

Tau Masina o Amerika Samoa

January 19, 2026 - February 6, 2027



Western Pacific Regional
Fishery Management Council
WPCOUNCIL.ORG

Fish Are Food: A Way of Life

In American Samoa, *i'a* (fish) is more than a meal – it is a way of life. For generations, families have relied on the ocean for daily sustenance, with fish connecting people to their culture, community and the sea. Fish is heart-healthy for its omega-3 fatty acids, which can reduce the risk of heart disease and support brain function. It's also an excellent source of lean protein that helps build and repair muscle, and it provides important vitamins and minerals.

While fast food has grown in popularity, local seafood remains central to Samoan heritage – prepared in many ways and rich in nourishment that strengthens both body and tradition. Among the local favorites are:

- ▶ *Atule* (bigeye scad) – a nearshore and often fried or stewed.
- ▶ *Alogo* (lined surgeonfish) – a reef fish typically caught by spear at dusk or dawn.
- ▶ *Pa'ala* (wahoo) – a prized pelagic fish caught offshore.
- ▶ *Palu-malau* (ruby snapper) – caught by deepwater bottomfishers.
- ▶ *Masimasi* (mahimahi) – a brightly colored pelagic fish known for its speed and flavor.



(above) Ropate Delana reels in a nice *masimasi*.



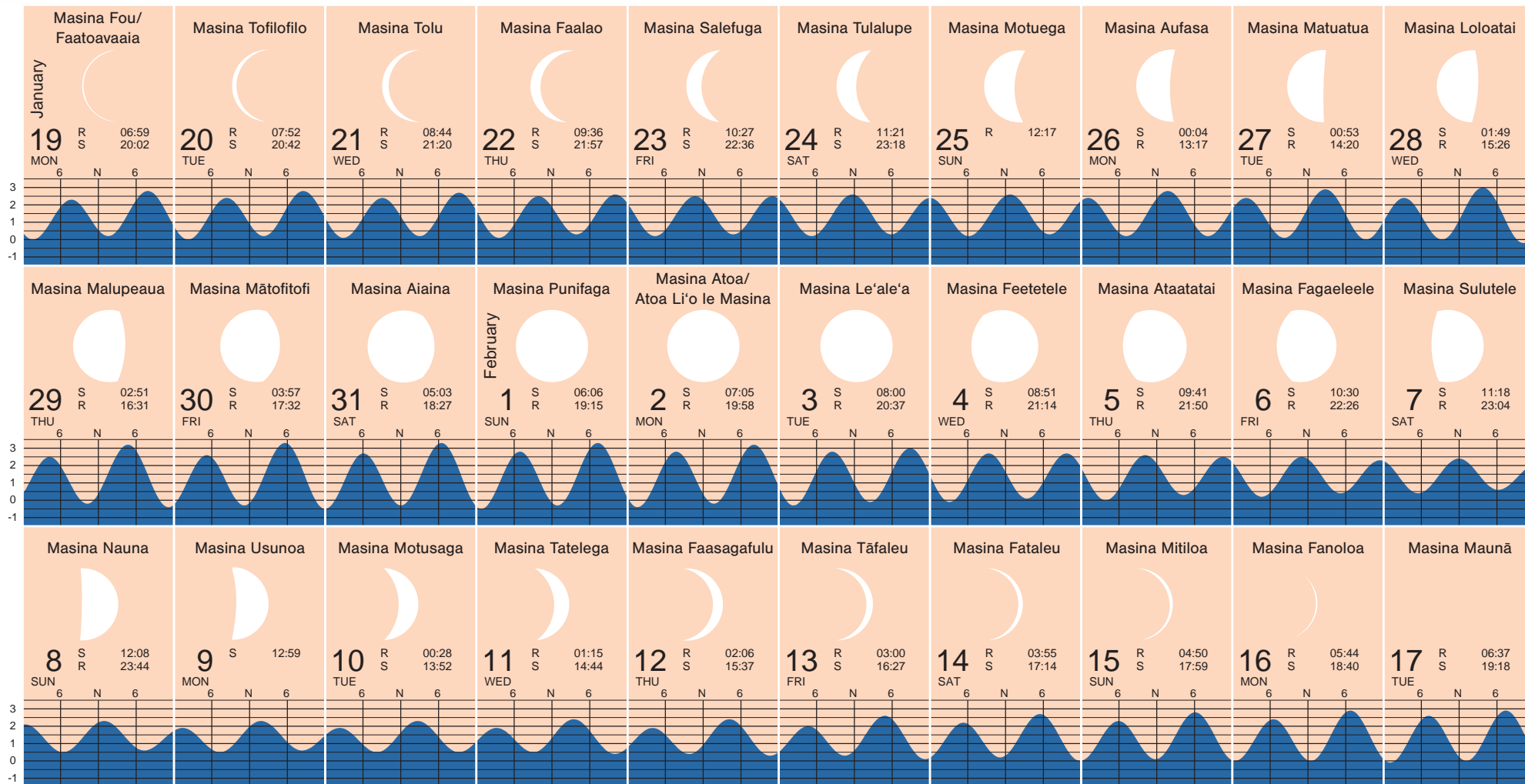
(left) The Reid family proudly shows off their weekend catch of *aku* (skipjack tuna) and *pa'ala* from their fishing boat, *Vaimalu*.

PHOTOS: Nathan Sagapolutele

Utuvāmua

January 19 - February 17

Ianuari 19 - Fepuari 17, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
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- 1 **FA'AAALOALO I LE NATURA O MEA** ma lou tulaga o loo i ai.
- 2 **SAILI LE TOFĀ** a matuao-faiva o loo i ai le silafia o punao'a faalotoifale.
- 3 **TAUTUANĀ** vaitaimi e faanoa ai i'a ma i'a laitī.
- 4 **AUA LE FAAMAUMAU.** Ave na o mea e mana'omia.
- 5 **IA SAOGALEMU** tagata, meatotino ma punao'a.
- 6 **USITA'I** i tulafono o fago-tagata ma o latou aiaiga.
- 7 **FA'AAOGA TATAU** metotia ma mea fagota.
- 8 **TA'ALAO AU OTAOTA.**
- 9 **FA'ASOA** lou faiva.

Saunia e le Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, faatasi ma le Matagaluega o Vaomatua ma le Gataifale o Amerika Samoa.

Fa'aliliu e le Samoan Studies Institute, American Samoa Community College.



(above) *Lauloa* fishing for *atule* in Leone in 2021. PHOTO: Natasha Ripley

(left) Fishermen Code of Conduct in Samoan, a poster produced by the Council.

(below) Samoan elder shows child how to weave a traditional enu basket used to catch *i'asina*. SOURCE: *Amerika Samoa: An Anthropological Photo Essay* ©1984 Government of American Samoa



Traditional Practices and Sustainability

Traditional fishing practices reflect a deep respect for the ocean and a commitment to sustainability long before these terms became part of modern conservation. Passed down through *‘āiga* (family) and taught by *tautai* (master fisherman), these methods were designed to take only what was needed, and nothing more.

Kili (throw net): Fishers target reef fish casting their nets strategically in shallow waters during calm conditions, usually near reef edges.

Lau (coconut frond sweep): Long coconut leaves tied end to end are used to herd schooling fish – especially *atule* – toward shore or into a net. Entire villages participate, moving slowly through the water to close the circle.

‘Enu (woven fish trap): Made from *‘ie‘ie* vines and tied with *‘afa* (coconut sennit), the *‘enu* is set in shallow sandy areas to catch *i'asina* (yellowstripe goatfish) during seasonal runs. Once inside the funnel-shaped trap, the fish cannot escape.

