

June 9, 2025

Kitty Simonds  
Executive Director  
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council  
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

**Re: American Samoa Opposes Deep-Sea Mining**

Talofa Director Simonds,

We write to express our unequivocal opposition to the unsolicited lease request by Impossible Metals and to all deep-sea mining activities within American Samoa's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Our position is not rooted in fear or resistance to clean energy and economic progress, but in science, hard-earned lessons from history, and a deep cultural responsibility we bear in protecting our ocean, livelihood and *Fa'asinomaga* (identity).

Scientific Evidence of Environmental Harm

Deep-sea mining poses serious, and often irreversible, environmental risks. A 2020 Japanese study documented a 43% reduction in fish density due to sediment plumes from exploratory mining,<sup>1</sup> an impact that potentially jeopardizes the economy of marine-dependent livelihoods. A U.S. study of long-term effects of deep-sea mining found limited evidence of recovery of the ocean floor (Blake Plateau) even 44 years after test mining,<sup>2</sup> prompting a moratorium on drilling and mining off the U.S. southeast coast through 2032.<sup>3</sup>

During the April 29, 2025 hearing of the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources,<sup>4</sup> experts including Professor Thomas Peacock (MIT) and Duncan Currie (International Legal Advisor) emphasized the unknown scale of long-term impacts, especially from sediment plumes that can travel far beyond mining sites. Peacock cautioned against commercial-scale operations without vastly improved oversight and environmental understanding.

This underscores the urgent need to enforce a moratorium on such activities within American Samoa's EEZ to allow time for comprehensive research and environmental impact assessments.

Economic Caution: Learning from Nauru

The collapse of Nauru's phosphate economy should serve as a stark warning. Driven by short-term gains and poor regulation, Nauru exhausted its natural resources, rendering 80% of its land uninhabitable and its economy bankrupt.<sup>5</sup> American Samoa must not repeat this mistake. No potential income from seabed minerals can justify ecological ruin and economic collapse.

### Sacred Relationship with the Ocean

To us, the ocean is not merely a resource, it is part of our *Fa'asinomaga*, our cultural and spiritual identity. Traditional practices like *Fa'asao* (conservation) have safeguarded our marine ecosystems for centuries. Deep-sea mining threatens to sever this ancestral relationship, undermining cultural continuity and intergenerational stewardship.

### A United Voice of Opposition

We are not alone in our concern. **Over 600 individuals and 40+ organizations in American Samoa have signed a petition opposing deep-sea mining.**<sup>6</sup> On May 9, 2025, Sustainable Ocean Alliance submitted the petition with 148 signatures to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) formally opposing Impossible Metals' lease application.

Our elected leaders have also spoken clearly. On May 1, 2025, former Governor Lolo Matalasi Moliga issued a letter<sup>7</sup> to Governor Pula declaring his “staunch opposition” to seabed mining. He warned of “disconcerting and alarming” risks and emphasized that proposals should not proceed without independent scientific assessments of both costs and benefits. In a follow-up letter<sup>8</sup> to Congresswoman Uifa'atali Aumua Amata on May 26, 2025, former Gov. Moliga reaffirmed that any unilateral decision to allow seabed mining without consulting the people of American Samoa defies the democratic principles and autonomous rights granted to the Territory. He reminded that the preservation of our culture and marine heritage must not be sacrificed for short-term gains or external interests.

Former Governor Lemanu Peleti Mauga also took decisive action by issuing an Executive Order in 2024 imposing a moratorium on all seabed mining activities in American Samoa.<sup>9</sup> He cited serious concerns over marine biodiversity, climate disruption, and the unknown extent of lasting ecological harm.

Other prominent leaders have echoed this stance: Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga, former Director of Marine and Wildlife Resources, has voiced her strong opposition,<sup>10</sup> and Representative Malaeoletalu Melesio Gurr has publicly declared that he opposes deep-sea mining “in any form”.<sup>11</sup>

We stand firmly with these leaders in rejecting seabed mining in our waters.

### Global Precedent for Moratoriums

American Samoa is not alone. Over 30 countries, including the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Mexico, have called for moratoriums on deep-sea mining. United States like Hawaii (via its 2024 Seabed Mining Prevention Act), California, Oregon, and Washington, have enacted similar bans to safeguard coastal ecosystems and uphold scientific integrity.<sup>12,13</sup> These actions reflect a clear global consensus: science—not speculation—must guide ocean governance.

### Our Request

We respectfully urge the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council to:

- Reject all lease or permit applications for seabed mineral extraction within American Samoa's EEZ;
- Uphold and reinforce the existing moratorium established by former Gov. Lemanu Peleti Mauga;
- Demand full consultation between the U.S. Department of Interior, BOEM, and the people and leaders of American Samoa;
- Champion scientific integrity, cultural preservation, and ecological stewardship, in all future deliberations.

Our ocean is not a commodity—it is our protector, provider, and *Fa'asinomaga*. Let us honor our responsibility to our ancestors and descendants by saying no to destructive experiments in our waters. Let American Samoa lead by example.

