



**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
Council**

August 14, 2025

Douglas Boren, Pacific Regional Director
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Office of Strategic Resources
760 Paseo Camarillo, Suite 102 (CM 102)
Camarillo, CA 93010

Dear Mr. Boren:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) request for information (RFI) on commercial leasing for outer continental shelf minerals offshore American Samoa. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) remains concerned about the potential impacts of deep sea mining development on fisheries in the Western Pacific Region. Further at its 203rd meeting, the Council directed staff to work with the fishing community in American Samoa to review the information available on deep-sea mining in preparation to provide comments to the RFI. From June 24-30, the Council held a series of meetings with the fishing communities on Tutuila/Aunu'u, Ta'u, and Ofu-Olosega to gather input on the RFI.

As BOEM continues to engage the American Samoa communities on deep sea mining, understanding and respecting the Samoan culture is crucial for any visitor. The concept of *Fa'a Samoa*, or "the Samoan way", underscores the importance of family community, and respect for elders. To ensure equitable access to information, all documents and presentations should be translated into Samoan, as English is a second language for many residents. In addition to providing translations, the Council offers its "Protocols and Tips for Visiting and Working in American Samoa" as a guide for future engagement in American Samoa.

Both the American Samoa longline and *alia* fisheries operate solely within the American Samoa Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Continued access to these fishing grounds is essential for the survival of these fleets. To address access concerns, BOEM and prospective lessees should consider conducting more detailed environmental analyses and provide specifics on what mining methodologies would be used, given differences in anticipated environmental impacts between new novel extraction approaches and other practices. Disturbance of seabed sediments could impact fish migration within and beyond the proposed lease areas and mining activities could limit fishing access. In addition, BOEM should consider the potential impacts on American Samoa's infrastructure and communities as lessees may develop operations that divert essential resources (i.e., gas, port facilities, transportation) away from local residents and businesses. As outlined in the Council's June 13 letter, BOEM should also consider ongoing extraction activities in the Cook Islands to minimize impacts on American Samoa.

At a recent American Samoa Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committee (REAC) meeting, members identified opportunities to engage local students in science and technology fields, especially through the territory's strong robotics programs. The REAC recommended that deep-sea mining companies offer educational opportunities to help residents participate in this emerging industry. BOEM and its lessees should consider building capacity amongst the residents of American Samoa to be able to provide both at-sea and dockside support for these activities.

While Executive Order 14285, *Unleashing America's Offshore Critical Minerals and Resources*, underscores the Trump Administration's interest in advancing deep-sea mining, the Council's foremost priority is to safeguard fishing in U.S. waters. Preserving access to marine resources is vital for sustaining jobs and economic stability in American Samoa through its tuna-based economy, as well as preserving Fa'a Samoa.

The Council looks forward to BOEM's future engagement with the Council and its American Samoa fishing community on the development of a potential marine mineral lease. If you have any questions or concerns, contact the Council's point of contact for offshore energy, Zach Yamada at the Council Office at (808) 522-8227, or Zach.Yamada@wpcouncil.org.

Sincerely,



Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director

cc: Council Members

Encl: WPRFMC American Samoa Cultural Protocol



**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
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Protocols and Tips for Visiting and Working in American Samoa

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About this Document

This document was created by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council as a sensitivity guide for visiting Council Family and affiliates. It provides important information describing how to plan and conduct work in a culturally appropriate manner, and the resources available to assist in the visitor's efforts.



Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

Introduction

Talofa and Welcome to American Samoa.

American Samoa is an unincorporated territory of the United States and the only U.S. territory in the South Pacific since 1900. Located approximately 4,250 kilometers or approximately 2640 miles south of Hawai'i in the central South Pacific Ocean, it is geologically part of the Samoa Archipelago, a remote chain of 13 islands of varying sizes and an atoll, positioned 14 degrees south of the equator near the International Date Line. The archipelago is divided into two political entities: the Independent State of Samoa and American Samoa. The Independent State of Samoa consists of two relatively large islands (Upolu and Savai'i) and eight islets. American Samoa is composed of five volcanic islands (Tutuila, Aunu'u, Ofu, Olosega, and Ta'u), one low-lying island (Swains Island), and a coral atoll (Rose Atoll).

American Samoa's economy is dependent on tuna processing. About 80% of the private sector employment derives from the tuna industry. The StarKist tuna processing plant employs over 2,000 workers. Large scale tuna fishing boats based in Pago Pago range far and wide in the Central Pacific Ocean to catch migratory tuna for delivery to American Samoa for processing and export to the United States.

This document aims to provide Council staff and affiliates with essential guidelines and protocols for engaging with the local community, government officials, and other stakeholders in American Samoa. Understanding and respecting Samoan culture is crucial for fostering positive relationships and ensuring successful interactions during your visit. The term *fa'asamoa*, or the Samoan way of life, refers to a complex cultural code that guides and teaches individuals on how to live their life. The concept of *fa'asamoa*, underscores the importance of family, community, and respect for elders and traditional leaders. This document sets the stage for navigating the cultural landscape of American Samoa with respect and sensitivity.

Meaningful engagement is about respecting cultural practices and protocols. Pacific values common to all Pacific cultures should always be considered when observing any customs. Although it is a part of the United States, American Samoa is rich in culture and tradition. By adhering to the guidelines outlined in this document, you will ensure your visit will be rewarding and culturally appropriate to the *fa'asamoa*.

Protocols for Council Staff and Affiliates

Coordination with Council Staff and Affiliates

To ensure a smooth and respectful visit, please coordinate with local organizers and relevant government agencies. Depending on the nature and level of the visit, you may need to engage with:

- **American Samoa Council Staff:** Visitors to the territory should coordinate all visits through the local island coordinator in American Samoa via email, ensuring the coordinator is included in all logistical communications. This will keep the coordinator informed and assist in planning activities effectively. As the primary on-the-ground resource, the local coordinator acts as an extension of the Council, facilitating engagement with the local government and communities. The American Samoa Council office is located on the second floor of the Tedi of Samoa Building, Room 208B, within Fagotogo Square.