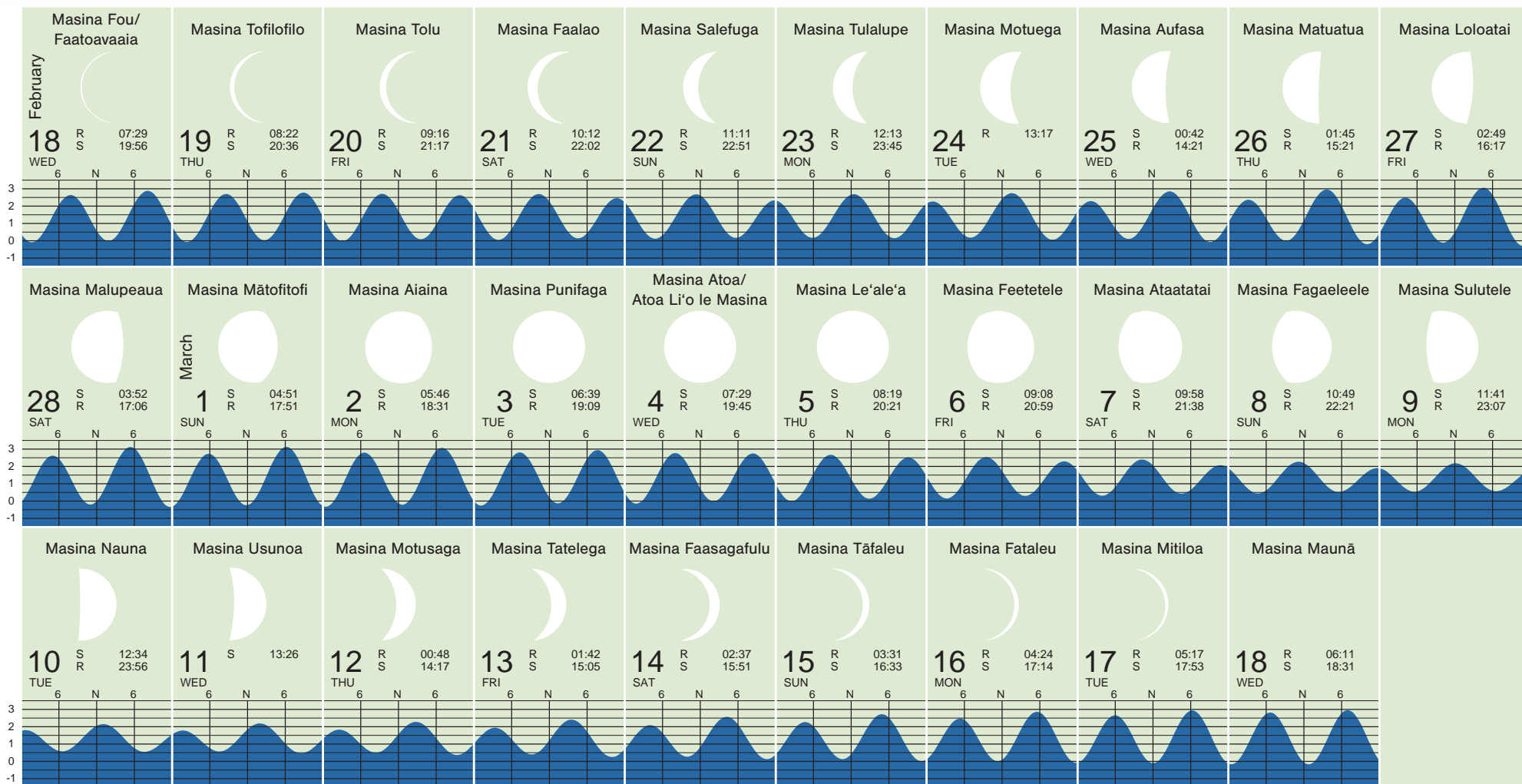
Sulu (night fishing): Conducted at night using coconut torch flames or flashlights to attract sleeping reef fish like *alogo*. Fishers use spears or hands to harvest them quietly, with minimal disturbance to the reef.



Toeutuvā

February 18 - March 18

Fepuari 18 - Mati 18, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Fishing Is the Culture

Fishing is more than just sustenance, it is deeply woven into local legends, ceremonies and communal life. These stories and practices anchor the indigenous people of the sea, and connect them to one another.

The Atule of Fagasa and the Dolphins ► A cherished Fagasa legend tells of a man, Liava’a, who accidentally left his daughter, Sina, behind when he sailed off. In grief, he and his crew transformed into dolphins and returned to guide a school of *atule* into the bay. In gratitude, villagers ritually return the first fish to the sea each season to honor the dolphins’ aid.

The Legend of the Matai Fe’e ► In this Samoan fable, a *fe’e* (octopus) rescues a drowning *isumu* (rat) and carries him safely atop its head – but once ashore, the ungrateful *isumu* soils the *fe’e*’s head and flees. From then on, octopuses bear the rat’s “mark,” and fishers crafted the rat-shaped *matai fe’e* lure in honor of the creature’s cunning trick and the broken trust.

The Tatau and the Faisua ► Some oral traditions tie the origin of the Samoan *tatau* (tattoo) to the ocean. In one tale, two sisters swam from Fiji to Samoa carrying tattooing tools in a *faisua* (giant clam). Along the way, they sang a chant saying “tattoo the women, not the men” – but when they neared the shore, the chant reversed: “tattoo the men, not the women.” Thus, the *malu* for women and *pe’a* for men came to define Samoan identity, all linked to the ocean’s creatures and journeys.



(left) *Atule* in a coconut frond basket from the 2023 harvest in Fagasa.

PHOTO: Travis Tua

(middle) Local *alia* fisherman Talosaga Ioka holding up his *fe’e* catch.

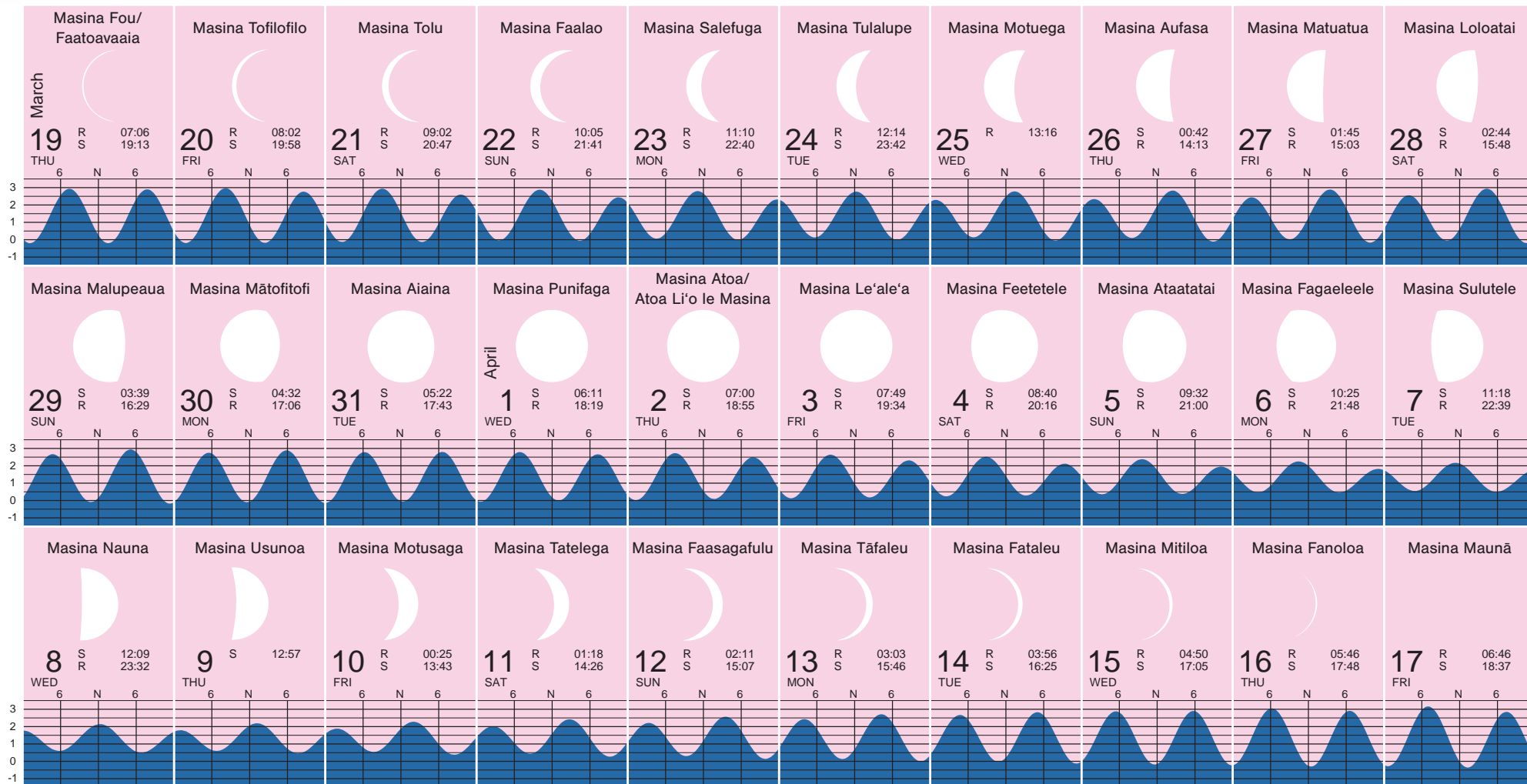
PHOTO: Pacific Islands Fisheries Group (PIFG)

(right) A depiction of Taema and Tilafaiga with a *faisua*.

March 19 - April 17

Fa'aafu

Mati 19 - Aperila 17, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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The Fisher as Provider and Cultural Custodian

The *tautai* is more than a food gatherer – they are stewards of knowledge, a provider for the village and a guardian of *fa'asāmoa* (Samoan way of life). Traditionally, the role of fishers was grounded in both skill and service to their family or village.

The act of *fa'asoa*, or distributing the catch, is central to the role of the *tautai*. After a successful fishing trip, fish are divided thoughtfully:

- ▶ The best or largest fish might be set aside for the *matai* (chief) or *faife'au* (pastor), as a sign of respect.
- ▶ Elders in the village often receive shares first.
- ▶ The fisher's extended 'āiga receive portions according to kinship ties.
- ▶ If the catch is especially large, it is shared with neighboring families, sometimes even other villages.



(above) A young fisherman shows off a freshly caught *palu-malau* to take back to his family on Ta'u.

