

Stakeholder Engagement Support Project and Recommended Action Plan for the American Samoa Ocean Planning Process

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List of Acronyms

AS EPA – American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency
ASCC – American Samoa Community College
ASG – American Samoan Government
ASOP – American Samoa Ocean Plan
ASOPT – American Samoa Ocean Planning Team
ASPA – American Samoa Power Authority
DMWR – Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (American Samoa)
DOC – Department of Commerce (American Samoa)
MPA – Marine Protected Area
NMS – National Marine Sanctuary
NOAA – National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration
OSA – Office of Samoan Affairs
PIRPB – Pacific Islands Regional Planning Body
USIECR – United States Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution

1. Executive Summary

A. Background and Purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Support Project

An ocean planning process has been underway in American Samoa over the past two years, under the umbrella of the Pacific Islands Regional Planning Body (PIRPB). The American Samoa Ocean Planning Team (ASOPT), a PIRPB sub-team, was created to develop the American Samoa Ocean Plan (ASOP) for the territory. The ASOPT includes PIRPB members and additional representatives from American Samoan and federal agencies responsible for different sectors active in marine resources management including commerce, fisheries, environmental quality, and planning. The ASOPT and PIRPB commissioned this project to conduct an in-depth assessment of stakeholder interests in ocean planning issues in American Samoa, and provide input to the ASOP. The project was funded through a grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and managed by the Udall Foundation's U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (USIECR).

The overall purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Support Project is to enable the ASOP process to more effectively consider the views, interests, concerns, and recommendations of the full range of parties impacted by ocean planning in American Samoa. A consultant Team including Scott McCreary, Ph. D. (Managing Principal, CONCUR Inc., Berkeley, California) and Keith Mattson (President, Keith Mattson, LLC, Honolulu, Hawaii) identified and interviewed a broad range of stakeholders, including current ASOPT members, village leaders on Tutuila and the Manu'a Islands, and a range of other people with interests in ocean planning. The Team was supported and assisted by CONCUR Associate Meredith Cowart along with translation services and protocol advice from Okenaisa Fauolo, Director of the Institute of Samoan Studies and colleagues at the American Samoa Community College.

The Stakeholder Engagement Support Project was conducted between February and June, 2017 and included the following objectives:

1. Identify overarching stakeholder engagement goals and objectives
2. Uncover potential opportunities and barriers for successful stakeholder engagement
1. Explore stakeholder perspectives about the ocean planning process
3. Develop a stakeholder engagement action plan to successfully engage stakeholders with respect to the ASOPT's ocean planning process goals and objectives.

These objectives were accomplished through a series of group and individual meetings with key leaders and informants, and 36 structured group and individual interviews.

B. Key Findings from Discussions and Interviews

The Team received stakeholder input from conversations and structured interviews with ASOPT members, pulenu'u (mayors) and other leaders from certain villages, and representatives from a range of marine sectors and interest groups. A selection of findings, grouped by topic, can be found below. More detailed findings are included in Sections 4, 5, and 6 of the Report. It should be noted that these findings are an accurate synthesis of findings from our interviews of a cross-section of stakeholders, and are not intended as a comprehensive census of all views.

Threats to Ocean Health

- The most widely noted threats are littering, runoff from erosion, and water quality degradation from effluent from septic systems and washing machines.
- Coral bleaching is a widely recognized threat, but we heard different opinions about its frequency and duration.
- We heard a range of views on the issues of overfishing in nearshore waters. Village leaders tended to say this is not occurring in their villages (apart from poachers from outside), whereas many government interviewees and stakeholders representing broader interest groups reported that there is significant overfishing in nearshore waters.
- Poaching of nearshore fisheries was identified as a major problem in several villages.
- Though historic problems included the use of explosives and poisons for fishing, interviewees reported that this problem is diminishing in severity. Similarly, interviewees reported that runoff from piggeries is less severe due to better understanding of impacts and enforcement of regulations.
- Some concerns were expressed about oil and fuel leaking into coastal waters.

Observed Changes to Marine Environment Attributed to Climate Change

- Increased coastal erosion, with substantial beach loss in some villages was reported, as well as more frequent and long-lasting coral bleaching.
- Changing physical conditions were also attributed to climate change, including rising sea temperatures, rising tides, stronger waves and more powerful storms.

Community Concerns for Long-Term Health and Quality of Ocean Resources

- The most frequently cited concerns across all stakeholders interviewed regarding the long-term health and quality of ocean resources included:
 - Coral reef health
 - Litter finding its way into the ocean
 - Sustainability of commercial fishing industry & canneries
 - Continued access to fishing for family consumption
 - Shoreline erosion
 - Effluent discharge from septic tanks

Economic Importance of Marine Sectors

- Purse seine fishing, commercial longline fishing, and Port of Pago Pago cargo operations were rated as the most important marine sectors for American Samoa's economy.
- Alia boat fishing was rated as 'somewhat important'
- Cruise ship and hotel/resorts were considered less important.