American Samoa Council Office

Phone: 684-633-0547

Fagatogo Village

Tedi of Samoa Building Room 208B

P.O. Box 357

Pago Pago, AS 96799

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- **Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR):** The point of contact is the Fisheries Chief or the Director of DMWR. When engaging with village matai or local fishermen, DMWR should be included as a liaison.
- **Governor's Office:** To schedule meetings with the Governor or his staff, coordinate all communications through the Governor's Office and the Chief of Staff.
- **Office of Samoan Affairs:** Particularly for outreach or public meetings with villages, ensure that all relevant entities are informed of your visit and itinerary to facilitate proper introductions and adherence to local protocols.
- **Other Government Officials:** Other local and Federal Government officials, department directors, and secretaries should be engaged through formal communication channels. As a best practice, always route any communication through their respective chief of staff or assistants.

Types of Engagement

The nature of your visit will determine the level of engagement and protocols to follow. The following are the key types of engagements and their respective protocols:

1. Official Visits with Government Officials:

- **High-Level Meetings:** Coordinate with the Governor's Office and ensure that all protocols for meeting high-ranking officials are followed. Acknowledge chiefs present and participate in prayers that start and end meetings. Route all formal communications through chiefs of staff or assistants.
- **Departmental Visits:** For meetings with specific departments like DMWR, contact the relevant point of contact (e.g., Fisheries Chief or Director) to facilitate introductions and meetings.

2. Community Engagement and Outreach:

- **Village Visits:** Make formal introductions and seek guidance from DMWR and the Office of Samoan Affairs to engage with local *matai* and respect village protocols.
- **Public Meetings:** Engage with local coordinators and the DMWR, who will liaise with the Governor's Office. Ensure all community members are appropriately informed and respected during engagements.

3. Council Meetings:

- **Formal Sessions:** Follow established procedures for Council meetings, including acknowledging high-ranking chiefs and participating in opening and closing prayers. Ensure all stakeholders are informed such as fishing communities, the Office of Samoan Affairs, the Department of Commerce, the *Fono*, the Governor's Office, and DMWR.
- **Welcoming Ceremonies:** It is customary for the American Samoa Government (ASG) to hold 'ava ceremonies to welcome Council staff and affiliates, along with NOAA federal staff participating in the Council meeting. When engaging with villages, you may be expected to participate in 'ava ceremonies at the village level. See 'Ava Ceremonies' section below.

Respect Local Hierarchy: Understand the local hierarchy and address individuals by their titles. Always address village chiefs and high-ranking officials with respect. Refer to *The Matai System* section below.

Learn Basic Samoan Phrases: Learning simple greetings and phrases in Samoan shows respect and can help build rapport. Refer to the *Language* section below.

Cultural Sensitivity and Respect

Understanding and respecting the Samoan Culture is crucial for any visitor. The concept of *fa'asamoa* underscores the importance of family, community, and respect for elders and the traditional leaders known as *matai*. The *matai* system is an integral part of the Samoan culture, governing land, family affairs, and community decisions. Respecting hierarchy, alongside showing courtesy and humility will greatly enhance your interactions with the community.

Engagement that is meaningful is about respecting cultural practices and protocols. Pacific values common to all Pacific cultures should always be considered when observing any customs. If you are asked to attend an event or ceremony, it is anticipated that you will be accompanied and/or advised by people who can help guide you.

1. **Understand *Fa'asamoa*:** The Samoan way of life, *fa'asamoa*, is central to the culture. It emphasizes respect for elders, family, and community.
2. **Respect for Elders and Leaders:** Always show deference to elders and local leaders. When entering a village, it is customary to seek permission from the village chief through the Office of Samoan Affairs with guidance from DMWR.
3. **Modesty in Dress:** Dress conservatively, especially in villages. Men should wear shirts, and women should wear skirts or dresses that cover the knees. Avoid wearing swimsuits or revealing clothing outside of beach areas.
4. **Observe Curfew Hours:** Sunday is a sacred day and activities are limited. Many villages observe curfews and quiet hours in the evenings, especially during traditional evening prayers (*Sa*).
5. **Observe Funerals, Weddings, and other Village Ceremonies:** Be considerate of funerals, weddings and other traditional ceremonies. Samoan events such as these are highly cultural and it is important to show respect around large gatherings of people. Keep noise to a minimum. Some coastal villages prohibit certain activities such as fishing when there is a funeral for high chiefs. Observing these customs will demonstrate your respect for Samoan traditions and help you integrate seamlessly into the community.

The Matai System

The *matai* are the chiefs of the Samoan culture, embodying the essence of *fa'asamoa*. The *matai* system is a sophisticated and integral part of Samoan society, reflecting a well-developed hierarchy that has been in place for centuries. The *matai* are responsible for maintaining the respect, traditions, and administration of the village. They play a critical role in preserving the cultural heritage and social structure of Samoa. The Samoan *matai* and the *matai* system account for strict policies of land ownership in American Samoa and the Independent State of Samoa, ensuring that the majority of the land remains under the ownership of people of Samoan descent.

At the heart of the *matai* system is the *aiga*, or family. The *matai* holds responsibility not only to their family but also to their village, district, and the wider community. The relationship between a *matai* and their family members is marked by mutual respect and pride. The *matai* serves as a leader and protector, ensuring the well-being and prosperity of the *aiga*, while the family supports and honors the *matai*'s leadership and decisions.

