapu and FAD E off Fagasa. The program currently uses two FAD buoys: the catamaran buoy and the Indian Ocean design. Only FADs A and B are of catamaran buoy design. Staff conducted visual inspections of FADs in the last quarter and collected data from sportfishermen. At present, all 5 FADs are in place in accordance with program objectives. The program is still waiting for the FAD replacements from the same product provider from New Zealand. We expect that the FAD product provider will send a bigger buoy for better visibility.

The weather was very bad from Oct to Dec 2024. Only two sportfishermen interviews were conducted.

Three pre-assembled FADs were received from New Zealand.

The vertical longlining gears from Honolulu arrived. Staff intend to conduct experimental fishing soon.

Staff attended the giant diamondback squid fishing training conducted by SPC staff in Upolu, Samoa from Nov to Dec (2 weeks).



The Buds and Suds fishing tournament, held from November 27th to 29th, saw participation from boats representing both American Samoa and Samoa. The tournament focused on catching a variety of fish species, with anglers reeling in Baracuda, Dogtooth, Wahoo, Masimasi, Yellowfin, Sailfish, and Marlin. "Blessings" emerged as the boat with the highest total weight of 474.80 pounds of fish. Other high-performing boats included the "Pure Indulgence" with 552.00 pounds, the "Amana" with 348.40 pounds, the "Double Trouble" with 231.60 pounds, and the "Free Spirit" with 276.80 pounds. The combined efforts of all participating anglers resulted in a grand total of 3,521.20 pounds of fish caught throughout the tournament. The competition between American Samoa and Samoa added another layer of excitement to the tournament. American Samoa ultimately secured the coveted Perpetual Trophy. This victory was attributed to their larger fleet of 11 boats, which contributed to a higher overall catch, averaging 163.65 pounds per boat. The Perpetual Trophy, awarded to the country with the highest average catch per boat, signifies the competitive spirit and national pride associated with the Buds and Suds tournament.

##### 5. **Boat-Based Creel Survey Program:**

There were 9 active alias that contributed to the landings from longline, bottomfishing, trolling, mix bottomfishing/trolling and spearfishing activities from October 2024 to December 2024. Throughout this quarter, these vessels have landed a total of 2,063 pounds of fish. Surveys were conducted randomly throughout the month for at least 3 weekdays a week and 2 weekends per month. Throughout this quarter, there were 71 fishing trips with fishing efforts recorded from 28 interviews. Species landed by the local alias are reflected in the port sampling through Boat-based Creel Surveys.

The market sales of pelagic, bottomfish, and nearshore species are found in the Commercial Invoice System. Registered vendors in the Commercial Invoice System are local businesses that purchase fresh and/or frozen local fish. In accordance with A.S.A.C 24.0905, Dealers Records need to reflect all this pertinent information on the invoices provided by the department. Purchase transactions such as Resold (purchase from another business) and Imports are also

reflected in these commercial invoices. Under A.S.C.A 24.0305, vendors need to submit their invoices on or before the 16<sup>th</sup> of every month. The department sends a team on a courtesy visit to all vendors to ensure data quality and control. Invoices collected do not always reflect purchases made during the collection. Some invoices are collected or submitted to the department at a later date which will alter the present numbers reflected in this report. Currently, there are 75 vendors in the Commercial Invoice System and all been visited every month this quarter.

The numbers between creel surveys and commercial invoices will vary. Data from commercial invoices include local landings from fishermen who use their alias, miscellaneous catches from longliners, and nearshore fishing activities. In contrast, creel surveys or port sampling are only landings from fishermen using alias. In addition, expansion numbers are not being used in this report.

The objectives of the project and corresponding activities for this reporting period are:

- 1. Monitor catches of highly migratory, species harvested within American Samoa’s EEZ through port sampling of commercial vessels and continue documentation of market sales.**

Three active fishing vessels caught 530.5 pounds of pelagic fish species this quarter. The following shows all species caught this quarter with the Skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) as the most dominant fish caught.