Ma le ava tele,

Utumapu Andrew Pati Ah Young, Ph.D.  
Head of Discovery Biology, California Biotech  
South San Francisco, California  
Faleniu, American Samoa

Sabrina Suluai-Mahuka, Ph.D.  
Founder, Finafinau  
Pago Pago, American Samoa

Exitia Lealofi, B.S.  
Communities In Schools-Tacoma Coordinator  
Tacoma, Washington  
Faleniu, American Samoa

## References:

1. Washburn TW, Simon-Lledó E, Soong GY, Suzuki A. Seamount mining test provides evidence of ecological impacts beyond deposition. *Curr Biol*. 2023.
2. Jones DOB, Arias MB, Van Audenhaege L, Blackbird S, Boolukos C, Bribiesca-Contreras G, Copley JT, Dale A, Evans S, Fleming BFM, Gates AR, Grant H, Hartl MGJ, Huvenne VAI, Jeffreys RM, Josso P, King LD, Simon-Lledó E, Le Bas T, Norman L, O'Malley B, Peacock T, Shimmield T, Stewart ECD, Sweetman AK, Wardell C, Aleynik D, Glover AG. Long-term impact and biological recovery in a deep-sea mining track. *Nature*. 2025.
3. Presidential Memoranda. (2020) Memorandum on the Withdrawal of Certain Areas of the United States Outer Continental Shelf from Leasing Disposition. Section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. 1341(a)
4. Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations oversight hearing (2025). *"Exploring the Potential of Deep-Sea Mining to Expand American Mineral Production."* United States Congress.
5. Dauvergne, P. A Dark History of the World's Smallest Island Nation. 2019. The MIT Press Reader.
6. Finafinau Environmental Advocacy Organization in American Samoa. (2025). "Community Petition Against Deep-Sea Mining in American Samoa Waters."
7. Moliga, Lolo. Letter to Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula. 1 May 2025.
8. Moliga, Lolo. Letter to Congresswoman Uifa'atali Amata Coleman Radewagen. 26 May 2025.
9. Executive Order 006-2024. (2024) "An order implementing a moratorium on deep seabed mining exploration and exploitation activities."
10. Talanei (2025). "Growing opposition to seabed mining." Interview with Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga. 4 June 2025.
11. Talanei (2025). "Rep Malaeoletalu opposes seabed mining in any form." Interview with Malaeoletalu Melesio Gurr. 2 June 2025.
12. Hawaii State Legislature. (2024). "Seabed Mining Prevention Act," House Bill 2024-156, signed July 10, 2024.
13. California Ocean Protection Council (2023), Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (2024), Washington State Department of Ecology (2024).

## Appendix:

1. Finafinau Environmental Advocacy Organization in American Samoa. (2025). "Community Petition Against Deep-Sea Mining in American Samoa Waters."
2. Moliga, Lolo. Letter to Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula. 1 May 2025.
3. Moliga, Lolo. Letter to Congresswoman Uifa'atali Amata Coleman Radewagen. 26 May 2025.
4. Executive Order 006-2024. (2024) "An order implementing a moratorium on deep seabed mining exploration and exploitation activities."
5. Talanei (2025). "Growing opposition to seabed mining." Interview with Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga. 4 June 2025.
6. Talanei (2025). "Rep Malaeoletalu opposes seabed mining in any form." Interview with Malaeoletalu Melesio Gurr. 2 June 2025.

Finafinau Environmental Advocacy Organization in American Samoa. (2025).  
"Community Petition Against Deep-Sea Mining in American Samoa Waters."

## **The People of American Samoa Stand Against Deep-sea Mining**

May 8, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

We, the undersigned community members of American Samoa, write to express our strong opposition to deep-sea mining proceeding in national and international waters. We are united in standing with former Governor, Lemanu P.S. Mauga, who has taken a clear and commendable position against deep-sea mining by placing a moratorium on all deep-sea mining activities in our territory.

Last year, we came together to make it clear to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management that we oppose Impossible Metals' unsolicited lease request to explore the seafloor for mineral extraction near our islands. Even though our community has already expressed clear opposition to the exploitation of our resources by Impossible Metals, the company has decided to make another lease request. Again, we oppose this attempt to exploit the natural resources of our islands, especially by a company who has clear disregard for our consent.

Our opposition is rooted not only in our deep cultural and spiritual connection to the ocean—which is essential to our way of life and identity—but also in serious concerns regarding the national security, economic, and environmental implications of deep-sea mining.

As Pacific Islanders and U.S. citizens, nationals, and permanent residents, we are deeply alarmed by the potential for deep-sea mining to create new geopolitical vulnerabilities. By issuing permits for the potential commercial recovery of seabed minerals in international waters, this could open the door to a race for control over ocean resources by foreign powers. These contracts could allow China—and potentially other actors—to extract not just minerals, but also critical maritime data that could be used for military or surveillance purposes. Deep-sea mining could provide economic and geostrategic footholds to actors whose long-term goals may not align with American values or interests. Weakening the commitment to the stewardship of international waters, or the territorial waters of the countries located closest to American Samoa, undermines our collective security.