PHOTO: PIFG



(left/below) Villagers of Fagasa display their *atule* harvest before distributing the catch in the traditional manner.

PHOTO: Travis Tua

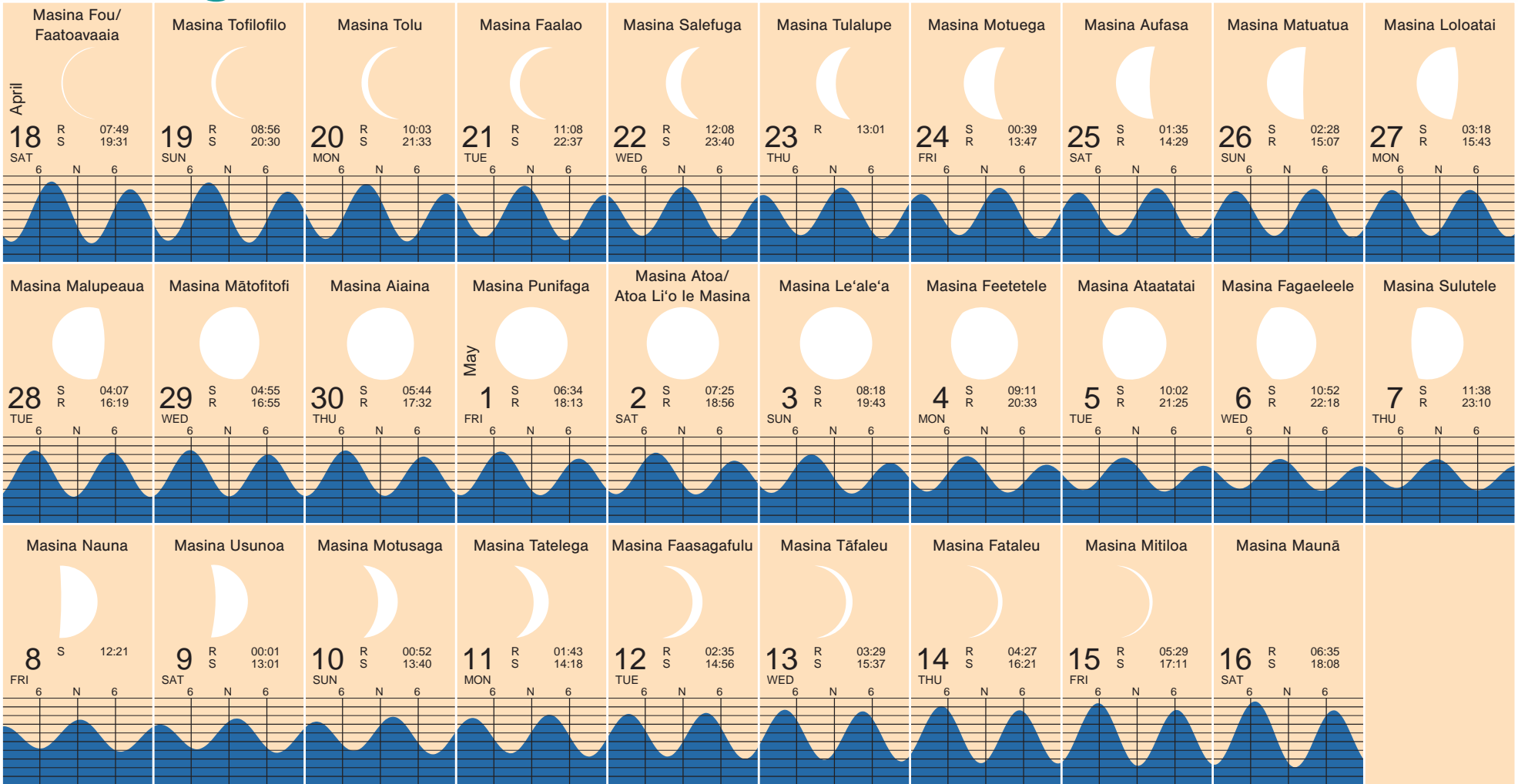




Fānoga

April 18 - May 16

Aperila 18 - Me 16, 2026



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Navigating Modern Challenges



(left) A roadside fish vendor sign in Nu'uuli.

PHOTO: WPRFMC

(below) *Alia* tied up at the Malaloa Marina floating docks in Pago Pago.

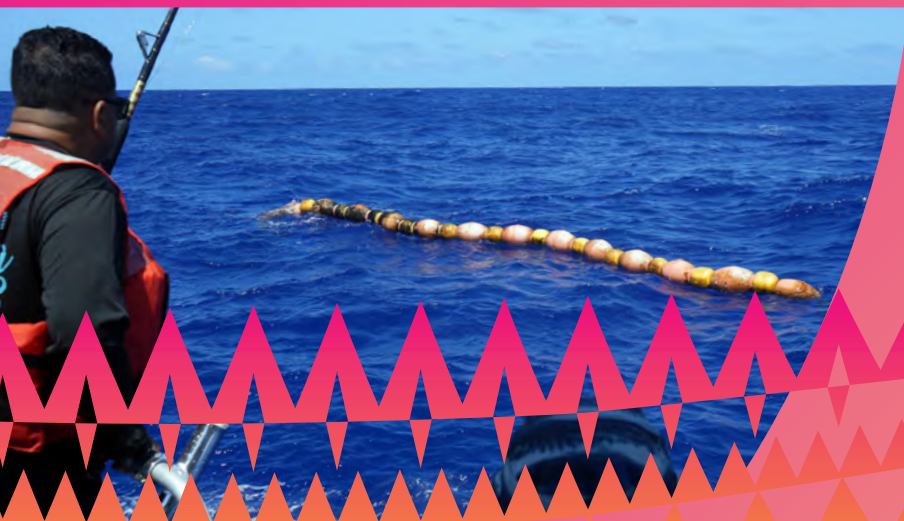
PHOTO: PIFG



The waters surrounding American Samoa remain rich with marine life, yet today's fishers face rising tides of challenges. From restricted fishing grounds and changing environmental conditions to economic pressures and shifting lifestyles, traditional fishing families must adapt to protect their livelihoods and heritage.

Fishing in American Samoa has become increasingly difficult due to restricted access from the establishment of marine national monuments, rising fuel costs and fewer young people entering the profession. Areas once open for fishing now require permits or are off-limits, and maintaining an *alia* (traditional double-hulled catamaran) has become more expensive.

Still, fishers persist. Many sell directly to customers at roadside markets, while others in the longline fleet continue to supply local canneries despite tight regulations and high operating costs. New tools such as fish aggregating devices (FADs), GPS and fisheries training help local fishers navigate modern waters – guided by the wisdom of elders and the enduring will to provide for family and island.