Suggestions on Stakeholder Engagement Formats

- Villagers and broader stakeholder community members nearly universally suggested that the ASOPT work with OSA to engage pulenu'u in order to gain access to the broader village decision-making bodies.
- Other suggestions included:
 - Conduct individual village engagement with multi-agency teams.

- Avoid large public meetings.(such as Federal Register meetings)
- Churches and schools are additional options for engagement
- Identify and work with ‘local champions’ in different communities.
- Ensure that materials and discussions are in Samoan when engaging local audiences.
- Avoid an approach that appears to ‘dictate’ policies or programs.
- Stress education about issues and solutions, and explain how solutions will help future generations.

Agencies to Lead Ocean Planning Stakeholder Process

- DMWR was the most often cited suggestion as the appropriate agency to lead stakeholder engagement, with support from OSA and AS EPA

Additional Reponses from American Samoa Ocean Planning Team Members

- Most ASOPT members reported that the broader Samoan community has an inaccurate sense that ocean resources (such as fish) are infinite. They indicated that this perception contributes to frustration over agency rules and regulations that they don’t feel are needed.
- Within local agencies, insufficient funding and lack of long-term coordinating staff have limited Ocean Plan implementation.
- The ASOP process needs to be driven by American Samoan Government (rather than federal) agencies, and with close coordination with the OSA and village leaders.

Additional Reponses from Village Leaders

- Notably, none of the village leader interviewees reported they had ever been asked by a government agency for their input on an ocean planning issue prior to this Stakeholder Engagement Support Project.
- Most villages claim to limit local nearshore fishing to village residents.
- Ofu and Olosega interviewees are very concerned about beach loss and looming threats from tsunamis and other large waves and storms.
- Ta’u interviewees expressed the view that they did not want any outside rules or regulations imposed by territorial or federal agencies.

Additional Responses from Other Stakeholders

- Some interviewees observed that average community members are not necessarily represented by pulenu’u, so there is a need to reach out to local residents in different ways (such as asking ranking matai to discuss some of these ocean concerns with their respective families.).
- We received the strong suggestion that Fono (legislature) members should be involved in the ASOP process
- One view expressed is that since traditional Polynesian ways of protecting reef worked well, current management should take a cue from that tradition.
- There is widespread lack of understanding about how individual actions impact the ocean.
- Several respondents noted that enforcement capacity is lacking within government agencies.

C. Recommendations/Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan

The Team makes seven broad recommendations to the ASOPT for stakeholder engagement, with specific actions under each recommendation. These are briefly summarized below, and addressed in more detail in Section 8 of this report. It is critical that recommendations 1 and 2 be addressed before moving on to the remaining recommendations. While much work has been done to date on the ASOP, the internal planning process should be strengthened before further engaging stakeholders. The remaining recommendations should be viewed as an integrated set of approaches. These recommendations are essential to helping the ASOPT more effectively engage American Samoa government agencies and key community leaders, and the ASOPT is strongly encouraged to consider them in their entirety.

1. Further develop and articulate clear and consistent leadership to deepen credibility of the Ocean Planning process

Recommended Actions:

- A. Establish clear leadership for the ASOPT among American Samoa government agencies so it is apparent to all stakeholders that there is strong local commitment to the planning process, and the willingness and capacity to implement the ASOP.
- B. Clarify the roles of federal agencies and regional partners in the ASOPT as supporting and contributing members to what should be a locally-driven planning process

2. Further refine and communicate a clear and compelling purpose for the American Samoa Ocean Plan.

Recommended Actions:

- A. Thoroughly examine participant territorial and federal agencies roles and responsibilities relative to ocean planning and marine resource management and conduct a gap analysis to identify ocean planning needs not yet sufficiently addressed.
- B. Draft a clear and succinct Statement of Purpose for the ASOP that defines the needs that it is intended to address in relation to existing American Samoan and federal plans and programs. Ideally, this statement should support and advance the priorities and responsibilities of each involved agency.
- C. Clearly communicate the ASOP purpose to stakeholders.

3. Develop and use a range of engagement formats and tools for outreach.

Recommended Actions:

- A. Determine the most important points during the planning process for engaging different groups of stakeholders (or stakeholder representatives), at stages

when there is sufficient content or issues to react to, and latitude to use the input received.

- B. Appoint a subcommittee of ASOPT members with extensive experience conducting outreach in different communities and with a variety of stakeholders in American Samoa. This subcommittee should recommend the timing, format, and other important details of the ASOP stakeholder engagement effort.
- C. Consider identifying one or two representatives from each major stakeholder group to help determine the best time and approach to use when engaging the stakeholders they represent.
- D. Engage Samoan language and cultural experts, as appropriate for specific needs to plan and conduct stakeholder engagement.
- E. Emphasize engagement formats likely to be effective and avoid or limit the use of engagement and outreach formats that would be least effective. Formats likely to be less effective are large 'public meetings', and emailed or online surveys.