Deep sea ecosystems remain among the least studied and understood places on the planet and support vital ocean ecosystem elements such as fish stocks, coral reefs, and ecosystem functions. Not only do the environmental impacts of deep-sea mining threaten the health of these ecosystems and our fisheries, but opening up this frontier for commercial exploitation for minerals at a time of growing opposition from the international community against the industry will undermine the ability for the U.S. to demand compliance from other states in areas like illegal fishing, which remains one the most significant threats to our economy, food security, and maritime sovereignty in American Samoa.

American Samoan families depend on healthy fisheries. Our food security and our livelihoods depend on our ability to catch fish, especially tuna, in our territory's waters. Research has shown that deep-sea mining could have serious impacts on commercially significant fisheries, such as tuna. Whether it is in our territory's waters, federal waters, or international waters, the potential impacts of deep-sea mining on fisheries, including tuna, puts the livelihoods, economies, and well-being of many at risk. This

is why seafood businesses and associations, including the Global Tuna Alliance and the Sustainable Seafood Coalition, have already expressed their opposition to deep-sea mining.

Introducing a destructive extractive industry such as deep-sea mining for speculative and short-term economic gain, at best, endangers the long-term viability of American Samoa's largest economic sectors, fisheries and tourism. The lives and livelihoods of American Samoans could be sacrificed for companies owned by foreign nationals who file taxes abroad.

We are asking the U.S. Government to put the rights and interests of its own citizens, nationals, and permanent residents in American Samoa first. **We do not consent to the commercialization of our seafloor, especially by companies that have neither engaged with our communities nor secured our free, prior, and informed consent.**

We urge federal agencies and all decision-makers to oppose the advancement of deep-sea mining, reject Impossible Metals' lease request, and respect the decisions of the Government of American Samoa and the will of our people. We respect and value our home as our ancestors did and hope to leave a better place for our future generations. Our future, our culture, and our economic resilience depend on the protection of our ocean—not its destruction.

Signed by,

Organizations (44)

Coral Reef Advisory Group	One Ocean, One People
350 Pacific Queensland	People of American Samoa
Pacific Climate Warriors - Te Whanganui-a-Tara	Pasefika Presence
Folauga ole Tatau ma Iaga Aganuu Faasamoa	CNMI Diaspora Community Fund
LEO Club of SPA	E Rea Consulting Limited
Neil's Ace Home Center	DWMR
Navitilevu Youth Club	REO-UPF
Finafinau	DJ PTE LTD
San Diego State University Pacific Islander Student Association	CEO Bay Area Researchers
Polynesian Republic LLC.	Pacific Islander Health Board of Washington
M.A.N.A. Pasefika	Soliai Empire LLC
Bayview YMCA	Manuia Selesele Transport



Kuini Pasefika	Miner Audiology, LLC
Pacific Roots Open Mic (P.R.O.M.)	Vaoto Lodge
Community Empowerment Organization	Marine Science - Waves of Change
Amerika Samoa Tours	Samoan Indigenous Native Agency (SINA)
Pacific Warriors Academy	Native Samoan Corporation
MAXXON Corporation	The Mosaic Network: A Collective of Inspiring Women
Ladies Of The Pacific & Pacific Warriors Academy	Falenu Catholic Youth
Alega Preservation Institute	Mauigoa Flames
PacificwinPacific	

Pacific Islands Climate Action Network NCX Tech Enterprise (Nesian Contrax LLC) PacificwinPacific

#### Individuals (643)

Patrick T. Reid
Nilda Suficiencia
Tilali Scanlan
Tahillah-Julia Peau
Anastasia Soti
Meleine Salavea
Casidhe Mahuka
Valentini Taua
Raijeli Toanivere
Vinzealhar Ainjo Nen
Clayton Mahuka
Drue Slatter
Lyla Tapusoa
Dr. Crystal Simanu