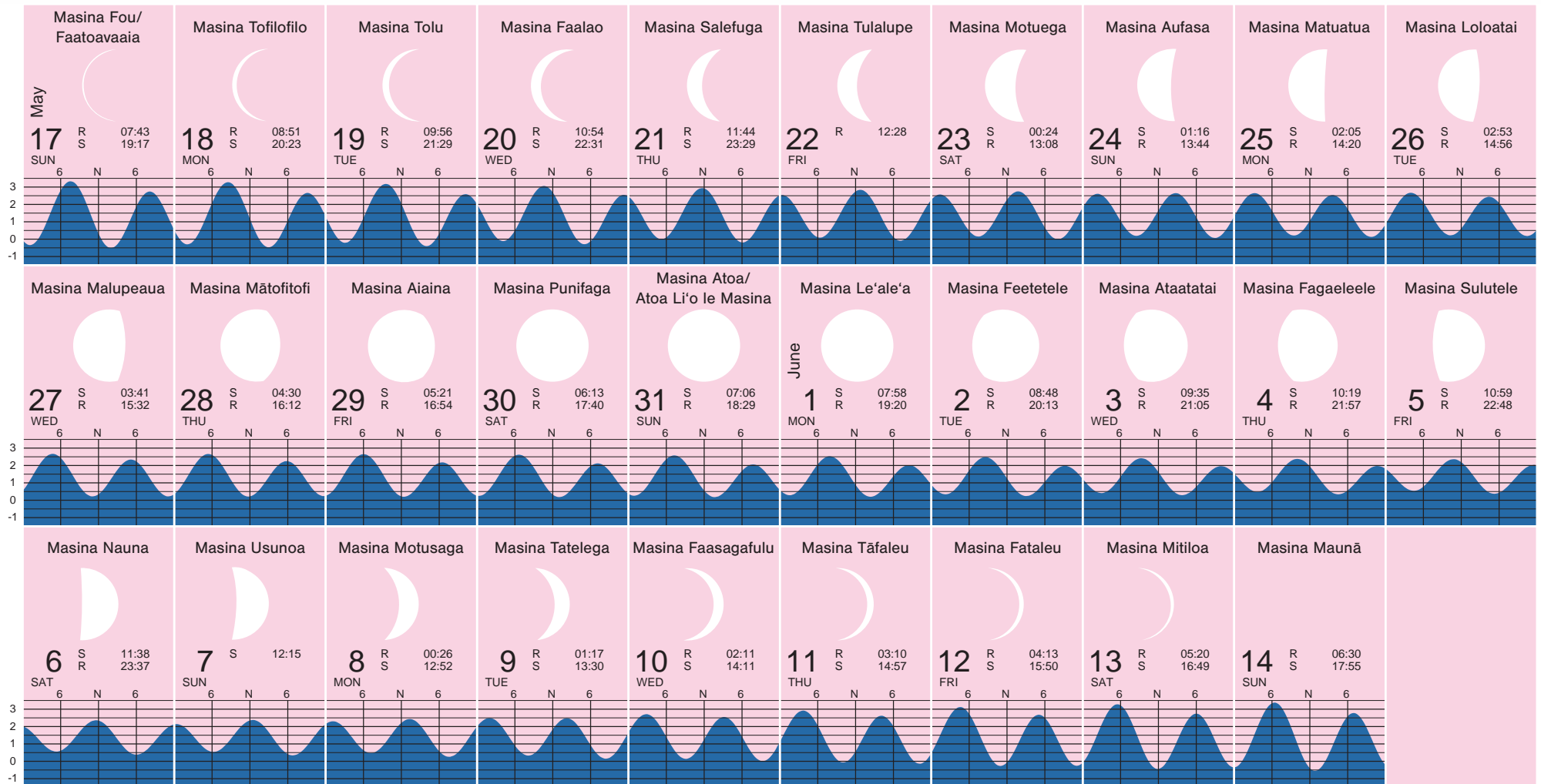


(left) Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) technician Ekueta Schuster deploys an Indo-Pacific FAD. PHOTO: DMWR

Aununu

May 17 - June 14

Me 17 - Iuni 14, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Fish and Food Security

While imported and processed foods have become more common, especially for convenience, locally caught fish – from reef gleaning, nearshore and offshore waters – still play a central role in food security in American Samoa.

Local fishing helps buffer households during supply chain disruptions. A survey showed that 45% of households obtain seafood from markets or roadside vendors, while 37% rely on their own fishing efforts (gleaning, line, net) – emphasizing how local and direct these food sources remain.¹

(left) Poke and rice plates sold at the Fagatogo Fish Market.

PHOTO: WPRFMC

(right) Talosaga Ioka's catch of the day includes brightly colored parrotfish.

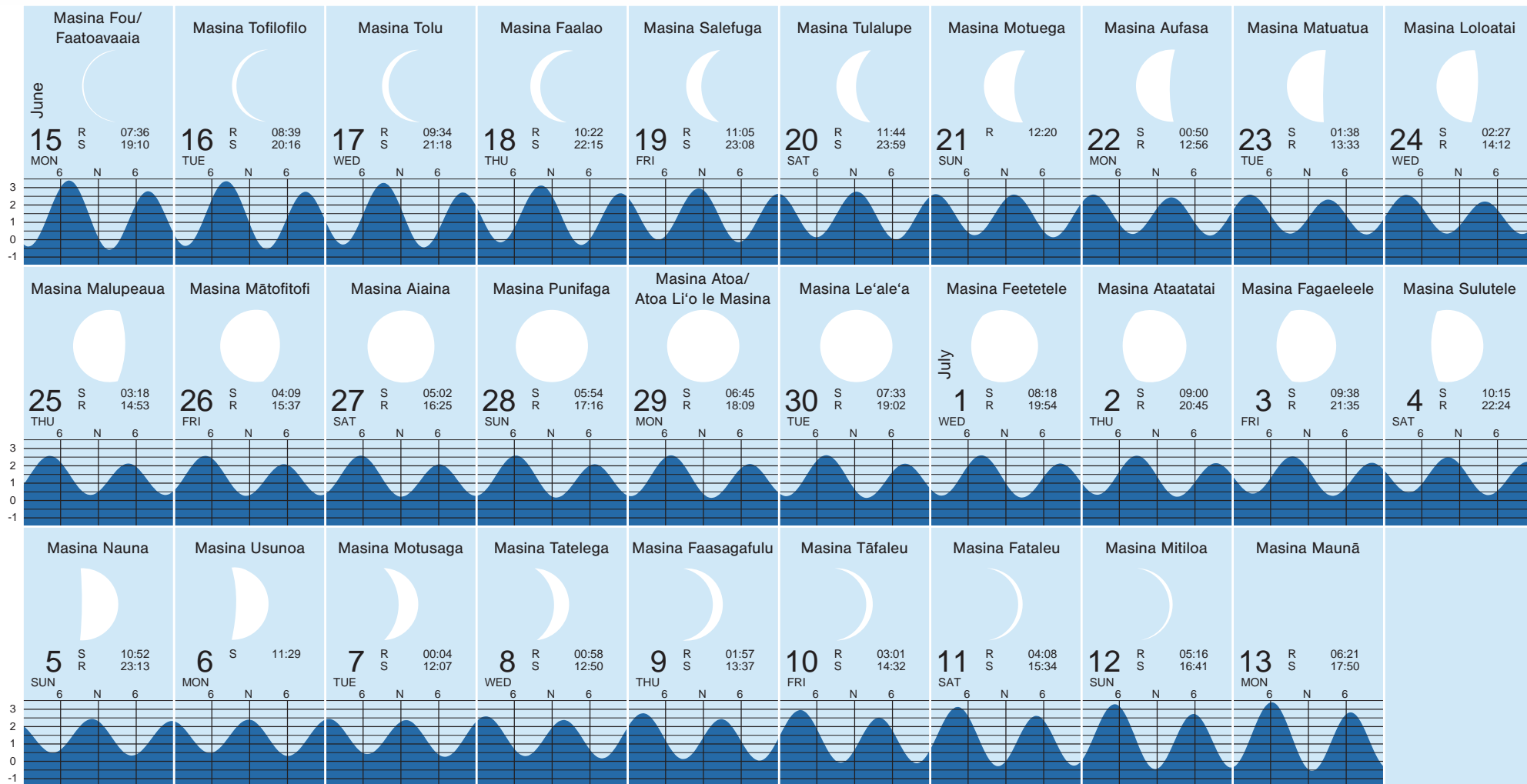
PHOTO: PIFG

¹Reference: Leong, K., S. Pooley, M. Marsik, A. Chan, and others. 2019. *Fish and Food Security in American Samoa*. Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries, Honolulu, HI.

Oloāmanu

June 15 - July 13

Iuni 15 - Iulai 13, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Fish Are Money

Fishing drives American Samoa's economy – from roadside vendors selling reef and bottomfish to longline vessels supplying the StarKist cannery, the territory's largest private employer. In 2024, bottomfish landings totaled about 11,700 pounds, roughly 5% above the 10-year average, while reef species like snapper, parrotfish, and lobster add hundreds to thousands of pounds each year.¹

The longline fleet made 43 trips in 2024, delivering apakoa (albacore tuna) to StarKist, while smaller pelagic fish such as *aku* and *pa'ala* sustain local markets. Together, these fisheries support hundreds of captains, crew, vendors and processing workers, with tuna exports forming the backbone of the private sector.

For many families, fishing blends tradition with livelihood – it's both a way of life and a paycheck.

¹Reference: WPRFMC, 2025. Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the American Samoa Archipelago Fishery Ecosystem Plan 2024. T Remington, C Pardee, J DeMello, A Ishizaki (Eds.). Honolulu: Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.
ISBN 978-1-950193-54-7.



Hard working ladies at the StarKist cannery in Pago Pago.



(above) Two longline vessels tied up next to a purse seine vessel along the main dock.