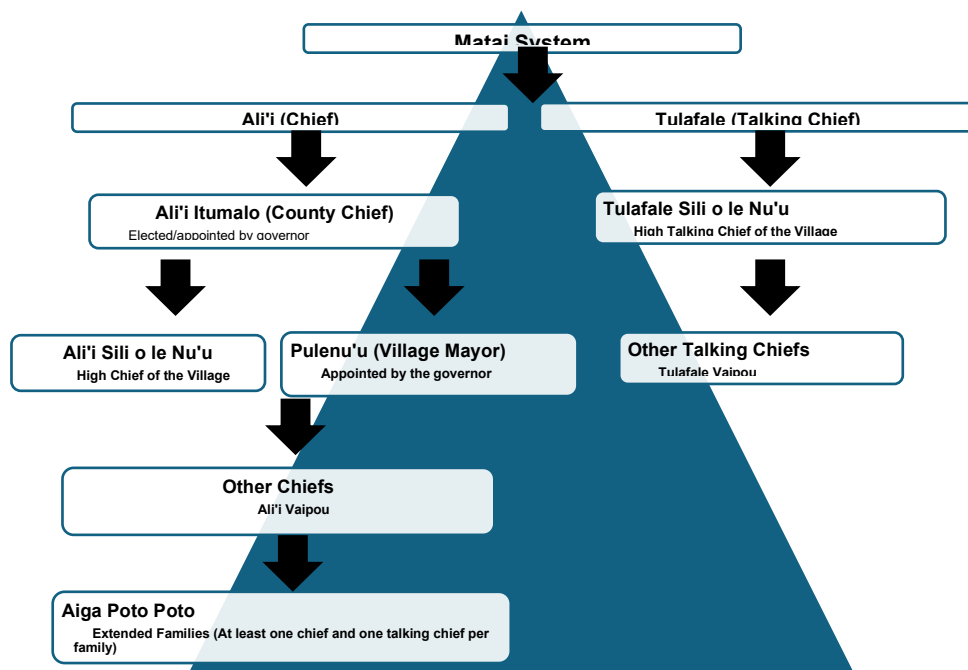
There are two main types of *matai* titles: *ali'i* (chief) and *tulafale* (talking chief or orator). The highest *matai* start with the *ali'i itumalo* (county chief), who are traditionally elected but appointed by the Governor under the Revised Code of American Samoa.

In the village hierarchy, nearly all villages have an *Ali'i sili o le nu'u* (village high chief), who may also be the *Pulenu'u* (village mayor). The *Pulenu'u* is appointed by the Governor with input

from the village council, county chief, and district governor. The village high chief is supported by high talking chiefs (*Tulafale sili o le nu'u*) who represent him at formal occasions. In some villages, there is no single village high chief, and there are multiple chiefs of the same rank who share responsibilities. Chiefs and talking chiefs have lower-ranking counterparts known as *Ali'i vaipou* and *Tulafale vaipou*, who do not hold prestigious positions during meetings. Each extended family (*aiga poto poto*) has at least one chief and one talking chief.

Apart from Swains Island, the islands are divided into several administrative districts (each with an appointed district governor), which are subdivided into counties. The influence of the extended families (*aiga*) reaches to the district level. The *aiga* are headed by *matai*, who are selected by their extended families on the basis of consensus. Most chiefs' titles are very old. The *matai* together make up village and district councils or *fono*, which control and run local affairs. This autonomous village control is linked with the central government through the district governors, who are appointed by the governor.

American Samoa has a bicameral legislature, called the *Fono*, which meets for two sessions each year. It is autonomous in its disposition of local revenues and is the sole law making body, although the Governor has the power to veto legislation. The members of American Samoa's House of Representatives (lower house) are elected by universal suffrage to two-year terms; one member is a non-voting delegate elected from Swains Island. Members of the Senate (upper house) are chosen by councils of chiefs, in accordance with Samoan custom, to serve four-year terms.



Language

There are two official languages used in American Samoa:

- a. Samoan (Native Language)
- b. English

Samoan is widely spoken among the local population and is considered a significant cultural aspect of the territory. English is also commonly used, especially in government, business, and educational settings. Be respectful and considerate when speaking to the local people. Speak slowly and clearly, use respectful language, and be mindful that some may have limited understanding of English. Learning a few basic Samoan phrases, such as *fa'amolemole* (please) and *fa'afetai* (thank you) can go a long way in showing respect and fostering goodwill.

Talofa! is a common greeting in the Samoan language. It is equivalent to saying "hello" in English and is used to greet someone warmly and respectfully. The term conveys a sense of welcome and friendliness, reflecting the hospitable nature of the *fa'asamoa* culture. When visiting American Samoa, using *talofa* when greeting people demonstrates respect and a willingness to engage with the local customs and language.

Here are a few additional phrases that might be useful:

Talofa lava: A more formal or emphatic way to say hello.

***Fa'afetai* (fah-ah-feh-tie):** Thank you.

***Tofa soifua* (toh-fah soy-foo-ah):** Goodbye.

***Tulou lava* (too-loh la-va):** Excuse me.

***Fa'amolemole* (fah-ah-moh-leh-moh-leh):** Please

***Ioe* (ee-oh-e):** Yes

***Leai* (le-ai):** No

***Manuia!* (ma-noo-ee-ah):** Cheers, or good, or very well

***Manuia le aso* (ma-noo-ee-ah leh ah-so):** Good day

***Manuia le po* (ma-noo-ee-ah leh poh):** Good night

***Manuia le afiafi* (ma-noo-ee-ah leh ah-fee-ah-fee):** Good evening

***O a mai oe?* (O-ah-my-o-he):** How are you?

***Manuia fa'afetai* (ma-noo-ee-ah fah-ah-feh-tie):** Very well, thank you.

***Fa'amalie atu* (fah-ah-mah-lee-eh ah-too):** 'I'm sorry' or 'apologies' (Literal meaning is to create ease, and atu is to gesture away from the speaker. Phrase is used for when the speaker wants to appease the person they are speaking to)

Religion

Religion plays a central role in the *fa'asamoa*, with Christianity being the dominant faith. Most Samoans are Christians and it influences many aspects of daily life. Various Christian denominations are present, including the Congregational Christian Church, Methodist Church, Roman Catholic Church, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church).

Church services are typically held on Sundays, and many community events and social gatherings revolve around church activities. Additionally, some activities are prohibited on Sundays as a sign of respect for the Sabbath, including certain types of work and recreational

activities such as fishing. Major Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter are widely celebrated with church services, feasting, and community events.

Prayers are an integral part of both formal and informal functions in the government and community, reflecting the central role of faith in public and private life. While Christianity is predominant, some traditional Samoan beliefs and practices may also be observed alongside Christian customs. This blend of old and new traditions is common, and understanding and respecting religious practices and ceremonies is important for engaging respectfully with Samoan culture.

When participating in or observing religious practices, it is important to dress modestly and behave respectfully. This includes being aware of the etiquette associated with church services and community religious events.

Etiquette on Touching, Shaking Hands, and Personal Interactions

Touching and Personal Space

1. *Respect Personal Boundaries:* Personal space is valued in Samoan culture. Avoid unnecessary physical contact with people you do not know well unless the person initiates a handshake or hug.
2. *Avoid Touching Heads:* The head is considered sacred in Samoan culture. Avoid touching someone's head, including children, as it is seen as disrespectful.
3. *Personal Space:* Samoans tend to leave an arm's length of personal space when interacting with others. Many believe it is impolite to walk in front of or invade someone's personal space.