4. Work with both the Office of Samoan Affairs and key resource agencies to engage villages.

Recommended Actions:

- A. OSA already has representation on the ASOPT. Strengthen the ASOPT's relationship with OSA leadership and provide regular updates to the pulenu'u meetings about the ASOP planning process as it unfolds.
- B. Convene a special workshop, or series of workshops, for pulenu'u on the key issues to be addressed in the ASOP.
- C. Structure outreach to pulenu'u geographically by convening subcommittees of key leaders from adjoining villages that share a reef or other ocean resources and help them focus on specific problems and solutions. As a further step, these sub-regions could then choose one pulenu'u representative to serve as a liaison to the ASOPT.
- D. Plan and convene a Territory-wide workshop series on critical ocean issues to present the latest information in a concise format, and demonstrate joint commitment on the part of multiple agencies.

5. Frame compelling incentives to territorial and federal government agencies, villages, commercial interests, educators, scientists, and recreationalists to fully engage in the Ocean Planning process.

Recommended Actions:

- A. Frame ocean issues to link stakeholder engagement to widely recognized problems and potential solutions.
- B. Use the Findings from this Stakeholder Engagement Support Project to identify and focus on the specific major concerns of each type of stakeholder.
- C. Ensure that successive outreach efforts build upon previous engagement with the same stakeholder groups.
- D. Identify and reconfirm specific priorities and responsibilities of individual ASOPT member agencies as they relate to the implementation of the Ocean Plan.

Identify opportunities to leverage and build upon existing efforts by individual agencies through new inter-agency partnerships.

- E. Identify ways in which the Ocean Plan can be developed to help local agencies become more competitive for grant proposals. Communicate these advantages to local agencies and other stakeholders. Develop the Ocean Plan such that it positions local agencies well to compete for funding opportunities.

6. Devise strategies to anticipate and overcome obstacles the Stakeholder Engagement Support team faced.

Recommended Actions:

- A. Consider identifying trusted and familiar intermediaries to get reluctant stakeholders to participate.
- B. Build in sufficient time to conduct stakeholder engagement in Manu'a to account for delays and travel changes that may occur.
- C. Consider combining ASOP stakeholder engagement with other scheduled agency visits to Manu'a.

7. Consider the use of a Joint Fact Finding (JFF) process to address any areas of significant technical disagreement and uncertainty in ocean and coastal resource planning.

Rationale: Joint Fact Finding (JFF) is methodology that brings diverse participants to the table in a neutral forum for sharing information and conducting evidence-based deliberations. JFF is a mediated process. Once assembled, participants formulate common questions and then seek to gather and interpret pertinent facts. JFF does this in a sustained manner rather than a one-off public meeting and through courteous, evidence-based debate. The discussions occur over an extended period of time and through a disciplined study structure that fosters collaborative discussions on science-intensive, politically sensitive matters. JFF is most appropriate when there are genuine disagreements over the technical and scientific impacts of actions. JFF processes are NOT appropriate when there are disagreements over personal, cultural, religious, or political beliefs underpinning actions.

JFF might be used as a part of the American Samoa Ocean Planning process to develop a common and scientifically robust understanding of various ocean planning issues. For example, our Team identified disagreement, misunderstanding or lack of information around a handful of issues, including:

- Status of various fish stocks
- Status of coral reefs and impacts of climate change
- Need for and impacts of sea walls

2. Project Background and Scope

A. Organizing Principles

Marine planning is a science-based, stakeholder-driven process used by coastal and ocean regions to develop integrated and stable ocean management plans that advance

their goals for economic development and conservation. The National Ocean Council, in its Marine Planning Handbook, defines marine planning in the following way: “Each coastal and ocean region of the country has its own interests and ways of doing business, but all regions want to support their marine economies and coastal communities and enjoy a healthy environment. Marine planning is a science- and information-based tool that can help advance local and regional interests, such as management challenges associated with the multiple uses of the ocean, economic and energy development priorities, and conservation objectives. Marine planning provides information that all ocean interests can use to maximize the benefits and minimize the impacts of how we use the ocean. Marine planning develops:

- Regional understanding and agreement about issues that should be addressed;
- Context for acquiring and sharing data and information to help avoid and reduce conflicts;
- An effective process to ensure that stakeholder interests and expertise are part of solutions;
- A tool to guide and coordinate Federal actions in the region; and
- Enhanced coordination among Federal, State, tribal, and stakeholders on ocean and coastal issues.