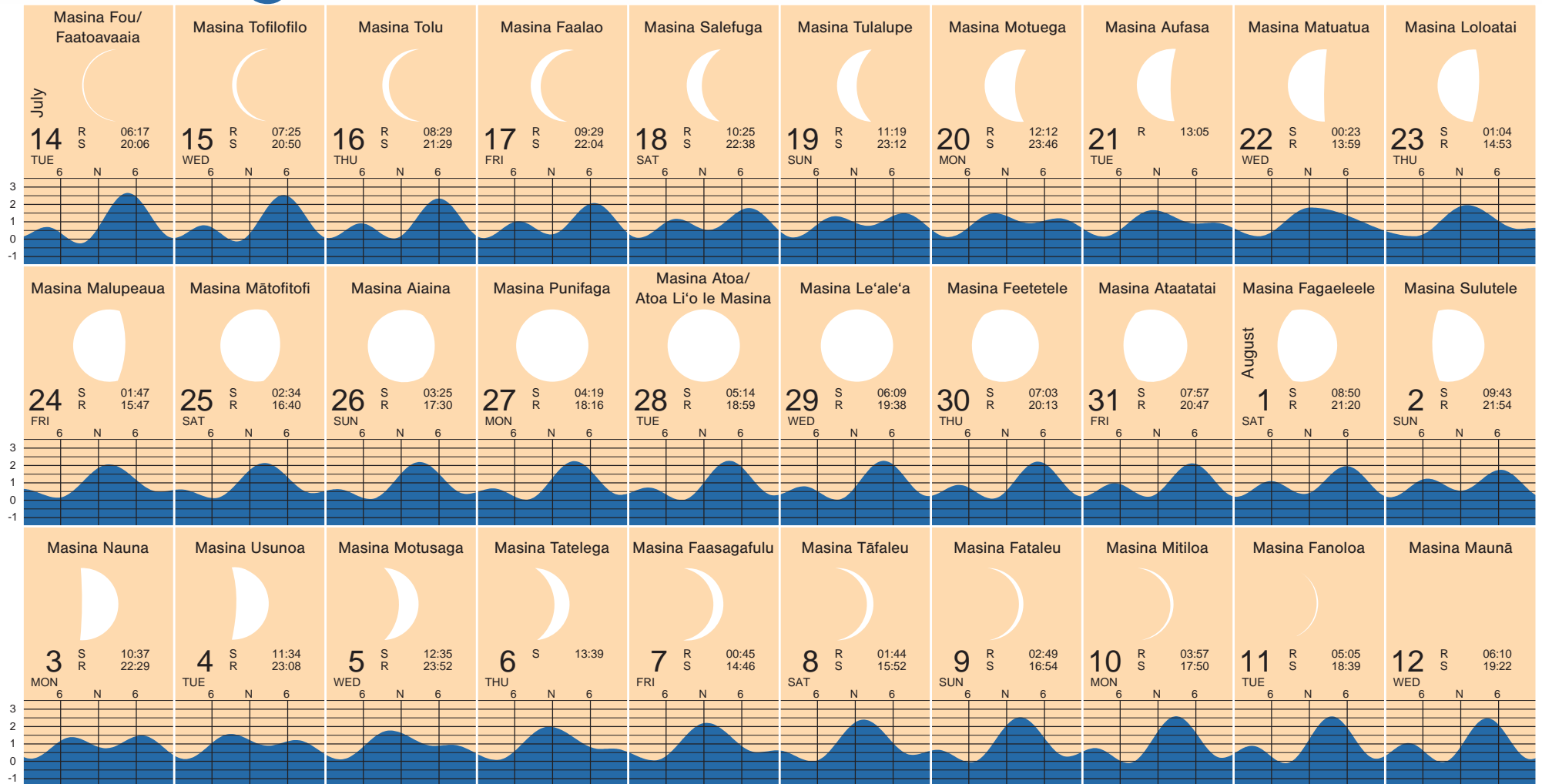
(below) A net full of tuna being unloaded at StarKist.

PHOTOS: WPRFMC

Lotuaga

July 14 - August 12

Iulai 14 - Aukuso 12, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Pacific Fisheries and U.S. Sovereignty



USCG Cutter *Harriet Lane* enters Pago Pago Harbor.

(right) Council members listen to presentations at the 202nd meeting in Honolulu.



(left) Fono House Representative Trude Ledoux-Sunia provides public comment at the March 2025 Council meeting.



PHOTOS: WPRFMC

As a U.S. territory, American Samoa anchors the nation's presence deep in the Pacific, extending U.S. stewardship across vast ocean spaces. Its surrounding waters form part of the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ), supporting local livelihoods, national seafood supplies and efforts to deter illegal fishing. Managed through the Council, NOAA and the U.S. Coast Guard, these waters reflect a shared U.S. commitment to conserve ocean resources. Yet federal designations and marine national monument boundaries can overlap with traditional fishing grounds, challenging families who rely on deep-sea access.

American Samoa remains both guardian and partner in this national effort – a bridge between island traditions and U.S. ocean governance. As the Samoan proverb says, “*O le fogāvai e tasi*” – “We are of one canoe,” navigating together in shared stewardship of the sea.

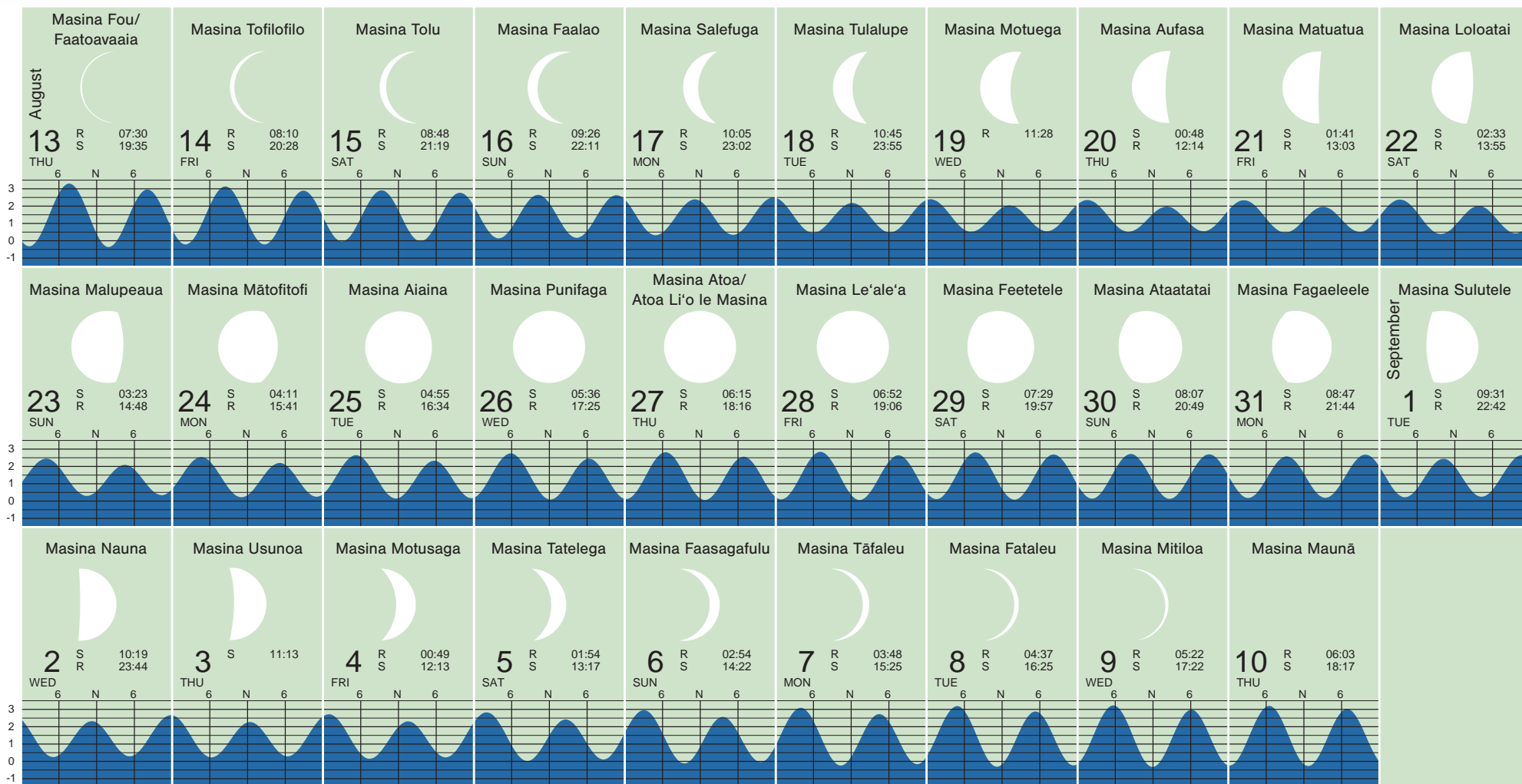
2026 • 50 Years of U.S. Fisheries Stewardship

In 1976, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) created the regional fishery management councils, including the WPRFMC. In 2026, we celebrate 50 years of this landmark law guiding sustainable, science-based management of U.S. Pacific fisheries.

Tu'iefu

August 13 - September 10

Aukuso 13 - Setema 10, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Executive Director Kitty Simonds (left) and Council members Taulapapa Will Sword (back) and Taotasi Archie Soliai at the 2023 WCPFC meeting. PHOTO: WPRFMC



Aerial view of the longline F/V America leaving Pago Pago Harbor. PHOTO: Edgar Feliciano

The Global Ocean and Local Rights

Decisions made in distant boardrooms and international fisheries meetings ripple all the way to the docks of Pago Pago. Choices about tuna quotas, high-seas closures or fishing limits directly affect American Samoa's longline fleet – the backbone of the cannery and a livelihood for hundreds of families.

As a small island territory, American Samoa often feels the weight of global policies without equal power to

shape them. Participation in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and similar forums ensures the territory has a voice – to advocate for fair access and recognition of traditional fishing rights.