**Table 1. Pelagic catches from alia boats throughout October 2024 to December 2024:**

Species	BTM/TRL Mix	Troll	Total (lbs.)
Bigeye trevally	14.8	-	14.8
Rainbow runner	27	-	27
Skipjack tuna	72.2	128.5	200.7
Dogtooth tuna	20.2	-	20.2
Yellowfin tuna	89.6	85.3	174.9
Mackerel tuna	90.2	2.7	92.9
<b>Total (lbs.)</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>216.5</b>	<b>530.5</b>

Market sales of \$240,324.63 for pelagic species are recorded in the Commercial Invoice System and the majority are Resale purchases:

**Table 2. Market sales of pelagic species recorded in invoices for this quarter:**

Species	Locally caught	Resale	Total (lbs.)
Bigeye tuna	200.00	253.21	453.21
Mahimahi	-	846.75	846.75
Marlin	4,055.01	15,200.35	19,255.36
Sailfish	1,057.42	211.23	1,268.65
Wahoo	55.00	5,220.52	5,275.52
Yellowfin tuna	1,000.00	2,302.00	3,302.00
<b>Total (lbs.)</b>	<b>6,367.43</b>	<b>24,034.06</b>	<b>30,401.49</b>

- 2. Monitor catches of Bottomfish species harvested within American Samoa’s EEZ through documenting market sales and port sampling.**

There were four alias that contributed to the total landings of 787.8 pounds of bottomfish species this quarter. Longtail snapper (*Etelis coruscans*) was the dominant species caught this reporting period with an

estimated 163 lbs. which accounts for 21% of the bottomfish species landed. The following table lists the dominant species caught this quarter.

**Table 3. Total bottomfish landings by species from October 2024 to December 2024**

Species	BTM/TRL Mix	Bottomfishing	Total (lbs.)
Bluelined snapper	23.7	35	58.7
Humpback snapper	29	34.5	63.5
Gray jobfish	35	71.9	106.9
Ambon emperor	35.1	76	111.1
Redgill emperor	9	21.4	30.4
Longtail snapper	-	163.3	163.3
Ruby snapper	-	45.5	45.5
Red snapper	-	33.3	33.3
Silverjaw jobfish	-	53.8	53.8
Yelloweye snapper	-	42.1	42.1
Bigeye trevally	-	79.2	79.2
<b>Total (lbs.)</b>	<b>131.8</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>787.8</b>

There are no records of bottomfish purchases this quarter in the Commercial Invoice System.

**3. Monitor catches of Spearfishing activities within American Samoa’s EEZ through documenting market sales and port sampling.**

There were four alias actively spearfishing this quarter with a recorded catch of 377 pounds of nearshore marine species. Spearfishing activities are conducted at least 4 days a week and 11 interviews were collected this quarter. The most dominant species caught was the Blue-banded surgeonfish (*Acanthurus lineatus*) which accounts for 15% of the total landing of nearshore species caught as listed in the following table:

**Table 4. A total of nearshore fish species landed by boat-based spearfishing activities.**

Species	Scientific Name	Samoan Name	Total (lbs.)
Blue-banded surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus lineatus</i>	Alogo	56
Redtail Parrotfish	<i>Chlorurus japanensis</i>	Fuga / Laea	71
Bluespine unicornfish	<i>Naso unicornis</i>	Umelei	67
Steephead parrotfish	<i>Chlorurus microrhinos</i>	Fuga / Laea	28
Spiny lobster	<i>Panulirus penicillatus</i>	Ula	29
Orangespine unicornfish	<i>Naso lituratus</i>	Ume / Iliilia	19
Saddleback grouper	<i>Variola louti</i>	Velo	14
Humpback unicornfish	<i>Naso brachycentron</i>		9
Striped bristletooth	<i>Ctenochaetus striatus</i>	Pone	8
Bigeye bream	<i>Monotaxis grandoculis</i>	Mata’ele’ele	7
		Others	69



Market sales of nearshore species this quarter are valued at \$12,319.135. Commercial invoices show 2,703 lbs. of nearshore species with parrotfish being the main species purchased by local businesses.

**Table 5. Nearshore species reported in the commercial invoice system from October 2024 to December 2024**

Species	Locally caught	Resale	Total (lbs.)
Blue-banded surgeonfish	1,006	-	1,006
Bluespine unicornfish	9	-	9
Fringelip mullet	10	-	10
Groupers	19.3	-	192.3
Long-jawed mackerel	120	-	120
Mulletts	182.5	-	182.5
Parrotfishes	512	200	712.00
Rabbitfishes	9.2	-	9.2
Reef fishes (misc.)	42	-	42
Spiny lobsters	-	110	110
Unicornfishes	310	-	310
<b>Total (lbs.)</b>	<b>2,220.00</b>	<b>310.00</b>	<b>2,703.00</b>

#### 4. Disseminate information on American Samoa's Fisheries and Data Collection Efforts

- a. There were no workshops conducted this quarter.
- b. The program team has been trained and has been entering commercial invoices into the Sell It Log It system in addition to the Visual FoxPro Database. The program team has also been trained in the use of Metabase, a web-based application linked to the Sell It Log It application which develops comprehensive reports. Constant communications with NOAA and DMWR have continued to further improve the use of Sell It Log It and Metabase during this trial phase.