To develop marine plans, representatives from all levels of government work together, publicly and transparently, as a regional planning body. Their work is informed by the expertise and perspective of stakeholders, whose participation ensures that the planning is based on a full understanding of the range of interests and interactions in each region...[S]takeholder and public participation is fundamental to marine planning. The scope, scale, and content of marine plans are defined by the regions themselves, to solve problems that regions care about in ways that reflect their unique interests, capacity to participate, and ways of doing business. Marine planning should build on and complement existing programs, partnerships, and initiatives. This flexible approach ensures that each region can determine the benefits it wants to achieve and the process by which it does so.”¹

Successful stakeholder engagement efforts rely on the core principals of legitimacy, accountability, representation, and participation. Underlying our recommendations are the essential premise that a stakeholder engagement effort must incorporate an understanding of *fa’a Samoa* (Samoan ways) of communication, deliberation and decision-making. Much of this entails engaging the traditional matai system of family and village leadership and governance. Matai are chiefs bestowed with a title that corresponds with a family’s land ownership, and they are the head of their respective families when it comes to decision-making about resources. Each village generally has several different matai, and one of them is chosen to be the village’s pulenu’u (village mayor). There are also different hierarchical layers of matai that bestow different levels of respect and importance to individual matai titles, an aspect of Samoan culture that is acknowledged but is beyond the scope of this report to describe.

¹https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/final_marine_planning_handbook.pdf

² The LPVA is a federal rule created in 2002 that restricts boats greater than 50-feet from fishing in waters within 50 nautical miles of American Samoa’s coast. The LPVA was reduced from 50 miles to 12 miles in 2016

³ Other ‘gap analyses’ could be done via an exercise wherein a particular action is proposed (e.g., a new telecommunications

B. Project Background

An ocean planning process has been underway in American Samoa over the past two years under the umbrella of the Pacific Islands Regional Planning Body (PIRPB). The American Samoa Ocean Planning Team (ASOPT) was created to develop the American Samoa Ocean Plan (ASOP) for the territory. The ASOPT includes representatives from American Samoan and federal agencies responsible for different sectors active in marine resources management including commerce, fisheries, environmental quality, and planning. The ASOPT and PIRPB recognize that the effort requires highly effective and inclusive stakeholder engagement to properly capture and account for the interests and recommendations of diverse parties. Recognizing that a stakeholder engagement and assessment process should be conducted by an independent third party, this distinct but complementary Stakeholder Engagement Support Project was initiated. This effort was overseen by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (USIECR), a program of the Udall Foundation (an independent executive branch agency of the U.S. Government with programs fostering collaboration to address the nation's environment, public lands, natural resources, and the rights and self-governance of American Indians and Native Alaskans), and was funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. The USIECR awarded a contract in February, 2017, to the Stakeholder Engagement Team described below.

C. Stakeholder Engagement Team

Consultants Scott McCreary, Ph. D. (Managing Principal, CONCUR Inc., Berkeley, California) and Keith Mattson (President, Keith Mattson, LLC, Honolulu, Hawaii) led the Stakeholder Engagement Support Project working with CONCUR Associate Meredith Cowart. The Team was assisted with translation services and protocol advice from Okenaisa Fauolo, Director of the Institute of Samoan Studies and colleagues at the American Samoa Community College. In initiating the project, our Team assembled a Roster of Advisors that includes Professor Tusi Avegalio of the University of Hawaii.

D. Stakeholder Engagement Purpose and Approach

The overall purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Support Project is to enable the ASOP process to more effectively consider the views, interests, concerns, and recommendations of the full range of parties impacted by ocean planning in American Samoa. To this end, the Team identified and interviewed a broad range of perspectives on ocean planning in American Samoa, including current ASOPT members (many of whom work with local or federal environmental agencies), village leaders on the island of Tutuila as well as in the Manu'a Islands, fishing interests (canneries, longliners & purse seiners, sportfishing and alia fleet), tourism industry representatives (cruise ships, hotels), ocean recreation representatives, environmental education representatives, environmental non-profits, and American Samoa Community College faculty.

E. Work Scope:

The project work scope was to conduct a situation assessment, in consultation with the U.S. Institute, the Pacific Islands Regional Planning Body (PIRPB), and ASOPT, to (1)

identify overarching stakeholder engagement goals and objectives, (2) uncover potential opportunities and barriers for successful stakeholder engagement, (3) explore stakeholder perspectives about the ocean planning process, and (4) develop a stakeholder engagement action plan to successfully engage stakeholders with respect to the ASOPT's ocean planning process goals and objectives.

Our work was conducted in the following steps:

Review background information and identify initial contacts in American Samoa (February, 2017).

Stakeholder Engagement Support Project initiation and introductory stakeholder meetings in American Samoa (March 3-10, 2017). Team members Scott McCreary and Keith Mattson visited American Samoa between March 3 – 10, 2017 for a series of introductory meetings and reconnaissance on ocean planning issues and concerns. This trip included a meeting with the ASOPT (March 7), a meeting with the pulenu'u (March 6), a meeting with the Lieutenant Governor (March 13), and several individual interviews with ASOPT members.

American Samoa Ocean Planning Team Member Interviews. Prior to the second visit, several additional follow-up interviews with ASOPT members were held over the phone from CONCUR team member offices. Three additional phone interviews held with: Kelley Tagarino, University of Hawaii Sea Grant Extension Agent at the American Samoa Community College; Michael King, Recycling Manager at the American Samoa Power Authority and a member of the Coalition of Reef Lovers; and with Michael Panem, Operations Manager at Harbor Maritime and Stevedoring Company.