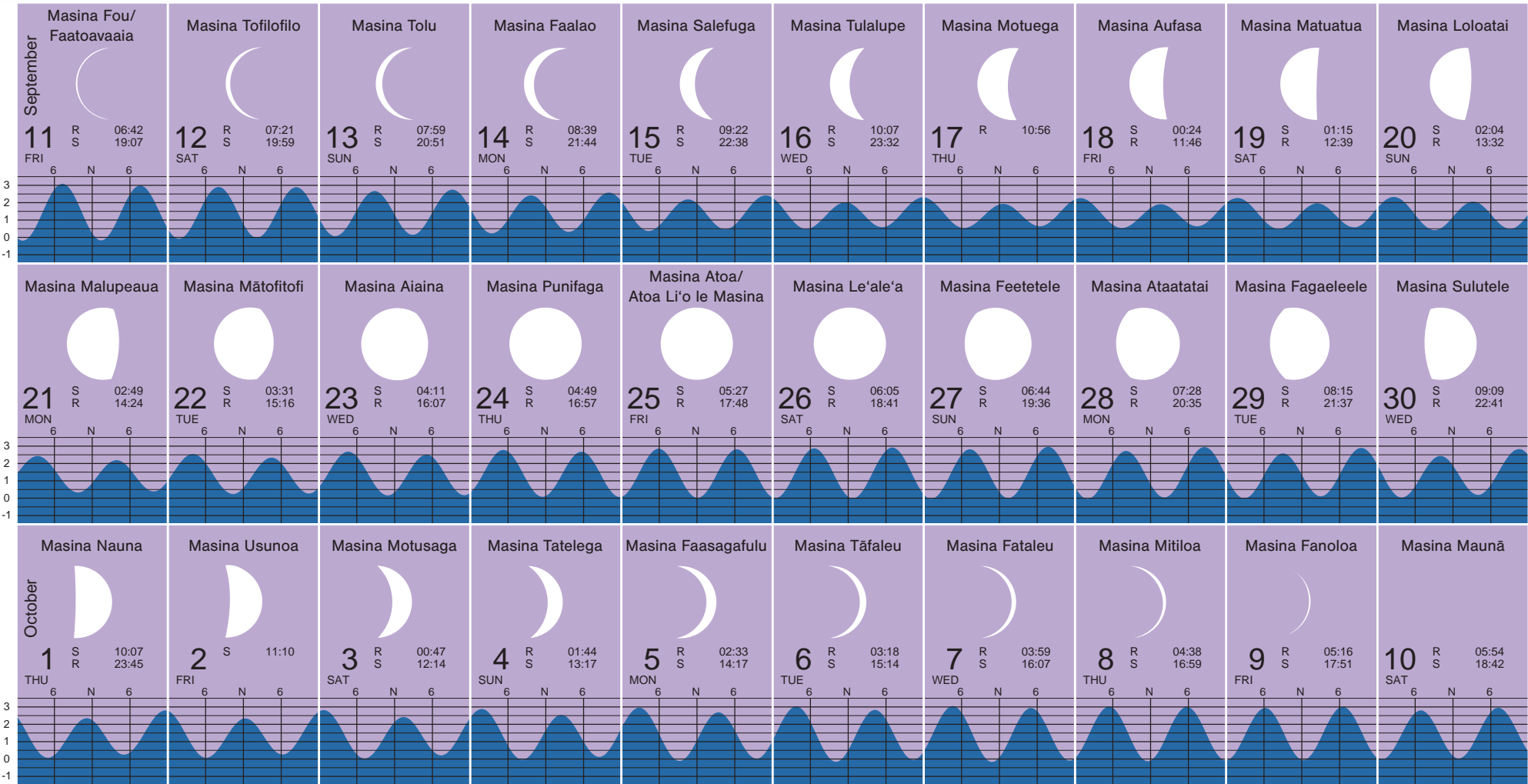
In a vast, connected ocean, local voices matter. American Samoa continues to remind the world that true sustainability must include the communities who have relied on the sea for generations.





Mulifā

September 11 - October 10
Setema 11 - Oketopa 10, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Stewardship Through Indigenous Knowledge

Long before written laws, Samoan communities practiced *faiga fa'aleaganu'u* – customary systems that protected the land and sea. Knowledge of moon phases, fish behavior and reef cycles was passed down through observation, song and storytelling. Fishing decisions were guided by *matai* and upheld through village consensus, not enforcement officers.

When the *matai* of Tutuila and Manu'a signed the Deeds of Cession in 1900 and 1904, they did so to secure peace and alliance with the United States while ensuring their lands, waters and customs would be respected. That promise affirmed traditional stewardship and remains central to defending Samoan fishing rights today.

Many villages still follow these principles. Community-based marine protected areas, seasonal bans and closures are guided by both science and cultural leadership – blending heritage with modern sustainability and respect for future generations.



(above) Village *matai* conducting a council meeting.



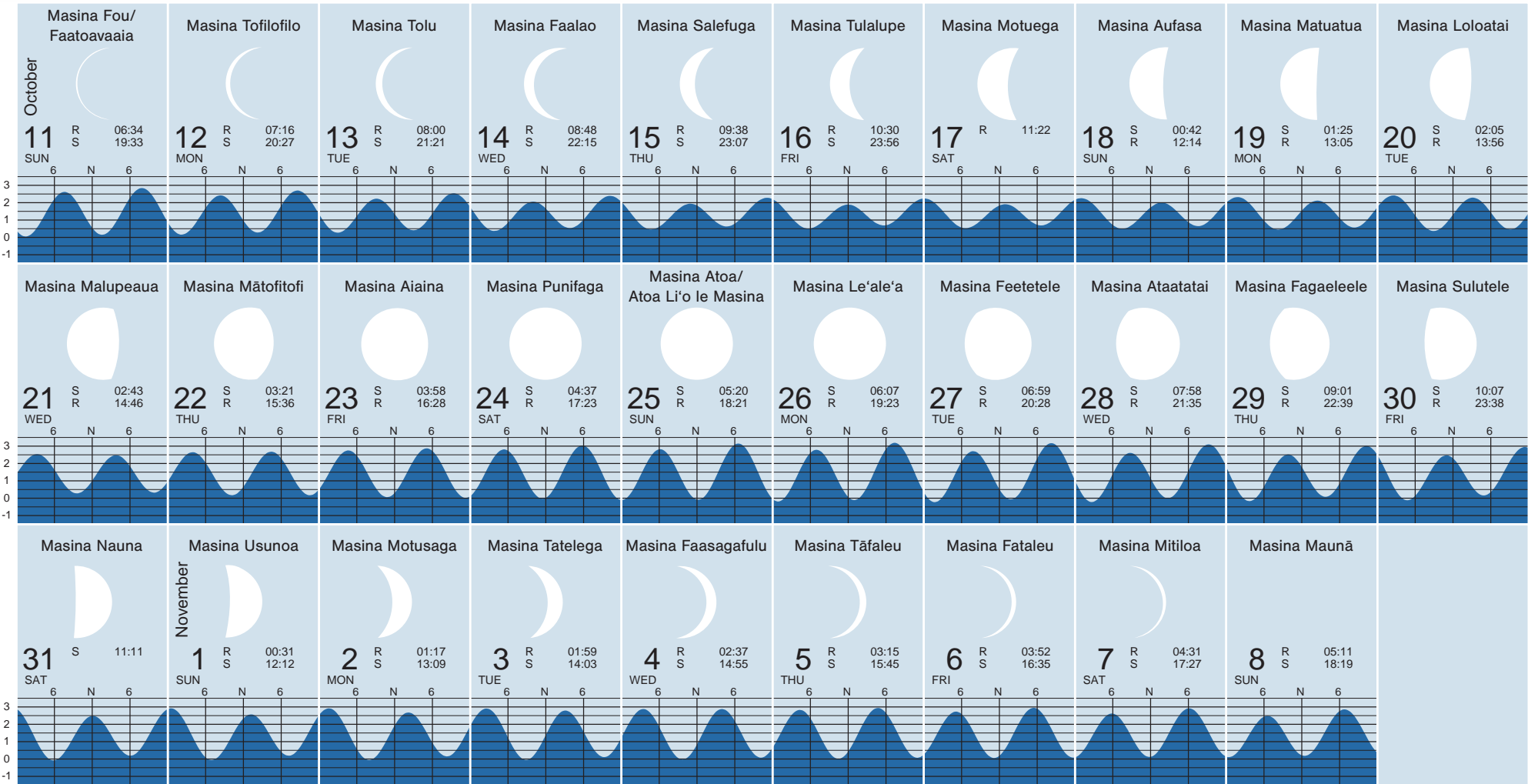
(left) Signage of the Faga'alu Village Marine Protected Area, part of DMWR's Community-Based Fisheries Management Program.

PHOTOS: WPRFMC



Pālalomua

October 11 - November 8
Oketopa 11 - Novema 8, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Youth and the Future of Fishing



(above) The Council supported DMWR's Hooked on Fishing–Not on Drugs event with Tafuna High School students, August 2025.

(below) Mary St. Francis students learning about boating safety from DMWR's Enforcement Division at the 2024 Flag Day Fishing Tournament.



The future of Samoan fishing depends on young people to carry forward the knowledge, skills and values of *fa'asāmoa*. Yet with changing interests and opportunities, fewer youth are entering the *faiva a le tautai*, or the way of the fisher.