Ruth Tauiliili-Mahuka

Jessebeth Ropeti

Mataio Suluai

Tiara Fata

Katlyn Culhane-Suluai

Talofa Fe'a

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Ulu Afaese

Tuifaasisina Tapenaga Reupena  
Polataivao-Fatialofa II

Sowani Nasemira

Reggie Meredith Fitiao

Anonymous

Gloria Tavita

Sina

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Samantha Anoa'i-Le'iato

Sonya Papalii

Tyson Aoelua

Lulu B

ELLA GURR

Meaitiiti Erika Radewagen

Letiunasema Nuusila

Elizabeth Paras

Ngaire Ho Ching

Jhen Allison Seguiwan

Ulu Afaese

Anthony Perez

One Ocean, One People

Imanueli Davetawalu

Joseph Langkilde

Glysa Blanco

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Angel-Baby Ifopo Sopoaga

MJ Matulino

Vitorina

Herbert Falemalama

Eleni Fanene

Kira Wade

Anonymous

Hyunghu

Soapy Ifopō

Angela Iopu-Leo

Simeona Leo

Dr. Mosana Evagelia

Tafaimamao Tupuola

Clayton

FAAEA F AFO

Beatrice

Anonymous

Pita

Lata J. Patu

Gabrielle Langkilde

S withers

Gregorie Towai

Kathryn Tsui

Natalie T. Brown

Elena

Mona Pauline Mangakāhia Bajwa

Charles Letterman Atimalala

Delia Ngata

E.S

Alamoana
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Jason
Julia Hope
Anonymous
Mary Harm
Tulimalefoi Vaofanua
Anonymous
Anonymous
Mekiraeanna Taumoepeau
Sava’auli S Suluai
Pemerika Mahuka
Luana Leiato
Sabrina Suluai-Mahuka
Sia Allaway
Anonymous
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Kuta Joseph Fonorito
Jone Delaibatiki
H Walker
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Epeli Tuibeqa
Milika Baukitoga Naulumatua
Josefa Sigavolavola
Darlene Sagaga
Naia Elizarraraz
Darius Shimasaki
Pauline Vaivao

Theodora

Lessei

Loretta

Nerisa Taua

Taua Tuionoula

Ihirau Piton

Dezmond Applin

Noelle Potoa'e-Solaita

Pupulaolela Petelo

Pupulaolela Petelo

Matasaua

Lauli Ifopo

Elorah Tusiofo

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Samone Suluai

Wilson Hazelman

Jubilee Faitala

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Fidow Mamea
Fualuga Alefosio
Lagolemu Banner S Fanene
Pefi Kingi, PacificwinPacific
Josh
Tinei Ripine
<b>Anonymous</b>
Casey Te Beest
Josslyn F. Lauvao-Sanervlivi
Jaiyah Saelua
Chessa Rae Johnson
Esther posala
Charmaine Faleaana
Telesia Mauigoa
Utumapu Andrew Pati Ah Young
Tafaimamao Tupuola
Peresetene Malaga
Losa Mua
Maotaoalii Savusa
Taetuli T. Laulu
Monaliza Tima
Toagamua Tavila
Tulili Lavasii
Toafa R Angilau
Koreti & Ofiu Hau
Anoalo Ah Young
Pauline silao
Tasi Fepuleai
Mathew Fogavai

Ms. Tisa Fa'amuli
Shalom Filoialii
Marynita Vaigatolo
Salamasina J Satele
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Sulusi Siu
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Anonymous
Jessica Tuia
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Daniella Natia
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Jennifer Amosa
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Chris Autagavaia
Anonymous
Esther Solaita
Eldon Tuiasosopo
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Talaeseeseolemaloomerikasamoa Faau'i
Iutita Snow-Tuitasi
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Muaiao Moliga
Lolo Moliga
Anonymous
Raven Atonio
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Jaslynn Tufele

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Christian Faataitai

Fuifui Ikenasio

Cassandra Laapui

Ne'igalomeatiga Lani Lavata'i

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Tiana Trepanier

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Petesa Tuliloa-Paselio

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Maddy Unutoa

Rev. Samuel Fiu Unutoa

Christine Unutoa-Luafulu

Sheri-Louise Unutoa-Kelekolio

Faith Fanene

Angela Teofilo

Mark Toloai

Danielle Atkinson

Tiute Epati

Hoenfels Unutoa

Annamaria Unutoa

Lydia



Lessie Fualau

Genevieve Gregg

Eleanor Sataua

Lemala Lang Thompson

**Anonymous**

Ertta Laumoli

Kenneth Kuaea

Vaiputasi Seumalo

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Saipai A'etonu

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Fono Jane Mataele

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**Anonymous**

**Anonymous**

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TALALEOMALIE FAUMUINA
Arrianna Auvaa
Victorian Lang
Verona Oloapu
Palemene Fagaima
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Sabrina Tauese
Ariyana Pilskalns
Pualani Fui
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Anonymous
Tafaevalu Aumoeualogo
Jueta McCutchan-Tofaeono
Janique Letuli
Trinity Pauulu-Ameperosa
Suiamai Tomasi
Dalton Gaoteote
Josephine niumaana
Venetta Williams
Rosie Soi
Tayler Vaita
Anonymous