Stakeholder Interviews in American Samoa (May 8-19). Team members Scott McCreary, Keith Mattson and Meredith Cowart visited American Samoa to conduct stakeholder interviews in the outer Manu'a islands and on Tutuila with key village leaders, and representatives of maritime industry, sportfishing, recreation, the alia fleet, hotel and tourism, [ASPA] and environmental education.

Stakeholder Engagement Support Project and Recommended Action Plan (late May/ June, 2017). Following the stakeholder interviews, this report was written to summarize key issues raised, develop a set of recommendations and propose next steps.

Presentation of Stakeholder Engagement Support Project and Action Plan in American Samoa (June- July 2017). Presentations of this Stakeholder Engagement Support Project and Recommended Action Plan were made to the PIRPB Coordinator and the Director of DMWR in June with briefings to follow by conference call in July to the full ASOPT. A follow up presentation may be made in American Samoa.

F. Administration and Funding

The project is being overseen by the Udall Foundation via their U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (USIECR). The Udall Foundation is an independent executive branch agency of the U.S. Government with programs fostering collaboration

to address the nation's environment, public lands, natural resources, and the rights and self-governance of American Indians and Native Alaskans. Funding for this ASOPT Stakeholder Engagement Support Project was provided by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Members of the PIRPB and ASOPT are advising the Stakeholder Engagement Support Team, however the Team considered the full range of input from different advisors and stakeholders in designing and conducting the stakeholder engagement project.

G. Interview Protocol

Interviewees were told that their statements would not be attributed to their names in public documents, although their affiliation with an interest group might be identified. In most cases, we have chosen to summarize the statements made to properly and succinctly reflect the range of stakeholder viewpoints. In several instances, we have paraphrased or used the construction “the interviewee stated that...” or “the interviewee reported that...”. This text should be considered a very close approximation of the actual word choices of the interviewee, but should not be construed as precise quotes.

The Team grouped prospective interviewees into three broad categories:

1. ASOPT Members: Largely staff from American Samoa and federal government agencies engaged in some aspect of planning related to marine resources.
2. Village leaders: Largely pulenu’u (village mayors) from various villages throughout Tutuila and Manu’a.
3. Broader Stakeholder Community Members: A mixture of largely non-governmental representatives of various interest groups with some role or interest in ocean planning.

The Team considered different methods to interview individuals and developed separate but related and comparable interview formats for each of the three categories. Interview formats included a mixture of close-ended questions using a numeric scale, and open-ended questions to solicit more unique viewpoints. The close-ended questions focused on the relative quality of different ocean resources, the importance of different marine sectors to American Samoa’s economy, and the relative importance of different topics to the future American Samoa Ocean Plan. The open-ended questions focused on different perceived threats to the ocean, concerns for the future of marine resources, and the desirability and effectiveness of different stakeholder engagement approaches. (The three different interview guides are included in *Appendix C. Interview Instruments*)

3. Project Initiation and Introductory Meetings

Team members Scott McCreary and Keith Mattson visited American Samoa from March 3 – 10, 2017 for a series of introductory meetings and reconnaissance on ocean planning issues and concerns. This trip included meetings with the Lieutenant Governor, the territory’s pulenu’u (village mayors) at the Office of Samoan Affairs, the ASOPT as a group, and several individual meetings with ASOPT members. These discussions helped deepen the Team’s understanding of American Samoa’s major issues

with respect to ocean planning, and laid the foundation for the approach for obtaining stakeholder input to the ASOP stakeholder engagement process.

A. Meeting with the American Samoa Lieutenant Governor

The Team met with Lt. Governor Lemanu Palepoi Sialega Mauga in his office on Thursday, March 8th and were accompanied by Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) Director Henry Sesepepara and Mago Faleosalafai Tipa (a Samoan orator or ‘talking chief’ who is a member of the translation team from the American Samoa Community College). The Lt. Governor was very interested and engaged in our discussion, which lasted approximately one hour. Key observations and outcomes include:

- Prior to our meeting, the Lt. Governor Lemanu had not been aware of the ASOP or the ASOPT but was keenly interested in the activity and very supportive of the purpose;
- He stated that our approach and plan for next steps are correct and appropriate, particularly our interactions with the Office of Samoan Affairs;
- He acknowledged the need for American Samoa government agencies to play a more active role in the ASOPT and stated his intent to speak with the Governor when he returns from a trip to Washington DC.