Handshakes

1. *Gentle Handshakes:* Handshakes are common when greeting someone, but they are typically gentle and not as firm as in Western cultures. A gentle handshake with a smile and eye contact is appropriate.
2. *Two-Handed Shakes:* Sometimes, people may use their free hand to touch the shaking hands or the wrist of the person they are greeting, adding a layer of warmth and respect to the gesture.

Greetings

1. *Use of Talofa:* When meeting someone, use the greeting *talofa* to show respect and friendliness. When greeting friends and family, usually one would use their first name followed by *talofa* (hello).
2. *Respectful Vocabulary:* Use respectful language, especially when addressing elders or people with chiefly titles.
3. If the person you are greeting has a title, such as chiefs (*matai*), you would use their title regardless of the length of time you have known the person.

4. Many chiefs do not advertise their status, so it is important to inquire and call them by their appropriate title.
5. The typical greeting among friends and family is a hug and kiss on the cheek.

Communication and Interaction

1. *Listen More Than You Speak:* Show respect by listening attentively. Avoid interrupting or speaking over others.
2. *Non-Verbal Communication:* Be aware of non-verbal actions. A friendly smile and nod can go a long way.
3. *Be Humble:* Approach interactions with humility and an open mind. Avoid boasting or displaying superiority.

Interactions with Elders and Chiefs

1. *Showing Deference:* Always show deference to elders and chiefs. When addressing them, use appropriate titles and show signs of respect, such as slightly bowing or lowering yourself if they are seated.
2. *Tulou Lava:* When passing in front of someone or entering a room where people are seated on the floor, it is polite to bend slightly and say *tulou lava* (excuse me). Always excuse yourself if your movements obstruct the view of others.
3. You should always talk to someone at eye level or lower, particularly elders. For example, if an elder is seated, you are expected to sit down before conversing with them. Failing to do so is seen as a sign of great disrespect.

Respect or *fa'aaloalo* is a universal value that transcends age. Whether someone is younger or older, it is always appropriate to show respect and deference. This courtesy applies to everyone, not just elders or chiefs.

In situations where younger people interact with elders, it's not only acceptable but expected that they show respect. However, the same level of respect should be extended to all individuals, regardless of their age or appearance. Since some chiefs might look younger, treating everyone with deference ensures that respect is given where it is due, avoiding any potential missteps. This approach fosters a culture of mutual respect, where kindness and honor are consistently practiced and reciprocated.

Sitting and Standing

1. *Do Not Stand Over Seated People:* It is considered impolite to stand over people who are seated, especially elders or those of higher status. If you need to address them, try to be at their eye level or slightly lower.
2. *Sitting Positions:* When sitting, avoid showing the bottoms of your feet to others, as this can be seen as disrespectful.

Other Etiquette Rules

1. Samoans tend to have a relaxed view of time and may refer jokingly to things running on “Samoan time” when it comes to social situations. In a business setting or an appointment of importance, punctuality is highly valued.
2. You would also excuse yourself in the presence of people you respect when you are sharing a story that may include offensive (but instrumental) content.
3. *Raising Eyebrows*: A raised eyebrow can have different meanings depending on the context. For example, it may mean that you do not believe the other person, that you agree with them or that you give your approval.
4. *Hand Gestures*: Hand gestures or movements with the hands are used often and dramatically during oral speeches and in general conversations.
5. *Pointing*: Pointing with the index finger is considered rude. Most Samoans will point to something by gesturing in its direction with their chin. Pointing one’s feet at someone is also considered rude.
6. *Eye Contact*: Holding prolonged, direct eye contact is not very common during conversations. When eye contact is made, it is usually fleeting (e.g., making eye contact then looking off to the side). When conversing with someone of higher status, people will avert their gaze out of respect. For example, a Samoan youth may not look directly in the eyes of someone older as it may be interpreted as challenging their elder.

Visiting



1. It is common for people to visit each other unannounced and people may stay long into the night.
2. Usually, shoes are left outside before one enters a dwelling. Always ask permission to enter with shoes on.
3. When you enter a Samoan house, people will likely be sitting on the floor around the perimeter of the room. Beginning at the highest-ranking person, walk up to the individual, meet them at their level and greet them. You would then repeat this as you move around the room.
4. The best floor mats are often laid out for visitors.

5. When sitting on a floor mat, people generally sit cross-legged or with their legs tucked behind them.
6. Legs should be stretched out if they are covered properly. However, mind your feet are not pointing at another person.
7. Speaking to someone in the house while standing is thought to be impolite.
8. Once guests have entered the home, the host will often make a speech of welcome and the guest makes a formal response.
9. Hosts may offer refreshments such as coconut, biscuits and soft drinks.
10. Allow the host to seat you. Guests are often asked to sit in the middle of the table so they may converse with everyone more easily.

What to wear: Clothing for Formal Meetings



In American Samoa, formal attire is crucial for business interactions with traditional and government leaders. Here's a guide for various settings:

- **Meetings with the Government Officials, *Fono* Leaders (Legislature), Village Chiefs, and 'Ava Ceremonies :**
 - **Men:** Wear a tie, collared dress shirt, formal dress pants, and closed-toe shoes. Although the tie and closed-toe shoes are not mandatory for other formal meetings, they add a touch of formality. Consider wearing an Aloha shirt and an *i'e faitaga* (a tailored skirt with pockets) for a formal and respectful appearance.
 - **Women:** Dress as you would for a formal business meeting, opting for modest clothing that covers the shoulders and skirts that reach at least the knees. Opt for a *pule'asi* (a traditional dress consisting of a top and a matching full-length skirt) that covers the shoulders and is not too low-cut. Avoid shorts that are too short or below the knees. If uncertain, a simple *lavalava* (sarong wrap) over shorts is a respectful option and can be purchased at many stores in Tutuila.
- **Field and Beach Attire:**
 - **General Guidelines:** Clothing should be modest. Bikinis are acceptable in the water, but cover up on shore. Avoid wearing shorts without cover-ups. Rash

guards and surf leggings are recommended for modesty and sun protection. Surf trunks are appropriate for men.