#### 5. Fund Enforcement activities related to inter-jurisdictional fish species.

- a. There were 12 applicants and only 10 paid to get their new licenses. Two had applied and didn't return after being informed to get a clearance from the Department of Public Safety. Therefore, only 10 commercial fishing licenses have been issued this quarter.
- b. Commercial Invoice Collection is scheduled on/or before the 16<sup>th</sup> of every month. Every month, every vendor is visited and invoice submissions are made by majority of the vendors.
- c. When applying for a Commercial Fishing License, applicants will need to sign an Acknowledgement Form that verifies their participation in a Regulations Briefing by the Enforcement Division. This form also informs applicant(s) of their responsibility to participate in all data collection efforts by the department. Copies of the forms are given to the (1) applicant; (2) Enforcement Division and (3) Boat-based Creel Survey Program for records and as supporting documents in future citations.

## 6. Community-Based Fisheries Management Program:

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES:

- CFMP staff Warren Seva'aetasi and Dimary Ulberg participated in the 'Living shoreline' project episode filming on Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024 by Voice of the Sea producers. Voice of the Sea is a television series of 30 minutes interview episodes produced by the University of Hawaii Sea Grant Center for Marine Science Education. This episode will be released in late February 2025 and will include how village MPAs in the program restore living shoreline ecosystem's function and provide protection, sustenance and resilience for village communities (from government perspective). This was a valuable opportunity to showcase CFMP work and the importance of the program to our local coastal communities.
- CFMP and Fisheries staff Warren Seva'aetasi, Fuamai Tago and Dimary Ulberg and Fatima Leau from NOAA held a meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October and 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024 for the progress of the Jurisdictional Coral Reef Fisheries Management Plan. The plan is currently discussed for funding opportunities, contents and template development, relevant stakeholders for cooperation, data and information to be sorted and included from Fisheries DMWR and the NOAA Pacific Islands Science Center. This continues to be one of the Fisheries priorities this new fiscal year.
- Ongoing monitoring and cleaning of the giant clams continued this quarter to ensure optimum growth, preventing disease and predatory activities and reducing mortality. The cage structure was cleaned and rebars were compacted again to ensure better sturdiness and stability underwater. All clams were taken out of their trays and laid on the mesh wire with gravel for more spacing and better chances of growth and survival. From the last count included in last quarter's report, 4 giant clams died and there are currently 538 live giant clams remaining in the cage. Ongoing monitoring of the giant clam cage is mostly dependent on weather conditions. Conducting this monitoring round on the 4<sup>th</sup> December was Fisheries staff Ekueta Schuster, Warren Seva'aetasi, Fuamai Tago and Dimary Ulberg.



- CFMP staff held a meeting with Faga’alu village council at NOAA conference room on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024. This followed a revision they made on their current by-laws for managing the village Marine Protected Area. Effective Friday, November 29<sup>th</sup> 2024, the village of Faga’alu has opened their village MPA to rod and reel fishing activities only. No other fishing method is allowed in the protected area and the village council will inform the Department on when they will impose fishing restrictions again. Present at the meeting were village council representatives Vaisoa Vani Atafua, Faiaso Ioelu Fouvale and CFMP staff Dimary Ulberg and Warren Seva’aetasi. Due to unavailability of the Mayor and several village Chiefs over the busy holiday season, another meeting will be scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of this fiscal year to discuss work moving forward.
- CFMP staff Warren Seva’aetasi and Dimary Ulberg were invited by Fa’asao Marist High School to judge the science fair competition on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2024. The fair included several interesting projects relating to our coastal environment and it was a valuable opportunity to engage with students and contribute staff knowledge, support young innovators, encourage creativity and inspire future scientists in the work of the CFMP program and the Department.

## 7. Coral Restoration Program

In November 2024, the Coral Restoration Program achieved a significant milestone with the formal appointment of a restoration coordinator. This essential position is designed to oversee the initiative and enhance its overall effectiveness. However, the hiring process encountered several challenges, resulting in notable delays to the project timeline and impeding momentum.



Given the necessity for the project to comply with regulatory requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) guidelines, both the funding organizations and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) have recommended a comprehensive review of the project's objectives. This reassessment aims to prioritize the completion of specific goals that do not necessitate permits, as the process of obtaining such permits can be both lengthy and complex. This strategic adjustment seeks to ensure that the project's activities are more closely aligned with its overarching objectives and operational needs, thereby facilitating a more efficient progression.