B. Meeting with Pulenu’u at the Office of Samoan Affairs

The Stakeholder Engagement Support Team made a presentation to 49 pulenu’u (village mayors) at their bi-weekly meeting on Tuesday, March 6. DMWR Director Henry Sesepepara accompanied the Team and provided an introduction of the Stakeholder Engagement Support Project and the American Samoa Ocean Plan. Mago Faleosalafai Tipa also introduced the Team and translated the presentation into Samoan. The primary purpose of the presentation was to explain what the ASOP would address, and that the Team would be approaching them later to ask for their input as stakeholders. At the close of the meeting, Secretary of Samoan Affairs Mauga Tasi Asuega requested that each pulenu’u speak to their respective village council about ocean planning issues and concerns in preparation for our team to return for more in-depth interviews.

C. Meetings with ASOPT Members

The Stakeholder Engagement Support Team met with several ASOPT members as a group on Wednesday, March 7, and followed up with many of them for individual discussions during that same week. These discussions revealed many key insights about the ASOP process to date, major issues for the Ocean Plan, and thoughts about effective stakeholder engagement. The Team drew from these discussions to prepare for more in depth interviews with ASOPT members over the following weeks. Key finding from these initial discussions with ASOPT members are incorporated in Section 4 below, “American Samoa Ocean Planning Team Member Interview Findings.”

4. American Samoa Ocean Planning Team Member Interview Findings

Following the Stakeholder Engagement Support Team's first visit in March, we requested interviews with individual ASOPT members by phone. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes and interviewees were asked questions about the following:

- Their recommendations for essential stakeholder organizations, individuals or communities to engage
- Their observations on the effectiveness of past stakeholder engagement efforts for natural resource issues in American Samoa
- Recent changes to American Samoa's marine environment and marine economy
- Their thoughts on how the American Samoan and federal government agencies should work together to develop the ASOP
- Their suggestions on engagement formats or methods that would be most effective going forward
- Their suggestions on how best to include stakeholders in the development of the ASOP, and the implementation of the Plan once it's finalized
- Other suggestions they may have

At the start of the interview, interviewees were also asked to rate (on a Likert-type scale) various ocean resources relative to their (1) health and quality and (2) economic importance. Relevant quantitative findings are described in Section 7. Qualitative findings from these interviews are summarized below, and are organized according to major topics. (See *Appendix C. ASOPT Member Interview Instrument* on p.4 of the Appendices).

Stakeholder Engagement Format

- ASOPT members provided the following advice when asked how to conduct a successful stakeholder engagement process around ocean planning in American Samoa:
 - **Involve stakeholders early on:** Conduct early outreach to inform villagers of the purpose of the stakeholder engagement, provide appropriate education about ecological systems (e.g. the role of wetlands), and receive feedback. Reflect feedback in the Plan document as it evolves.
 - **Ensure redundancy:** i.e. "talking to the same people more than once, in different ways and in different contexts." Provide multiple public forums that ensure stakeholders are able to attend a meeting.
 - **Ensure outreach beyond village leaders:** Couple large public meetings with more distributed outreach. Suggestions included (A) Convening subgroup meetings (e.g. organized into groups of men, women, and youth or young men) and (B) door-to-door engagement with villagers
 - **Identify local champions:** Find key leaders who are locally respected and supportive of the planning process to help drive the process on the village level.
 - **Employ tools that foster engagement:** Mobilize tools that encourage input and engagement. For example, the DMWR village-based MPA program employed a mapping tool that allowed stakeholders to map key

resources and fostered discussions on how to minimize the impacts on those resources.

- **Hands-on Engagement:** One respondent suggested bringing key stakeholders on tours/field trips to both learn about and give feedback on the key issues.
- **Respect local customs and styles of engagement:** Awareness of local and traditional values, laws and perspectives is critical. There is the feeling that some federal agencies haven't paid proper attention to these elements, damaging credibility and effectiveness. Public meetings should be conducted in Samoan and should not involve PowerPoint presentations. One respondent stressed that plan elements should be presented by local partners, not Federal.
- **Necessity of Government and Office of Samoan Affairs support:**
 - One interviewee suggested that critical to effective stakeholder engagement is: (1) A directive from the territorial government, and (2) A directive from the Secretary of Samoan Affairs to the village councils. He stressed the importance of the OSA in communicating the necessary information to pulenu'u (village mayors) and matai (village chiefs)
 - "The Governor needs to hold people accountable, and those people need to know what they're doing and implement accordingly. This is not just an exercise where people come together and talk – they need to execute."
 - As one ASOPT member explained, "The government is such a large employer here that when you have people involved in the government championing an effort, it goes a long way towards getting buy in. This is a culture of listening to your elders and doing what you're told. When the government or legislature says 'you need to do this', it carries a lot of weight."
- Venues and opportunities for conducting stakeholder outreach and engagement (not in any particular order):
 - **Office of Samoan Affairs:** Be sure to work through OSA to discuss issues with pulenu'u and matai.
 - **Village pulenu'u's house** (or high ranking matai): Conduct outreach by inviting community members to come to a village leader's house over the course of a day for conversations.
 - **Village council meetings:** These can be time-consuming but an effective way to involve the village leadership in planning and decision-making.
 - **Village church groups:** Some church groups are very active and influential in the community. Working with clergy or pastor of key village church groups can be more time efficient as consensus is not needed in these groups (unlike with village council).
 - **Town hall meetings:** These can be effective ways to get feedback from citizens, but they are much more effective on the village level than on the regional or territorial level.
 - **Legislature:** Each village is represented in the Legislature. "Someone needs to make a presentation to the legislature so they know what we're

doing. They need to be involved in the process and not just on the receiving end.”

