

FAGATELE BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Photo: NOAA

Fagatele Bay Sanctuary Begins Management Plan Review

In 2008, Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary staff began a review of the sanctuary's management plan, a document that describes the objectives, policies and activities for this site. The current management plan has not been updated since the sanctuary's original designation date in 1986, and a revision is important to ensure the plan reflects new scientific discoveries and resource management issues. The management plan review process provides an opportunity for sanctuary staff and the public to shape the future direction and management of the sanctuary and its program. This is also an opportunity to provide input on site expansion and potentially designating additional sites in American Samoa that are worthy of sanctuary protections, including the marine portions of Rose Atoll Marine National Monument. Studies focusing on the biogeography of American Samoa and the socioeconomics of villages neighboring Fagatele Bay are underway. Public meetings were held in February 2009 to provide opportunities to assist sanctuary staff in identifying appropriate management measures and to solicit public input.

Education Cruise Teaches American Samoa Students about Ocean Topics

A sanctuary-sponsored education cruise targeting high schools in American Samoa, including Manu'a schools, allowed over 90 teachers and students to spend a day aboard the NOAA ship *Hi'ialakai* learning about ship operations and science activities. Each student completed five educational modules featuring ocean topics like water quality, geographical information systems (GIS), benthic sampling, and habitat identification. The experience provided a hands-on opportunity for students in American Samoa to learn ocean literacy messages and discover career options in marine conservation.



Photo: NOAA

Sanctuary Staff Conduct Outreach on Fagatele Bay Trail

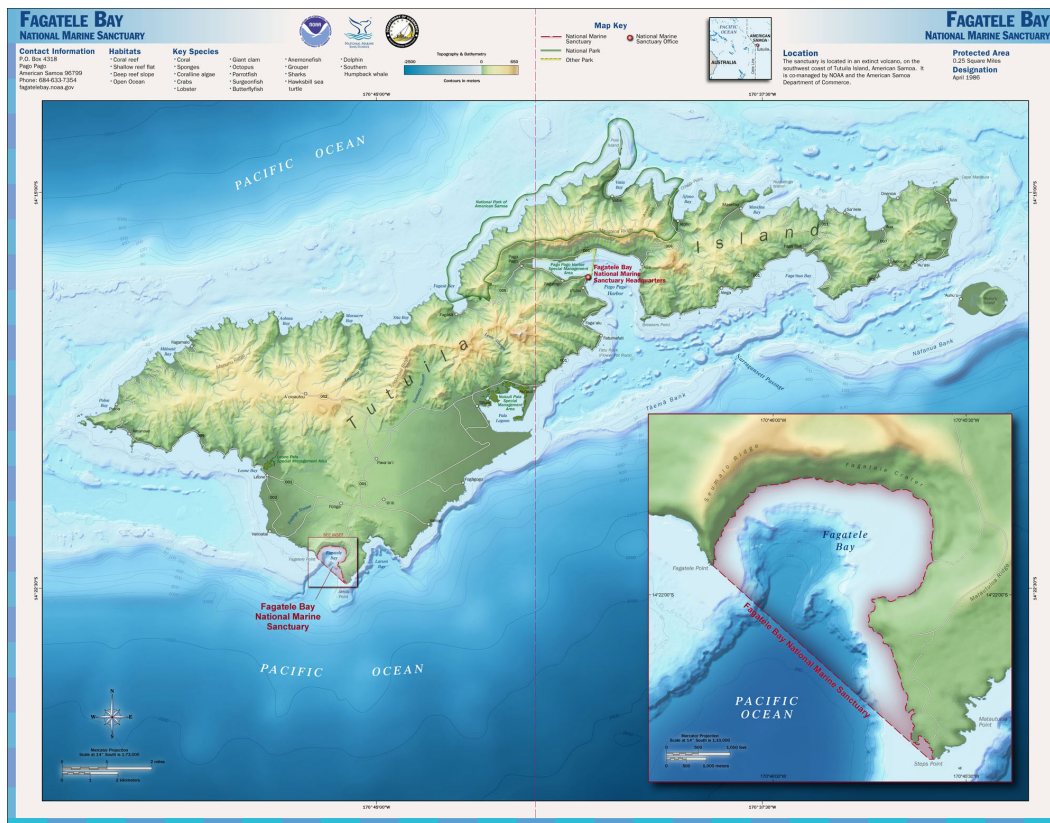
In 2008, sanctuary staff led numerous trail hikes for tourist and local groups along the Fagatele Bay Trail. The trail, completed in 2007 through collaboration with numerous partners, runs five kilometers around Fagatele Bay from Vaitogi to Taputimu, through some of American Samoa's rare paleo-tropical rainforest and provides views from the steep slopes around the sanctuary. Guiding hikes along the trail provided staff with excellent outreach opportunities and offered recreational and health benefits to all.



Photo: Dave Madill - NMFS Permit #8507

Whale Surveys Investigate Southern Humpback Populations

Staff from Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary and the Center for Marine Studies conducted multiple surveys in 2008 of Southern humpback whales that come to American Samoan waters to breed and calve. The goal of the research was to define the local population of humpbacks, to clarify its relationship to other parts of Oceania and to identify its Antarctic migratory destinations. Significant contributions have been made to understanding these populations and the management implications of these findings. A DVD is in the works to allow the results of this four-year project to be readily shared with the public.



Sanctuary maps available at sanctuaries.noaa.gov

Long-Term Monitoring Report Reveals Resilient Corals, New Species

A report was released in 2008 titled “Long term monitoring of Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Tutuila Island, American Samoa: Results of surveys conducted in 2007/8, including a re-survey of the historic Aua Transect” (Fenner et al.). This paper presents the latest results from a monitoring program stretching back almost 30 years, indicating that that corals in the sanctuary are resilient and doing well. In addition, the report describes four species of coral not previously recorded in Fagatele Bay and contains indications that reef fish communities in Fagatele Bay and elsewhere around Tutuila are still showing signs of overfishing.

Joint Project Seeks to Bring Hyperbaric Chamber to American Samoa

Staff from Fagatele Bay and Thunder Bay national marine sanctuaries joined forces in 2008 in an effort to establish a Hyperbaric & Wound Care Center in American Samoa. Interest in obtaining a hyperbaric chamber for treating dive-related injuries and diabetic wounds in the Territory of American Samoa has increased substantially in the past few years, particularly since the nearest hyperbaric treatment facility is in Fiji. The center will be modeled on the successes of a similar project by the Thunder Bay sanctuary in Alpena, Mich., and will provide a platform for collaboration among local, Territorial and federal agencies, LBJ Hospital, and the private sector. A hyperbaric chamber would serve American Samoa and the entire Pacific region with specialized treatment for diving injuries and non-healing wounds caused by diabetes, saving lives and possibly reducing the number of diabetes-related amputations.

To learn more about these and other accomplishments, visit sanctuaries.noaa.gov