## **Other Notable Developments:**

### **South Pacific Albacore**

South Pacific Albacore is a major agenda for the WCPFC this year especially concerning harvest strategy. There was a stock assessment this year and FFA countries are keen in developing harvest control rule and management procedure since MSC certification is important for these countries. From the American Samoa perspective, declining catch rates and fishery participation are challenges due to increasing fishing pressure around the region. For this quarter, American Samoa participated in various discussions with federal partners, attended the WCPFC Science Committee meeting (Manila Aug 2024), the Science Management Dialogues (online Sept 2024), and the South Pacific Albacore Intersessional Working Group (online Oct 2024) and the Regular Meeting of the WCPFC (Suva, Fiji Nov 27 to Dec 3, 2024) to discuss the management of this tuna species and other management measures.

### **Regional Cooperation on Legislation Training**



American Samoa and Samoa officials participated in a training held in Apia, Samoa last Nov. 3 to 8 designed to strengthen the legal framework for fisheries in both jurisdictions. The training concentrated on enhancing transparency, accountability, and equity in marine resource laws. This joint initiative showcases a commitment to sustainable fisheries management and the importance of strong legal frameworks in the region. Three officials from American Samoa attended the training in marine resource laws. The training was funded by a grant from the U.S. Embassy in Samoa and was organized by the Samoan Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) in partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC) and the University of California College of Law, San Francisco (UC Law SF). The training covered topics such as: 1) Drafting and implementing laws to protect coastal ecosystems; 2) Critical Samoan Laws such as the Fisheries Management Act of 2016, fisheries regulations, and community-driven village fisheries bylaws, and; (3) Gender equity, social inclusion, and human rights within coastal communities.

**Am. Samoa Department of Marine & Wildlife Resources**  
2024 JOINT ENFORCEMENT AGREEMENT  
Quarterly Report for October, November & December 2024

**Execution Priority 1: PMSA**

The DMWR officers and EO- Lonetona conducted PMSA vessel boarding, vessel inspection, and monitored offload activities to confirm that all documentation is complete and matches the offloads. Foreign vessels listed below that were boarded and inspected to ensure PMSA compliance:

1. F.F.V. LONG BOW NO.1 (10/01/24)
2. F.F.V. TENN FA LI NO.8 (10/02/24)
3. REEF CARRIER "DINOK" (10/06/24)
4. F.F.V. CHI HONG NO.899 (10/17/24)
5. F.F.V. MAN FU TSAI NO.11 (10/18/24)
6. F.F.V. TENN TSAI JI (11/12/24)
7. F.F.V. CHUAN HSIANG NO.368 (12/09/24)
8. F.F.V. SHIN JANN SHIN (12/17/24)
9. F.F.V. TENN FA LI NO.8 (12/17/24)
10. F.F.V. MAAN FU TSAI NO.9 (12/17/24)
11. F.F.V. MAN FU LONG (12/18/24)
12. F.F.V. CHONG MYONG NO.709 (12/20/24)

**Executive Priority 2: MSA**

During port checks, officers observe letter markings to ensure legibility and that they meet current requirements. During boarding, officers check to make sure all permits and required documentation are current and appropriate for its activities. Listed below are all US fishing vessels that were boarded and inspected to ensure MSA compliance:

1. F.V. CAPE COD (10/06/2024)
2. F.V. ADELITA (10/06/2024)
3. F.V. AMERICA (10/17/2024)
4. F.V. FETUOLEMOANA (10/28/2024)
5. F.V. CAPE FERRAT (11/06/2024)
6. F.V. TRACEY C(11/24/2024)
7. F.V. PACIFIC PRINCESS (11/21/2024)
8. F.V. ADELITA (12/04/2024)
9. F.V. SEA ENCOUNTER (12/11/2024)
10. F.V. SURVIVOR (12/11/2024)
11. F.V. PRINCESS KARALINNA (12/11/2024)

**Execution Priority 4: NMSA**

DMWR officers' conduct 8 Sea and 13 land patrols in the Fagatele National Marine Sanctuary. Purpose for these patrols are to monitor for any illegal fishing activities conducted in Sanctuary Bay or Aunu'u unit.

**General Enforcement:**

1. Chief Hanipale picked up a dead hawksbill turtle at Sadie's by the sea. 10/13/2024
2. Officers Travers/ Crawley retrieved a dead hawksbill turtle from Marine patrol compound. 11/18/2024
3. Officers Travers/Woo-ching/Ah-mu/ Crawley retrieved a dead green turtle from behind the playground at Lyon's park. 12/11/2024