Valelia Sefo Vaouli

Tafaoga S. Vaeao

Florida Leota

Omeka Fe'a

Monphei Puletasi

Rhane Malaw

Deborah Malae

Benjamin McDonough

Anonymous

Anonymous

Stina Scanlan

Lealavaturalua Grohse

Tamiano Gurr

Josephine Satele

Cecilia Reid

Christine Kaio

Failetasi Tupua-Fale

Brigitte Magaui Moala

Kimberly Lutu Fuiava

Puna

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Florence

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Thor Tinitali

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Maria Karameli Telea

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Jackie Sade Fiso-Fruean

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Lourdes David-Thetadig

Anonymous

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Cayla Ho Ching-Fogavai

Teine Savaii

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Toetau Leauanae

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Iosiaratulala

Michael Atuatasi

Makerita Roberts-Niuamoa

Anonymous

Wayne Salave'a

Julia

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Victoria Misi

Anonymous

Kalani Barber

Gabby Alafagamalufilufi Fa'ai'uso

Anonymous

Muliagatele Alize Foloia Liaiga

Veronika Mata'utia Mortenson

Evolini Vaiotu

Alalamua Andrew Mortenson

Anonymous

Tuu

Juliet Fung Chen Pen

Chloes Galiki

Jacqueline

Anonymous

Anonymous

Kristie Yandall

Stanley S Suka

Tepora Tinoisamoa

Patrisha Tumanuvao Maeataanoa

Emma Ailolo-Helsham

Anonymous

Randilei Faumui

Helena

Brigitta Taaga

Fia Lui

Daphny Ortiz

Faapale Taumua

Cory Sene

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Sala Tipeni

Rachael Wilson

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Salaevalu Osa

Tausala Jackson

Meatuai Moliga

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Lisa Tuatoo

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Anonymous

Sunshyne Tupua

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Lisa

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Afu Lefaoheu III

Afu Lefaoheu IV

Ais Lefaoheu

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CECILIA
Manua Malauulu
Maninoa hudson
Daystar Parker
Chloe Tuaua
Falenu Women Fellowship Catholic Church
Anonymous
Mathias
Anonymous
Jeannie S Leovao
Wilmamina Tuliloa-Leafa
Ofisa Faleafine
Anonymous
Vaealuga Solia
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Soy Benjamin Ah Siu
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Uaine Brown
Losapela
Tonu Letalu
Elizabeth Puaauli
Faafuata Amituanai Puaauli
Tovia Puaauli
Anonymous
Monica.Holmes
Tapuala R Vaili
Solagaliua Ames
Adrian Alama Povalu
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Tumaulealofa Leatiota
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Carol Yandall

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Mele Gaisoa-Tema

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Salimu T

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Irene Tagara

Christina Leatimua

Carol Baqui

Carol Schuster

Christiane Talamoa

Fouaimalo Luamanu

Falenu Catholic Church

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Val

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Krisean Tuitele

Abigail Maga

Tuuaina

Vai

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Miriama Tufele Samifua

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Charles Letterman Atimalala

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Fonomaali'i Mason Mataele Sr.

Uluaitupu Tufele

**Anonymous**

Tumanu Fesilafai

Alfred Paiao Puaa Vitale

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VIRJEAN MATA'UTIA ETELAGI

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Evan Uiagalelei

Faoafa Monzon

Stephen Samuelu

Jared Emory

Raina Mauga

Tuatuamamao Williams

Vai Soliai Uiagalelei

Vaifafo Tagoilelagi

Arlene

Fale

Michelle Felagai

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Lauleva Lua'iufi Aiono

Veronica

Ednessjoisa Mareko

Letauaeletise Hunkin

Pele Pasiliōali'i Aveau

Dolan Manaiaisiva I'aulualo

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Kate Simonson
Rania
Taliilagi Aumavae
Stephanie Noble
Samantha Rios
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Taylor Paul Anuheha Ahana-Jamile
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Beatrice Afoa-Galo
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Matapuna Mailo Levenson
Jasmine Sozi
Taotasi Sala
Anonymous
William Nu'utupu Giles
Joyce Nenefu
Helen Lauvao
Lovely Tuilata
Evelyn T. Eveni
Anonymous
Joy
Anonymous
Yasmin Rosa

Anonymous

Faith Vaifanua

Aileen Solaita

Lesuea teo

Jackie To'oto'o

Poufa Pua'a Moefu

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Leilani Salu

August

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Alameda Eperu Ta'amū

Gindla Mcbee

Troy

Alfred Paiao Puaa Vitale

Georgina Onesi

Rosadiana Carter

Manofo

Margaret Jones

Epenesa Taylor

Arlington Niuleava Tasiaeafe

Arisa

Asier Mapp

Palefuiono Sai-Ilaoa

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Loua Lilio

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Dr. Maxine Sia Masaniai

Anonymous

Jeannie Kim-Bueno

Evelyn Posala

Cathy

Fa'aea Tumanuvao

Janell Apulu

Lily Stevens

Faafanuaosamoa Palelei

**Disclaimer:**

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Moliga, Lolo. Letter to Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula. 1 May 2025.

May 1, 2025

Honorable Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula  
Governor of American Samoa  
Office of the Governor  
American Samoa Government  
A.P. Lutali Executive Office Building  
Pago Pago, American Samoa, 96799

Dear Governor Pulaali'i:

I pray that our Heavenly Father's choicest blessings are perpetually being bestowed upon you to ease the weightiness of the leadership burden being brought to bear on your shoulders as our people look to you and Honorable Lieutenant Governor Pulumataala to improve the quality of their lives.