- **Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Teachers:** Conduct outreach to STEM teachers/schools and involve youth in science projects and other educational outreach programs.

Agencies/Organizations to Lead the American Samoa Ocean Planning process

- Respondent expressed that territorial agencies should play the leading role in the ASOP development.
- Interviewees felt that the Department of Commerce, as the agency implementing the plan, needs to take a strong leadership role in the Ocean Planning process.
- One ASOPT member stated that “the territorial government agency heads need to drive this. Unfortunately we’ve seen agency subordinates pushing the effort, but the cabinet level members need to take the wheel to make sure those efforts weren’t wasted.”
- The heart of the stakeholder engagement effort, respondents felt, should come from the Office of Samoan Affairs, to ensure that appropriate traditional protocol is followed. An educational body such as Le Tausagi could also be involved.
- Also needed is a local resource agency with subject matter expertise. Most respondents suggested DMWR, and a few also mentioned that AS EPA and the Ports Administration has subject matter expertise and existing community outreach programs.
- Other agencies mentioned included the Port (which has an engagement program but targets a small subset of stakeholders) and other federal programs including the NPS and NMFS PIRO (both of which conduct stakeholder engagement in AS).
- One ASOPT member stated that “[the ASOP] will definitely need to expand to include other authorities, including public health. The plan itself when completed/implemented will help to improve the local action strategy we have for the Coral Reef Advisory Group. My hope is that it will be coordinated by a local partner. I would like to see local partners reach out to other groups related to marine resources but outside of the core group.”

Stakeholder Groups Important to American Samoa Ocean Plan Development and Implementation

- ASOPT members identified a range of stakeholder groups key to success of the ASOP (not in any particular order):
 - Territorial agencies, including Department of Commerce and Department of Education
 - Office of Samoan Affairs
 - Legislative politicians (active high chiefs and leaders from villages)
 - Key village church groups
 - Canneries
 - Fisheries
 - Ecotourism

- Local high schoolers
- Harbor users and developers
- Outer villages
- Several respondents simply said that “everyone” needs to be involved in the ocean plan. For example, a Federal agency employee stated that “We’ve identified a list of 20 or 30 user groups that depend on the ocean or various reasons – they should all be included. Plus just Samoans living their lives and buying fish out of a cooler, they’re important too.”

Threats to Ocean Health

- The most frequently named local activities that negatively impact marine resources involved **runoff from septic systems and piggeries, and littering**.
- **Runoff from septic systems:** ASOPT members reported that while septic system regulations exist, enforcement is lacking and many systems are not to code. One member noted that a portion of the island doesn’t have sewer line access.
- **Littering:** Several interviewees explained that the residents often dump trash into streams during a heavy rain as a waste disposal mechanism, and the runoff flows to the shoreline and then into coral reefs.
- **Coastal development:** Two members mentioned new development/ construction as significant threats, particularly dredging projects possibly not going through the proper local permitting process and causing sediment loads to wash into the ocean and the local reefs.
- **Overfishing:** Two members mentioned overfishing, citing both longline and purse seine fishing. One member mentioned biofouling from vessels entering and exiting the harbor, but also noted that this threat is well controlled through Coast Guard rules and related inspection.

Climate Change Impacts

- **Coral bleaching:** When asked what climate change impacts to ocean resources they have already noticed in American Samoa, five members identified the issue of coral bleaching. One member noted that rising water temperature causes coral bleaching and contributes to a rise of invasive species entering the waters.
- Other impacts that ASOPT members noted included: **sea level rise, coastal erosion, storm surges and rising water temperatures**. It should be noted that some of these impacts cause or reinforce others--for example both sea level rise and storm surges contribute to coastal erosion.
- In the longer term, participants were particularly concerned with **coral bleaching, sea level rise and ocean acidification**. They stressed these effects on livelihoods due to nearshore resource depletion and the expense of combatting sea level rise.

American Samoa Ocean Plan Topics That Would Benefit From Community Input

- ASOPT members noted several topics that they feel would merit from community input and feedback, including:
 - Sustainable fisheries
 - Mapping of the various recreational, fishery and environmental uses, to allow for effective coordination

- How communities view their impact on nearshore resources
- How regulations on nearshore and offshore bottom fisheries would impact village livelihoods
- Harbor development
- Tuna fisheries (e.g. where fishing occurs, seasons, catch limits).