- **Additional Tips:** When leaving your hotel, walking around, or using the restroom, it's best to wear a lavalava or shorts and a t-shirt. Modesty and respect are important in public places, especially around elders and children. Given the volcanic nature of the island, water shoes like neoprene booties are recommended for walking over rocky areas.

Meetings



1. Engage with village chiefs or community leaders before the meeting. Their support can facilitate better attendance and participation.
2. Choose a venue that is accessible and comfortable for the community. It could be a village meeting house (*fale tele*), church hall, or a government facility.
3. Whenever possible, extend personal invitations, especially to local leaders and influential community members.
4. Use local radio, community boards, and word-of-mouth to announce the meeting. In American Samoa, radio is a highly effective medium.
5. Have a clear agenda but be flexible. Community concerns may shift the focus, and it's important to be responsive.
6. Punctuality is important. However, keep in mind that meetings may not start at the designated time.
7. Start the meeting with a prayer, as this is customary in American Samoa.
8. Begin by acknowledging the presence of any *matai*, elders, or community leaders. It's respectful to allow them to speak early in the meeting.
9. During meetings, wear appropriate attire. This is usually a shirt and smart trousers for men and a blouse with smart trousers or a long skirt for women. If in doubt, dress modestly. Refer to *What to wear?* section for more information.
10. During a meeting, a gift is usually expected. The presentation of gifts is formal and often done publicly. Refer to the *Gift Giving* section below.
11. Consider providing translations or explanations in Samoan for those who may not be fluent in English.

12. Encourage open dialogue, but be mindful of the cultural norm where younger or lower-ranking individuals may not speak freely in the presence of elders or chiefs. Gently prompt participation if needed.
13. While it's important to respect the time of participants, be prepared for the meeting to go longer if the community is engaged.
14. Samoans tend to be very polite. They may say what they think their foreign counterpart wants to hear, regardless of whether it is entirely true. This is because they want to avoid spoiling relations.
15. Maintain communication with the community after the meeting, showing that their input is valued and acted upon.

Gift Giving

1. A Samoan may politely decline a gift out of humbleness. If a gift is not accepted at first, give it to a daughter or son or somebody that lives with the family. It is thought that this is a better alternative than having to take the gift back.
2. There is no need to buy an expensive gift, particularly if you can't afford one. For many Samoans, it is the thought behind the gift that is more important.
3. If you feel your gift is inadequate, apologize that the gift may not be enough but that you have brought it as a token of your appreciation.
4. When accepting a gift, it is customary to bow your head slightly and place the gift above your head with both hands for a moment.

'Ava Ceremonies



The Kava Ceremony, also known as the 'Ava Ceremony, is an ancient Samoan ritual that is performed at the beginning of all important services and gatherings. Typically led by the high chief of the hosting village, the ceremony begins with words of welcome as the participants sit

cross-legged on the floor in a circle or semicircle. The proceedings include the preparation and consumption of an 'ava drink.

The drink is made by mixing the 'ava plant, also known as *piper methysticum*, with water. This is done in a *tānoa* (bowl that stands on multiple legs) using a *fau* (strainer made from the bark of the *fau*, or *Hibiscus tiliaceus*, tree) as the stirring tool. The *fau* strains excess 'ava from the water; it is then tossed over the right shoulder to a *soga'imiti* (a male with a *tatau*), who shakes out any remaining 'ava pieces before tossing it back. This continues until no more plant pieces remain in the *tānoa*. The drink is then served in an *ipu tau* 'ava (half of a polished coconut shell) in an order that reflects the social rank of the guests being served.

Participants are expected to behave with the utmost respect and decorum. Speaking out of turn or showing signs of disrespect can be seen as a serious breach of etiquette. Visitors are expected to observe certain protocols, such as sitting quietly and waiting for the chief to accept the kava.

Photos during an 'ava ceremony can only be taken with the high chief's permission. These ceremonies are typically held in a traditional Samoan guest house or *maota*, which is an oval or circular structure with wooden posts supporting a domed roof. It's important not to take photos or move around inside the ceremony area. Dress modestly for the occasion. Gifts are not given during the ceremony itself but are presented afterward.



195th Council Meeting delegation in American Samoa. Photo by WPRFMC.

Village Curfews



Most villages in American Samoa typically observe a *Sa* or village curfew at 6 pm for a family prayer service, which lasts about 15 minutes. The *Aumaga*, or untitled men, ring bells throughout the village to signal the curfew. The first bell indicates that it is time for villagers to return home, while the second bell marks the start of the curfew. During the second bell, no one is allowed to walk around the village; you must remain indoors or stay in your parked vehicle. If you are outdoors during the curfew, try to go indoors or find a spot to sit until the *Sa* is concluded.

While the *Sa* does not apply to moving vehicles on the main road, drivers must maintain a modest speed. If you are driving on a village back road or dirt road, you must stop your vehicle until the *Sa* has ended. The final bell indicates the end of the curfew, after which people are allowed to go about their activities again.

Failure to adhere to the village *Sa* may result in punishment from the village council chiefs.

In addition to the 6 pm curfew, some villages also have curfews at 9 pm and/or 10 pm. In the village of Nu'uuli, the *Aumaga* uses a conch shell horn to signal the curfew. At these times, no one should be wandering about the village.

Traveling to American Samoa

Airlines

Three international airlines service American Samoa from Hawai'i , USA, Samoa, and Tonga:

- **Hawai'ian Airlines:** Bi-weekly flights from Honolulu to Pago Pago.
- **Samoa Airways and Talofa Airways:** Daily flights from Apia, Samoa, with Talofa Airways also offering twice-weekly flights from Tonga.

During peak holiday seasons (June - August and December - January), additional flights are available. A weekly ferry service between Samoa and American Samoa is operated by the Samoa Shipping Corporation.

Airports:

- **Pago Pago International Airport (PPG)** on Tutuila Island is the main arrival point.
- **Fitiuta Airport (FTI)** on Ta'u Island and **Ofu Airport (OFU)** on Ofu Island serve the Manu'a Islands.

Immigration

American Samoa enforces its own immigration laws for foreign visitors. U.S. passport holders can travel freely to and from the Territory.