My wife, children, and I were truly moved and touched by your selfless gesture of generosity and kindness evident by your personal visit to check on me and the status of my health condition, along with the monetary gift to help defray the associate cost of my stay in Hawaii to remedy my medical challenges. Fa'afetai agalelei, fa'afetai fa'aaloalo, fa'afetai Alofa.

The pathway to achieving economic development self-sufficiency, quality healthcare services, effective educational schemes, responsive public safety system, maximum ego-system and environmental preservation, adequate social service delivery system, a cost-effective and accommodating economic and social infrastructural system is strewn with almost impassable pitfalls.

The principal cause of American Samoa's development struggles is the scarcity of developable natural resources. Our land mass is finite and insufficient to cost effectively accommodate large scale industrial and business development projects. Our remoteness and isolation from the economic mainstream, not only, exacerbates our economic and social vulnerabilities, but also, creates an additional set of development impairments which further thwart and stymie efforts to achieve our aspired vision aimed to advance the improvement of our peoples' quality of lives.

The purpose of this letter will appear countervailing and contradictory to the essence of economic and social development principles. But tantamount to our steadfast, fierce, and uncompromising commitment to the preservation of culture, traditions, and way of life, I apply the same passion to the protection and preservation of our ocean resources given that it has been only the source of economic opportunity that we have cultivated and has fueled economic progress for our territory.

I recently read a seabed mining article announcing the preparations by two off-island companies to approach our government for permission to conduct seabed mining operations within our Exclusive Economic Zone. This is very disconcerting and alarming. We don't have any scientific information or data to gauge the potential damages which might be inflicted on our ocean quality and impact on biological resources we currently depend on for our economic and social livelihood.



Accordingly, this letter officially registers my staunch opposition to any proposal to conduct seabed mining within our 200 Miles Exclusive Economic Zone. I would humbly ask that we tread cautiously and methodically on any effort to conduct seabed mining within our waters. We must be absolutely sure, before we move to consider any proposal, by first amassing scientifically generated reports clearly delineating benefits and costs embedded in this type of operation.

I am fully cognizant of the fact that our economic development stalemate is attributed to our lack of developable natural resources. Naturally, it makes economic and logical sense for us to explore and cultivate all potential economic opportunities. But just as we have been adamant to preserve our Fa'aSamoa, above all else, conjures up the same passion to be applied to this issue.

Sincerely,

Lolo M. Moliga

Cc: Honorable Pulumataala Ae Ae Jr. Lieutenant Governor  
Honorable Uifa'atali Aumua Amata, Member of Congress  
Honorable Tua'olo Manaia Fruean, President of the Senate  
Honorable Savali Talavou Ale, Speaker of the House  
Honorable Fa'iivae A. Godinet, Secretary of Samoan Affairs

Moliga, Lolo. Letter to Congresswoman Uifa'atali Amata Coleman Radewagen. 26 May 2025.

**LOLO MATALASI MOLIGA**  
**TAFUNA**  
**PAGO PAGO, AMERICAN SAMOA 96799**  
[Lolo.moliga@gmail.com](mailto:Lolo.moliga@gmail.com)

May 26, 2025

Honorable Uifa'atali Amata Coleman Radewagen  
Member of Congress  
United States House of Representatives  
United States Congress  
Washington D.C. 20202

Lau Afioga Uifa'atali:

Ou te talitonu o lo'o to fa'atimuga loloto mai pea e le Tapa'au ile lagi ana fa'anuiaga i lau afioga ua mausali ai lau tofa ma lou soifua ua fa'aa'upega ia pea 'oe e momoli le fe'au ma 'e finau malosi e puipui mea sina a si o tatou atunu'u.

In my letter dated May 1, 2025 dispatched to Honorable Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula, Governor of American Samoa, I made known my vehement opposition against deep sea mining for the obvious consequential obliteration of our marine environment and marine resources that we historically and presently depend on for our economic and subsistence livelihood.

Our quest for economic development independence has always been American Samoa's principal preoccupation since our people bequeathed their hopes, dreams, and aspirations in 1900 in the compassionate arms of the greatest country in the world – the United States of America. It recognized the uniqueness and significance of our cultural identity embedded in our land tenure system and thus legislated its protection. Safeguarding and sustaining American Samoa's unique culture and way of life is categorically tied to the protection of its marine resources and its environment.

The United States accorded the Territory the legal privilege to assess and decide federal laws to be applicable to American Samoa. Our prevailing authorized capacity to independently handle our own immigration, customs, taxes, and border issues exemplify special autonomy granted to the Territory of American Samoa by the United States of American Samoa.

Capriciously authorizing seabed mining within or just outside American Samoa's 200-Mile Economic Zone, without first seeking the wishes, opinions, and feelings of the people, defies the spirit of autonomy conferred to the territory.