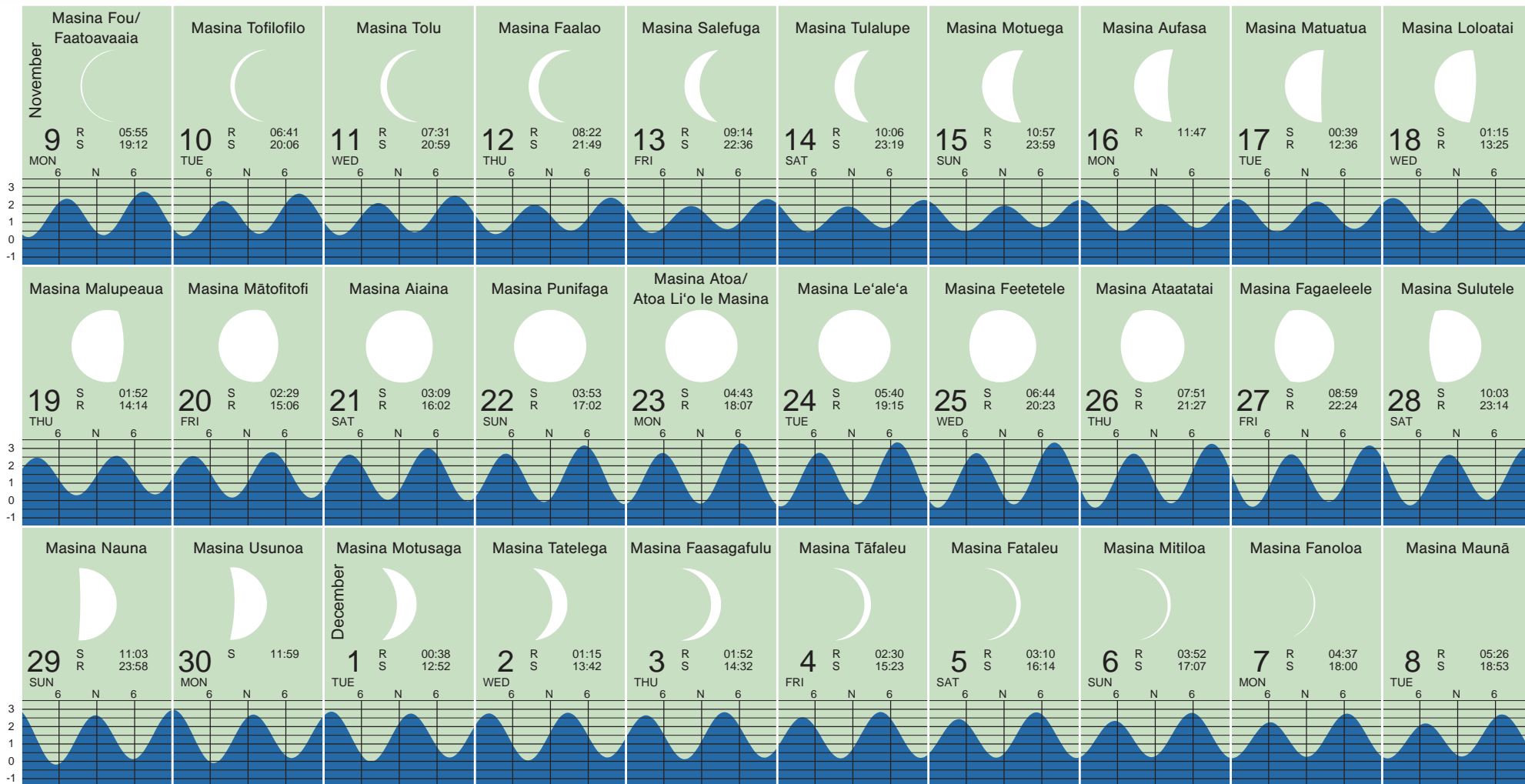
Programs across the territory are helping bridge that gap. DMWR's Hooked on Fishing–Not on Drugs program engages youth in fishing while promoting positive lifestyle choices. At the regional level, the Council supports long-term capacity building through initiatives like the U.S. Pacific Islands Fisheries Capacity-Building Scholarship Program, which has helped train the next generation of fisheries scientists and managers. Together, these efforts ensure that youth are not only learning to fish – but learning to lead.

PHOTOS: WPRFMC

Pālalomuli

November 9 - December 8

Novema 9 - Tesema 8, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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The American Samoa AP meets in advance of the June 2023 Council meeting.

Policy, Participation, and Conservation

The ocean that sustains American Samoa is also shaped by the people who speak for it. Fisheries decisions – on catch limits, protected areas, or seasons – work best when guided by both science and the firsthand knowledge of fishers, community leaders, and residents.

Ways to get involved:

- ▶ **Attend Council or Public Meetings** – held in person and online, with time for public comments.
- ▶ **Join Community Consultations** – the Council and DMWR visit villages to gather local input.
- ▶ **Apply for the Advisory Panel (AP)** – the AP provides advice to the Council on issues affecting American Samoa's fisheries.

Meeting details are posted at www.wpcouncil.org and shared through local media. By taking part, community members help ensure that conservation supports both the ocean and the fa'asāmoa way of life.

(top left/middle) StarKist cannery worker (left) giving public comment at the 195th Council Meeting (middle) in June 2023 on the proposed sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Island Areas.

(below) The Council and PIFG engage the community at public meetings as part of a 2-year consultation effort. See www.wpcouncil.org/ira-projects for more info.

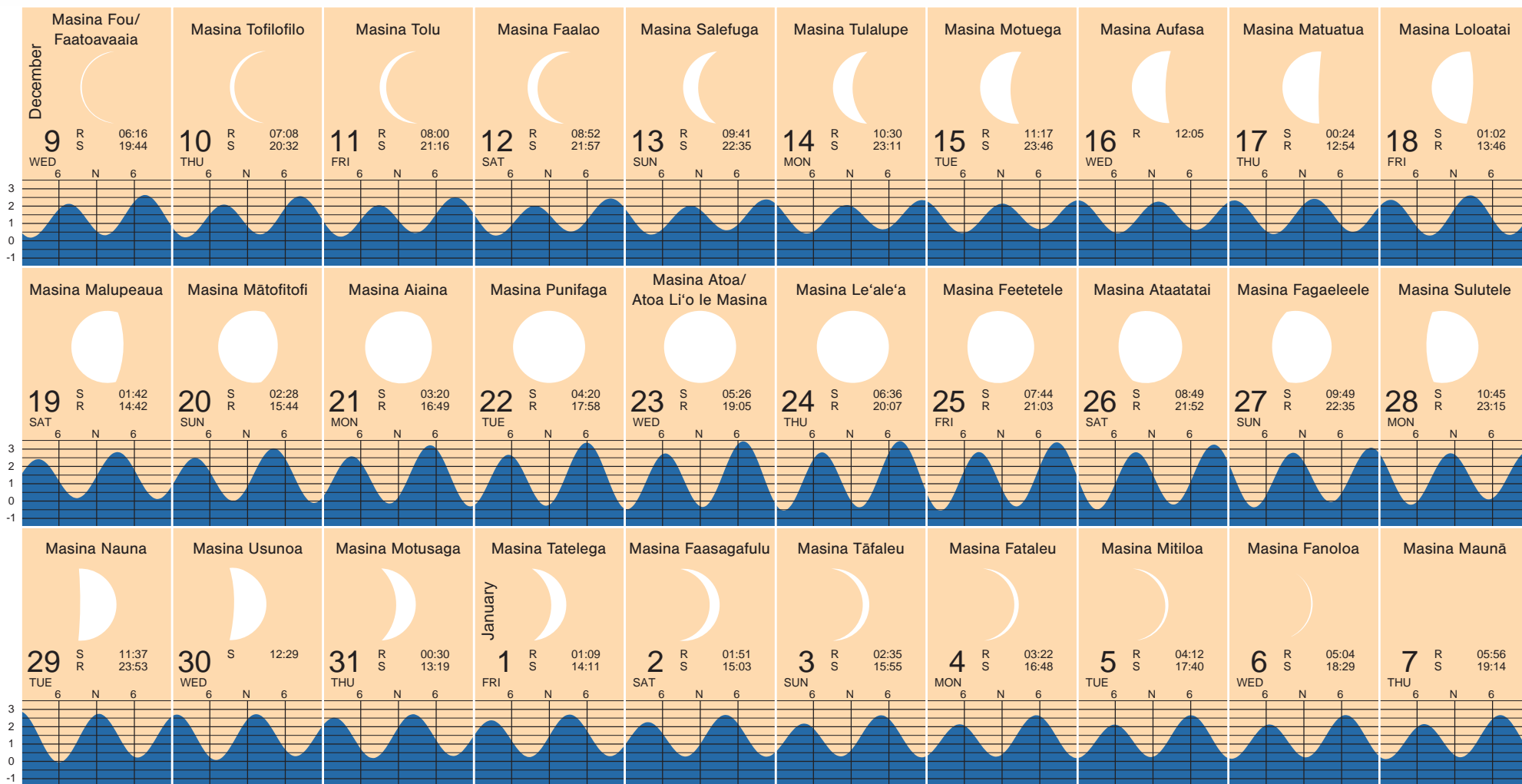
PHOTOS: WPRFMC



Taumafamua

December 9, 2026 - January 7, 2027

Tesema 9, 2026 - Ianuari 7, 2027



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
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Just Keep Fishing: A Vision for the Future

The Council's U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship supports college students by covering tuition, fees and living costs for up to two years. Graduates commit to work at DMWR, strengthening local fishery management. Learn more at www.wpcouncil.org.