A traveler entering territory must complete a health declaration. For convenience, travelers can submit responses using the TalofaPass web portal, or travelers will be required to complete a health declaration paper form upon arrival in American Samoa.

If you previously registered for a TalofaPass account, your information has been saved and you can use your same login information to complete your health declaration.

If you did not previously register on TalofaPass, you can create a new Traveler Declaration account on travelerdeclaration.as.gov.

American Samoa Entry Permit Waiver Program (EPWP)

To qualify for the EPWP, foreign travelers must provide:

1. A non-expired, machine-readable passport valid for at least 6 months beyond the planned departure date from American Samoa.
2. A confirmed roundtrip ticket to the point of origin or onward travel.
3. Payment of a USD \$20 processing fee.
4. An online application and payment for an "OK to Board" at www.legalaffairs.as.gov before traveling.

Note: Eligibility for the EPWP does not guarantee entry. Immigration officers can deny entry based on American Samoa's laws, especially if a traveler poses a threat to the welfare, health,

safety, or security of the Territory. Travelers deemed a threat will be returned to their point of origin.

EPWP Exclusions: Travelers entering American Samoa to board fishing or other commercial vessels are not eligible for the EPWP.

Eligible Countries: Citizens of the following countries may travel to American Samoa under the EPWP, and these countries are also listed under the U.S. State Department Visa Waiver Program: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Federated States of Micronesia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales).

Permitted Activities under the EPWP:

1. **Business:** Consultations, attending conventions, short-term training (with no payment except for incidental expenses), and contract negotiations.
2. **Tourism:** Vacations, visiting friends or relatives, medical treatment, participation in social events, amateur contests (without payment), short recreational courses, and cultural or religious exchanges.

Prohibited Activities:

1. Study for credit
2. Employment
3. Work as foreign press, radio, film, or other media
4. Applying for residency or extending stay (except in emergencies)

Transit Permits: Travelers and crew arriving on cruise ships for less than 24 hours do not need an entry permit; a TRANSIT PERMIT is automatically issued.

Entry Permit: Travelers from countries not listed under the EPWP must obtain an Entry Permit by contacting the Attorney General's Office.

For questions regarding the EPWP, contact the Office of the Attorney General at +1 (684) 633-4163 or +1 (684) 633-4164, or email okboard@la.as.gov.

Duty-Free Allowance

Travelers can bring:

- 1 bottle of alcohol (including wine)
- 1 carton of cigarettes
- 1 case of beer

Amounts exceeding these limits are subject to duty by Customs.

Communications

1. **Service Providers:** Mobile phones from Hawai'i or the mainland may work in American Samoa depending on your service provider. If you are subscribed to one of the major service providers such as Verizon or AT&T, you are subject to roaming charges. Please check with your providers.
2. **Local SIM Cards:** As a general rule, if you want to use your phone, you must unlock it from your carrier and purchase a local SIM card or eSim. American Samoa has two communication service providers (ASTCA and Bluesky) which offer both calling and data services.
3. **SIM Card Purchase Locations:**
 - o **Bluesky:** Available at Forsgren's Laufou Shopping Center, a kiosk at the Fagatogo Market, and typically from a mobile shop in the parking lot if arriving via Hawai'i an Airlines.
 - o **ASTCA:** Available at locations in Tafuna, Nu'uuli, and Fagatogo.

For more information, refer to the end of this document.

Lodging

Main Hotels

1. **Sadie's by the Sea** - Located in Utulei, this hotel offers beachfront accommodations with various amenities.
2. **Tradewinds Hotel** - Situated in Ottoville, this hotel provides a range of services and comfortable stays.

Local Inns

1. **Airport Inn** - Conveniently located near the airport.
2. **Moana O Sina Lodge** - Located in Vaitogi, this lodge offers a more intimate and local experience.
3. **Sadie's Thompson Inn** - Another option under the Sadie's brand, offering additional choices for accommodations.

For more information, refer to the end of this document.

Driving

Speed Limits: Most main roads in American Samoa have a speed limit of 20-25 mph. Visitors must be mindful of these limits to ensure safety. When traveling through village backroads, maintain a speed of 15-20 mph or follow posted speed limit signs.

Road Conditions: There are many winding roads along the coastline. Exercise caution and drive carefully.

Pedestrians: Be wary of pedestrians walking along the roads and crossing. Always give them the right of way.

Local Driving Etiquette: Drivers commonly honk their horns, flash their high beams, or use hand gestures to give way to other vehicles or pedestrians.

Car Rentals: Vehicles can be rented from the airport facilities or at various locations across the island. Other than the car rentals at the airport, rentals must be paid for and picked up at their locations, as most businesses do not offer drop-offs to the airport. For more information, refer to the end of this document.

Currency

American Samoa uses the U.S. Dollar. Notes: \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100. Coins: 1c, 5c, 10c, 25c. Major foreign currencies can be exchanged at the airport, Western Union retailers, and the Territorial Bank of American Samoa (TBAS).

Banks and ATMs

The Territorial Bank of American Samoa (TBAS) has branches in Utulei and Tafuna, open Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. TBAS ATMs are widely available around Tutuila Island.

ATM Locations

Facility	Location	Hours
ACE	Malaeimi	7:30am - 4:30pm Monday to Friday
		7:00am - 2:00pm Saturday
EOB	Utulei	24 HRS
AVEINA BROTHERS	Nuuuli	24 HRS
CANTON MART	Lepuapua	6:00am - 10:00pm Sunday to Saturday
CENTENNIAL BRANCH	Utulei	24 HRS
COST U LESS	Tafuna	7:00am - 8:00pm Sunday to Saturday
HUANG MART	Atu'u	5:30am - 9:00pm Sunday to Saturday
JIN MART	Alofau	6:00am - 9:00pm Sunday to Saturday
KS MART	Ili'ili	6:30am - 8:00pm Monday to Saturday
LAUFOU SHOPPING CENTER	Nu'uuli	24 HRS
LBJ HOSPITAL	Fagaalu	24 HRS
MATASUA MINI MART	Ta'u,Manu'a	6:00am - 9:00pm Sunday to Saturday
McDONALDS	Tafuna	24HRS
P&F MART	Ili'ili	6:00am - 9:00pm Sunday to Saturday
PAGO PLAZA	Pago Pago	24 HRS
STARKIST	Satala	24 HRS
STARKIST CAFETERIA	Satala	
TAFUNA BRANCH	Tafuna	24HRS
TSM	Tafuna	6:00am - 9:00pm Monday - Friday
		6:30am - 10:00pm Saturday
		6:30am - 8:00pm Sunday
TUTUILA STORE	Leloaloa	6:00am - 9:00pm Monday to Thursday
		6:00am - 10:00pm Friday & Saturday
		7:00am - 8:00pm Sunday
US MART	Futiga	6:00am - 9:00pm Monday to Saturday
		6:00am - 8:00pm Sunday