The utilization of the long-acknowledged finiteness of our economic development options as rhetoric to justify the perceived necessity for seabed mining, without first quantifying the benefits and comprehensively assessing resultant consequences constitute a very perilous path to pursue.

The most famous marine Scientist and ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau dubbed Swains Island as “One of the Last Jewels of the Planet”. We have examples galore of marine wildlife annihilation caused by human activity. Can the seabed mining contractors provide unwavering guarantees and solid assurances that the largest coral head unearthed in the world and the Swains Island will continue to maintain its only discovered asset will not be eradicated?

We have lived with the economic development disadvantages consequential to our decision to preserve our cultural identity and our way of life. We have emphatically declared that our economic and financial desires will not overshadow our pledge to our ancestors and our commitment to the generations to come that we honor our charge to preserve, safeguard, and sustain our indigenous culture, our lands, our way of life, and all our natural assets.

Protecting our oceans, our marine resources, and our environment reflect sacred trusts that should not be sacrificed and weighed against economic and financial considerations. Unilaterally making decision on activities that would undeniably hurt the Territory of American Samoa does not reflect the honored and treasured spirit of democracy.

It is my fervent hope that you will champion our cause to discourage the declared promotion of conducting seabed mining in our backyard.

Sincerely,

Lolo M. Moliga  
Former Governor

Cc: Honorable Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula, Governor of American Samoa  
Honorable Pulumataala Ae Ae Jr. Lieutenant Governor of American Samoa  
Honorable Tua'olo Manaia Fruean, President of the Senate  
Honorable Savali Talavou Ale, Speaker of the House  
Honorable Lealaialoa Michael Kruse, Chief Justice  
(Secretary of the Interior)  
(Assistant Secretary of OIA)

Executive Order 006-2024. (2024) “An order implementing a moratorium on deep seabed mining exploration and exploitation activities.”



**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
AMERICAN SAMOA GOVERNMENT**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER 006 – 2024**

**AN ORDER IMPLEMENTING A MORATORIUM ON DEEP SEABED MINING  
EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION ACTIVITIES**

**Section 1: Authority**

This Executive Order is hereby issued under the authority granted to the Governor in Article IV, Section 6 and Section 7 of the American Samoa Revised Constitution and the American Samoa Code Annotated, §4.0111 (b).

**Section 2: Preamble**

**WHEREAS,** the waters surrounding American Samoa are home to diverse and vibrant marine ecosystems, which are critical for the ecological balance, cultural heritage, and economic well-being of the territory and region; and

**WHEREAS,** the people of American Samoa have a profound connection to the ocean, relying on it for sustenance, cultural practices, and economic activities, particularly through fisheries and tourism; and

**WHEREAS,** the main economic driver in American Samoa is the tuna industry, which relies on the locally based fishing fleet for fish supply and access to fishing grounds within the EEZ is of great importance; and

**WHEREAS,** deep sea mining poses significant risks to marine biodiversity, including the potential for habitat destruction, pollution, and the disruption of critical ecological processes, which could have irreversible impacts on marine life and local communities; and

**WHEREAS,** sustainable management of ocean resources and protection of deep-sea ecosystems is essential to mitigating climate change, preventing further rise in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, and ensuring the health and prosperity of current and future generations of American Samoans; and

**WHEREAS,** deep-sea ecosystems remain among the least-understood places on earth and support vital ocean ecosystem elements such as fish stocks, coral reefs, and ecosystem functions, including water temperature regulation, carbon sequestration, and nutrient cycling; and

**WHEREAS**, there is insufficient scientific information and technological development to understand the full scope of potential impacts of seabed mining and technologies for extracting minerals from the ocean floor remain untested in terms of environmental safety; and

**WHEREAS**, international agreements and conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), emphasize the protection of the marine environment and the importance of conducting environmental impact assessments for activities that may adversely affect it; and

**WHEREAS**, the precautionary principle as enshrined in international environmental law mandates that in the face of potential harm, the burden of proof falls on those proposing an action.

**NOW THEREFORE, I, LEMANU P. S. MAUGA**, Governor of American Samoa, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Revised Constitution of American Samoa and the American Samoa Code Annotated, hereby execute this order.

### **Section 3. Moratorium on Deep Sea Mining Activities**

There shall be a moratorium on any mining, extracting, removing, or any exploration activities related to the mining, extracting, or removing of minerals from the seabed in waters of American Samoa.

### **Section 4: Minerals Definition**

“Minerals” as used in this Order means natural deposits of valuable minerals, including but not limited to metals and placer deposits of metals, nonmetallic minerals, gemstones, ores, gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, iron, manganese, silica, chrome, platinum, tungsten, zirconium, titanium, garnet, phosphorous, polymetallic nodules, polymetallic sulphides, and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts. The term “minerals” does not include rock, gravel, sand, silt, or hydrocarbons.

### **Section 5: Scientific Research**

This moratorium shall not be construed to prohibit scientific research or collections conducted by, or on behalf of, an educational, scientific, or a research institution or a government agency. Any such research activity shall be subject to local laws, regulations, and permitting requirements.