Name: Alphaina Sifaleulaole Tuimanu'a Liusamoa

Current Role: Wildlife Biologist III - Sea Turtle Biologist, DMWR

Education: BS Marine Science, Univ. of Hawai'i at Hilo (UHH)

Scholarship: 2019 - 2021, **Hometown:** Ta'u, Manu'a

Growing up in Ta'u surrounded by the ocean inspired my desire to protect it. My journey led me to study marine conservation at ASCC before continuing on to UHH. My work today is motivated by the belief that the health of our oceans is directly tied to the well-being of our people. I am dedicated to preserving these waters for my family and all who call AS home.



Want to work with fishing or the ocean? Start by getting your hands dirty. For fishing, head to the docks and learn from those on the water. For marine science, pursue education and volunteer or internship opportunities. Whatever path you choose, work hard, be resilient and never stop learning.



PHOTO: Gyllian Taei

(above) Alphaina conducting surveys at the Rose Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

PHOTO: Sofia Suesue

Name: Fuamailagimanuiaolenuu Ulugaono Siaosi Ativalu Tago

Current Role: Coral Restoration Coordinator, DMWR

Education: BS Marine Science, UHH

Scholarship: 2019 - 2021, **Hometown:** Nu'uuli

A college marine biology course and my first swimming class sparked my passion for the ocean and fisheries. My motivation is to make science accessible and relevant, bridging the gap between researchers and the community while honoring Samoan culture.

I hope to see more community and youth involvement in managing our fisheries. By blending traditional knowledge with science, we can build sustainable, culturally grounded practices that protect marine ecosystems for future generations.

To me, fish are more than food; they are tied to our *aganu'u* (culture), *fa'asinomaga* (identity), *aga'ifanua* (traditions) and *soifuaga mo aso uma* (overall survival and livelihood). That connection drives my commitment to protect our marine resources and to share science in ways that honor and strengthen our relationship with the ocean.



(above) Fuamai in the field scuba diving for a coral study.

PHOTO: Fuamai Tago

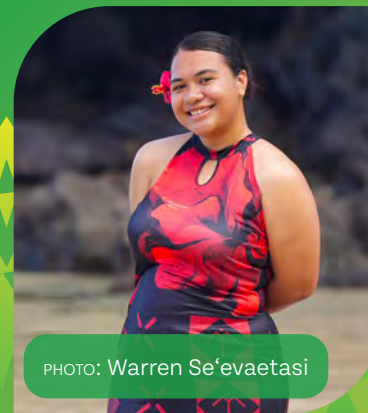
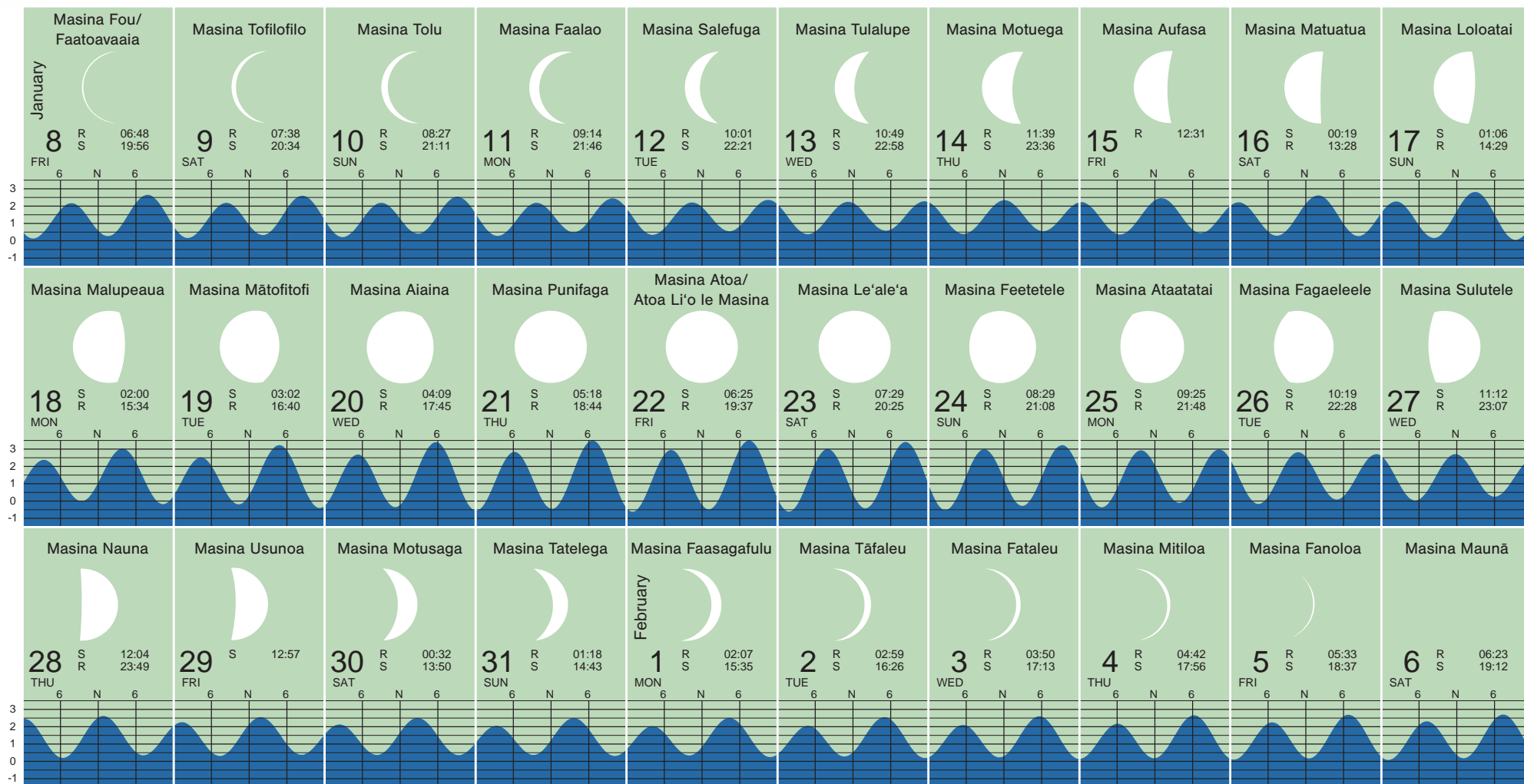


PHOTO: Warren Se'evaetasi

Toetaumafa

January 8 - February 6, 2027

Ianuari 8 - Fepuari 6, 2027



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
Regional Fishery
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About This Calendar

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council has produced traditional lunar calendars for American Samoa since 2007. These calendars follow the traditional Samoan calendar months and are designed to be a resource for the community to learn about the moon phases and their relationship with the tides. The theme for the 2026 *Tau Masina o Amerika Samoa* is the importance of fish to the Pacific Islands, highlighting how *i'a* provide food, support livelihoods and are woven into culture and tradition.

The calendar shares traditional and cultural knowledge about fishing alongside information on moon, tide and seasonal patterns. The lunar months, moon phases and calendar months are given in Samoan. The moon phases in this calendar are for Pago Pago Harbor. Data to discern the first day of the lunar month are used with permission from HM Nautical Almanac Office, UKHO and the Keeper of Public Records, UK. The tide charts with moon rise and set times are in Samoan Standard Time for Pago Pago and were provided by OceanFun Publishing, NZ.

A special *fa'afetai tele* lava to calendar contributors noted throughout and to Aiono Keseta Okenaisa Fauolo, Samoan Studies Institute Director at the American Samoa Community College, for her guidance on the Samoan lunar month names. We also extend our appreciation to Elisapeta Alaimaleata and John Patu Jr. of the Samoan Language Commission for their additional language support.

For an electronic version of this calendar, go to www.wpcouncil.org/educational-resources/lunar-calendars.

About the Council

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council was established by Congress in 1976 to manage fisheries in the offshore waters surrounding Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Hawai'i and the U.S. Pacific Remote Island Areas. The fisheries in federal waters surrounding American Samoa are managed under the American Samoa Archipelago and Pacific Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plans. Traditional knowledge and wide community involvement are integral parts of the ecosystem-based approach to fishery management.

- 1 **RESPECT NATURE** and your place in it.
- 2 **SEEK ADVICE** of experts with generational knowledge of the local resources.
- 3 **SHOW REGARD** to spawning seasons and juvenile fish.
- 4 **DO NOT WASTE.** Take only what is needed.
- 5 **KEEP SAFE** people, property and resources.
- 6 **OBEY** fishing laws and rules.
- 7 **USE PROPER** gear and techniques.
- 8 **PICK UP YOUR TRASH.**
- 9 **SHARE** your catch.

Produced by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.

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*Fishermen
Code of
Conduct*

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Front cover photos: (left) *Alia* boats moored at the Malaloa Floating Docks. (right) The longline vessel *F/V America* heading out to sea in pursuit of albacore tuna for the local cannery. PHOTOS: PIFG and Edgar Feliciano