Shopping

Shopping in American Samoa is more limited compared to Hawai'i or the mainland United States. However, there are several places where you can find essential goods and groceries:

- **Convenience Stores:** Village stores are small, general merchandise businesses whose profits are primarily from a village or section of a village. It is not uncommon to find multiple village stores in larger villages, even in close proximity to their competitors. Their stock is mainly food and household products for the families in their respective village(s). Seafood sold at these village stores is mainly small reef or bottomfish, sold fresh out of large coolers, or frozen. Occasionally, though not often, these small village stores will have pelagic fish – usually frozen sections of tuna, wahoo, mahi mahi, marlin or swordfish. On occasion, locally caught clam, sea cucumber (although currently under moratorium), octopus and sea urchin are also sold in these stores. They also carry imported shrimp, crab meat and squid regularly which can be purchased from local wholesale businesses which supply these small stores. While they were almost exclusively owned by local families in the past, the large majority of these businesses are now owned by Asian, non-US passport holders. The largest group of village store owners are Chinese families who are sponsored by local families. A smaller percentage of these stores are owned by Korean and American Samoan families.
- **Supermarkets:** For a more comprehensive shopping experience, visit larger grocery stores such as KS Mart on Iliili Road, TSM Mart on Airport Road, and Forsgren's at the Laufou Shopping Center.
- **Forsgren's Laufou Shopping Center:** In addition to Forsgren's, this center offers other services such as Bluesky Communications (phone service provider), a drug store, various gift shops, and restaurants.
- **PX Center:** Located on Airport Road, this is a convenient shopping option for military personnel.
- **Textile Shops:** For textile supplies, visit Manu'a Store on Airport Road in the Industrial Park and Tutuila Store locations in Nu'uuli and Leoloaloa on the east side.
- **Building Supplies and Home Goods:** Major stores include Neil's Ace Hardware Store in Malaeimi and The Tool Shop, with locations on Airport Road in the Industrial Park and in Fagatogo on the east side.

For more information, refer to the Directory at the end of this document.

Directory

Restaurants, Hotels & Resorts

These restaurants purchase both fresh and frozen pelagic, bottomfish and reef fish from local fishermen which are featured on their daily menus. Yellowfin tuna, swordfish, wahoo and mahi mahi are the most sought-after fish by the larger restaurants, and are staples on the regular menu for these businesses. For bottomfish, most restaurants utilize a “catch of the day” on their menus.

Restaurants

A&E Café

Tafuna Village
(684) 699-6470
<https://www.facebook.com/moanaosina.inc/>

Don't Drink the Water (DDW)

Utulei Village
(684) 633-5297
<https://www.facebook.com/DDWBeachCafe/>

Emelio's Restaurant

Pago Pago Plaza
(684) 633-2206

Equator Restaurant

Tafuna Village
Tradewinds Hotel
(684) 699-1000
<https://www.tradewinds.as/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Tradewinds-Hotel-American-Samoa-361181413896689/>

Fia Fia Seafood Restaurant

Fagatogo Village
(684) 633-0101

Flying Fox Brewing Company

Pava'ia'i Village
(684) 688-5581 Office
(684) 252-3033 Cell
Email: nate@pavafox.com

Jade Restaurant & Fast Food

Nu'uuli Village
(684) 699-8555

Koko Bean Café

Nu'uuli Village
Laufou Shopping Center
(684) 699-8538
<https://www.facebook.com/kokobeancafe/>

Matai's Restaurant

Fagatogo Village
Tedi of Samoa
(684) 633-1199

Oasis Restaurant

Tafuna Village
(684) 699-5245

Paradise Pizza Bar & Grill

Nu'uuli Village
(684) 699-7492
<https://www.facebook.com/paradisepizza6997492/>

Paradise Pizza & Restaurant

Satala Village
(684) 644-7492
<https://www.facebook.com/paradisepizza6447492/>

PJK Fish Market

Utulei Village
(684) 633-1019
<https://www.facebook.com/Pjk.fishmarket/>

Goat Island Café

Utulei Village
Sadie's by the Sea
P.O. Box 3222
Pago Pago, AS 96799
(684) 633-5900
<https://www.facebook.com/sadies.hotels.page>

Sadie Thompson's Inn

Fagatogo Village
P.O. Box 3222
Pago Pago, AS 96799
(684) 633-5900
<https://www.facebook.com/sadies.hotels.page>

Shan J Restaurant

Malaeimi Village
(684) 699-6175
Shanjresto@gmail.com

<https://www.shanjresto.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/shanj.malaeimi>
Business: Restaurant with seafood menu items

Sook's Sushi
Fagatogo Restaurant
(684) 633-5117

Sunny's Chinese Restaurant
Nu'uuli Village
(684) 699-5238

Taumafa Restaurant

Tafuna Village
(684) 699-0269

Tisa's Barefoot Bar
P.O. Box 3576
Pago Pago, AS 96799
Alega Village
<https://tisasbarefootbar.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Tisas.Barefoot.Bar>

Milovale's
Nu'uuli Village
P.O. Box 1270
Pago Pago, AS 96799

(684) 699-9906
<https://www.facebook.com/Milovales/>

Night Hawk Clubhouse
Ili'ili Village
(684) 699-7365

Shan J Fast Food
Malaeimi and
Fagatogo Village
Locations
(684) 699-6175

Suamalie Fast Food
Fagatogo Village
(684) 256-8246

Hotels

Tradewinds Hotel
Ottoville
P.O. Box 999
Pago Pago, AS 96799
Phone: (684) 699-1000
<https://tradewinds.as/>

Sadie's by the Sea
Utulei Village
P.O. Box 3222
Pago Pago, AS 96799
(684) 633-5900

<https://www.facebook.com/sadies.hotels.page>
Sadie Thompson Inn
Fagatogo Village
P.O. Box 3222
Pago Pago, AS 96799
(684) 633-5900
<https://www.facebook.com/sadies.hotels.page>

Pago Pago, AS 96799
Phone: (684) 699-8517

Pago Airport Inn
Tafuna Village
Pago Pago, AS 96799
Phone: (684) 699-6333

Moana o Sina Lodge
Fogagogo Village

Supermarkets

Seafood bought and sold by larger supermarkets is a combination of locally caught, fresh and frozen fish, octopus and shellfish along with frozen fish and seafood imported from the US and New Zealand. These stores also sell value-added seafood products (tuna filets, Hawai'i an-style poke and Samoan oka (raw pelagic or reef fish & vegetables in coconut milk).