### **Section 6: Policy Development and Cooperation**

During this moratorium, American Samoa will advocate for the advancement of marine research, the development of sustainable ocean policies, and the promotion of local and international cooperation in the sustainable management of marine resources.

### **Section 7: Effective Date**



This order shall take effect immediately.

  
Lemanu P. S. Mauga  
Governor of American Samoa

24 July, 2024  
Date:

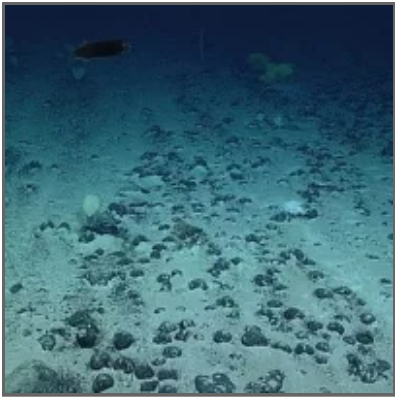


Talanei (2025). "Growing opposition to seabed mining." Interview with Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga. 4 June 2025.

Talanei (2025). "Rep Malaeoletalu opposes seabed mining in any form." Interview with Malaeoletalu Melesio Gurr. 2 June 2025.

# Growing opposition to seabed mining

📅 June 4, 2025 📍 News (<https://www.talane.com/category/news/>) 0 Comments  
([https://www.talane.com/2025/06/04/growing-opposition-to-seabed-mining/#disqus\\_thread](https://www.talane.com/2025/06/04/growing-opposition-to-seabed-mining/#disqus_thread))



A former Director of Education and former Director of Marine and Wildlife Resources has added her voice to those opposing seabed mining in waters in and around American Samoa.

Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga, an educator and biologist, said in a statement, “We Samoans are guardians of the oceans, with strong connections to the sea through our culture, history and strong reliance on marine resources for survival. We teach our children at home, school and church the need to protect its biodiversity and marine resources.”

She said the concept of seabed mining—extracting minerals from the ocean floor—will undoubtedly, and as research has shown, “disrupt the natural process of the ocean floor, loss of species and damage the seabed for thousands of years.”

Dr. Matagi-Tofiga cautioned, “Already, we are facing climate change, ocean acidification, coral bleaching—then to add seabed mining will bring negative consequences for millions of people who depend on its health.”

She believes seabed mining’s impact “on our biodiversity outweighs any economic gains.”

She pleaded, “American Samoa lets stand together and oppose seabed mining.”

# Rep Malaeoletalu opposes seabed mining in any form

📅 June 2, 2025 🔒 News (<https://www.talane.com/category/news/>) 1 Comment  
([https://www.talane.com/2025/06/02/rep-malaeoletalu-opposes-seabed-mining-in-any-form/#disqus\\_thread](https://www.talane.com/2025/06/02/rep-malaeoletalu-opposes-seabed-mining-in-any-form/#disqus_thread))



Fagatogo Representative Malaeoletalu Melesio Gurr, Chairman of the House Committee on Ports and Transportation has declared he does not support any form of seabed mining in American Samoa's waters.

The Interior Department recently announced that its initiating the process to evaluate a potential mineral lease sale in the waters offshore American Samoa. The announcement follows on the heels of an application by US based company Impossible Metals for a lease sale to conduct seafloor exploration and extraction. The company filed its application with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on April 8, 2025.

Rep Malaeoletalu released a statement saying, "I want the people of American Samoa and especially Fagatogo District 8 to know that I do not support seabed mining in our ocean.

"We must protect our ocean environment for our children and future generations."

The statement says seabed mining involves digging up the ocean floor for minerals. It has raised serious concerns worldwide for its potential to harm marine life and fragile deep-sea environments.

Rep. Malaeoletalu says he's not willing to take that risk. "There's still so much we don't know about the long-term impact of seabed mining, and we can't afford to take a risk on something as important as our ocean."

He also emphasized the importance of transparency and community input. "Any decision that affects our land or ocean should always include the voice of our people.

"That HAS NOT happened here, and that's another reason I cannot support it."

Rep. Malaeoletalu expressed his appreciation for those speaking out on the issue of deep seabed mining, with particular acknowledgment to former Governor Lolo Matalasi Moliga and the Executive Order 006-2024 issued by former Governor Lemanu P.S. Mauga, which placed a moratorium on the practice.

"I thank Governor Lolo for publicly voicing his concerns recently on this critical issue. I fully support his call to protect our ocean from potential harm. The moratorium established under Executive Order 006-2024 by Governor Lemanu last year is vital in preserving our marine environment, and I commend those who continue to advocate for its protection."

The Fagatogo faipule concluded, “I pray that our government and traditional leaders will unite to stop the destruction of our resources. We must protect what God has blessed us with. We’ve always been taught to respect the ocean and not just use it. That’s part of our culture and our responsibility. I will continue to stand up for our environment and the people of American Samoa.”