Aveina Bros.
Nu'uuli and Matu'u
Village locations

Phone: (684) 699-5621/
(684) 633-4613

Leone Village
(684) 688-7222

FJ&P Kruse Inc.

YSJ Ltd.

Nu'uuli Village
(684) 699-4470

Forsgren Inc.
Nu'uuli Village
Laufou Shopping
Center
(684) 699-1903

**K.S. Mart &
Korner Kafe**
Ili'ili Village
Store: (684) 699-4727

O & O Wholesale

Nu'uuli Village
(684) 699-4484

Pelene Supermarket
Pava'ia'i Village
(684) 699-8140
Fresh and frozen seafood

Steven & Sons
Tafuna Village
(684) 699-6121

US Mart

Futiga Village
(684) 688-7933

Young Mart
Utulei Village
(684) 633-2655

Wholesale Businesses

Wholesale businesses in American Samoa are the primary providers for the village stores in the territory. The larger grocery stores do their own product procurement, but the smaller village stores rely on wholesalers to stock their shelves. Wholesale companies rely on off-island vendors for product orders and shipments to American Samoa, and do not buy locally caught seafood from fishermen. Seafood sold by wholesale businesses is exclusively frozen imported fish and other seafood from the US and New Zealand.

Aveina Brothers, Inc.
Nu'uuli Village
Phone (684) 699-5621

FJ&P Kruse Inc.
Leone Village
Phone (684) 688-7222
Phone (684) 688-1588

GHC Reid & Co. Ltd.
Tafuna Village
GHC Reid & Company
Senator Inouye Industrial
Park, Tafuna
P.O. Box 1269
Phone (684) 699-1854
Fax (684) 699-2869
<https://www.facebook.com/GhcReidTafuna/>

IMPEX
Pava'ia'i Village
Phone (684) 699-4814

O & O Enterprises
Nu'uuli Village
Phone (684) 699-2092

**Pacific Independent
Distributors**
Fagaima Road, Tafuna
Village
P.O. Box 6452
Pago Pago, AS 96799
Phone (684) 699-8086
Email pidinc@blueskynet.as
<https://www.facebook.com/PIDInc684/>

Pacific Sales Wholesale
Senator Inouye Industrial
Park, Tafuna Village
Phone (684) 699-9444

Panamex Pacific Inc.
Nu'uuli Village
P.O. Box 1872
Phone (684) 699-1881
<https://www.facebook.com/panamexpacific/>

**Wightman Crane &
Stewart**
Fagatogo Square, Fagatogo
Village
P.O. Box 1416
Phone (684) 633-5335

Hardware and repair

Industrial Gases

P.O. Box 5664
Pago Pago, AS 96799
Office: (684) 699-9234
Fax: (684) 699-9136

Tool Shop

P.O. Box 1215
Pago Pago, AS 96799
Office: (684) 699-2420

Cost-U-Less

(684) 699-5975
Monday – Sunday: 8:00
AM to 8:00 PM
<https://www.costuless.com/american-samoa/about-us>
Email:
CULecom006@northwest.
ca
Store: (684) 699-5975
Fax: (684) 699-5977

Neil's ACE Home Center

P.O. Box 385
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799
Store: (684) 699-9770
Office: (684) 699-2482
Fax: (684) 699-2982
<http://www.neilshomecentne.com/>

Airlines**Hawaiian Airlines**

684-699-1875
Pago Pago International Airport
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799
www.hawaiianairlines.com

<https://www.talofaairways.com/>

Samoa Airways

Pago Pago International Airport
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799
684-699-9126 or 684-699-9127
www.samoaairways.com

Talofa Airways

684-699-3002
Pago Pago International Airport
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799

Ferry and Shipping Services**Samoa Shipping Corporation (Western Samoa Company)**

685-20935
www.ssc.ws

Polynesian Shipping Services(Local American Samoa Agency)

684-633-5636
email: polynesiashipping@gmail.com
web: www.polynesianshipping.co.nz

Tafuna Industrial Park
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799
<https://icargosupport.com/>

CSL Cargo/FedEx

684-699-4800
PO Box 3868
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799
www.csllcargo.com

Island Cargo Support

684-699-0003
Email: ppg@icargosupport.com

DHL Service Point

6998 Fagaima Road Tafuna,
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799

Car Rentals**Avis Car Rental Tafuna**

684-699-2746

Tafuna Village,
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799

Tautai Car Rental

684-699-5294

Tafuna International Airport and Nu'uuli
Village Locations

Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799

Steven & Sons Car Rental

684-699-6059

Tafuna Industrial Park

Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799

Island Government Representatives-American Samoa

Lemanu Peleti Mauga

Governor of American Samoa

www.americansamoa.gov

lemanu.mauga@go.as.gov

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A.P. Lutali Executive Office Building

Pago, Pago, AS 96799

Phone: 684-633-4116

FX: 684-633-2269

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Washington Rep: Vacant

Phone: 202-408-4998

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eperri.asg.govoffice@gmail.com

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Savali Talavou
Ale Senate Speaker
of the House
A.P. Lutali Executive Office Building
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FX: 684-633-1681

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petti.matila@doc.as.gov
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ivaeneliko1@gmail.com

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AS Environmental Protection Agency
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ASEPA Building - Utulei
Utulei Building
Phone: 684-633-2304
faamao.asalele@epa.as.gov

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Director
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falenaoti.loionfruean@pa.as.gov

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