Perceived Misconceptions in the Community About Ocean Resources

- **Finite Nature of Ocean Resources:** Several ASOPT members described a worldview within the American Samoan community of ocean resources as infinite. They stated that most community members do not see overfishing as a problem. Because of this conception, ocean management regulations are often seen as “arbitrary controls by people in power to hold power over others”.
- **Mistrust of Federal government:** A complaint among ASOPT members who work for the US government is a lack of trust in the Federal government. This is particularly the case for NOAA. Some noted that many community members think that the Ocean Plan is implemented primarily by Federal partners, without the support of territorial agencies. They stated that many people don’t understand the need for cooperation and coordination among the Federal and territorial agencies.
- **The Ownership of Longline Fishing Vessels:** A few interviewees noted that there is a lack of understanding about the local tuna fishing operations. While there is a sense that tuna is important to the economy, many people are not aware that many of the longline boats themselves are locally owned. One member explained that long line vessels must either be from American Samoa or have a long history of fishing in the region. The 14 longline fishing vessels in American Samoa are owned by four families, three of which are American Samoan and one of which is a Korean family who has live in American Samoa for 20 years. As a result of these misunderstandings, there is an anti-long line vessel sentiment. This contributed to the sense that the revised Longline Vessel Protected Area (LVPA) rule² in 2016 that reduced the exclusive area for alia fishing vessels was an encroachment on American Samoan fishing rights.

Community Concerns for the Long-Term Health and Quality of Ocean Resources

- We asked ASOPT members what they thought the community’s main concerns are regarding the health and quality of ocean resources. Their responses included:
 - Jobs, specifically tuna industry
 - Access to ocean resources/ability to fish in protected areas
 - Land based sources of pollution, especially litter
 - Sea level rise
 - Ocean reefs continue to provide food for subsistence

Marine Issues with Low Intergovernmental (Territorial – Federal) Cooperation

- Respondents provided a few examples of marine issues that they perceive as having a low level of intergovernmental coordination:

² The LPVA is a federal rule created in 2002 that restricts boats greater than 50-feet from fishing in waters within 50 nautical miles of American Samoa’s coast. The LPVA was reduced from 50 miles to 12 miles in 2016

- Longline Vessel Protected Area regulations
- Endangered/listed species
- Fishery development
- Ocean Resource Management Plan
- They noted a few causes of low intergovernmental cooperation including:
 - Insufficient funding, which restricts the ability of local partners to act
 - Senior staff in local agencies not providing sufficient direction to others within the agency to support a certain regulation
 - The perception that Federal agencies are arbitrarily telling locals how to govern
 - Lack of engagement and cooperation from the Department of Commerce (regarding the Marine Spatial Planning and Ocean Planning processes)

Marine Issues with High Intergovernmental Cooperation:

- Interviewees also described some of the issues with high intergovernmental coordination, including:
 - Coastal Reef Advisory Group (CRAG), which includes two Federal partners, local government partners, and conducts extensive outreach to local communities.
 - Coastal Management Plan
 - Land use permit approval process for coastal areas
 - American Samoa Longline Limited Entry Program
 - NOAA and DMWR surveys and research efforts – e.g. coral reef monitoring and research vessel programs
 - Coordinated vessel inspection (between DMWR, FWS, NPS, AS EPA, & NOAA)
 - Two Samoa Initiative (*note – this is between American Samoa and the independent nation of Samoa*)
 - The Coast Guard works with local agencies to ensure compliance and provide trainings
 - Rose Atoll protected area management (*note – this is not necessarily a commonly-held viewpoint*)
 - National Marine Sanctuary management and expansion from 2009 – 2012 (*note – this is not necessarily a widely-held viewpoint, as we also heard there has been some opposition to fishing regulations in sanctuaries*).
- Factors accounting for success include:
 - Open communication and sharing of information
 - The Coastal Zone Management Program success because “there was a Federal law, there was funding tied to it, and the local government saw the usefulness of it”

National Marine Sanctuary management and expansion during 2009-2012 success because ASG was supportive at the time, and the project received support from the Office of Samoan Affairs, which worked closely with villages (*Note - it is our understanding that these dynamics have changed somewhat, and there is more opposition to some aspects of the sanctuaries*).

Effectiveness of the 2003 American Samoa Ocean Resource Management Plan

- Participants overwhelmingly reported that the 2003 American Samoa Ocean Resource Management Plan (ORMP) has not been influential or effective in guiding ocean planning since 2005. Several ASOPT members were involved in working groups that developed the plan, or in attempts to revive the plan after several years of inactivity. Interviewees reported that the plan was initially effective, due to the focused efforts of several working groups and having secured the backing of the Governor at that time. But in 2005 after the departure of the ORMP Coordinator, the effort “fell apart.” While monthly meetings were held between 2006-09, lack of a coordinator to ensure follow-through and aid the collaboration between working groups prevented the plan from being fully implemented. Various attempts to revive the program (2009-10) and hire an off-island coordinator (2010-11) never fully gained traction. An ASOPT member noted that the position of coordinator has been funded each year, yet this position has only been filled sporadically. He noted that the position was again filled in 2015 but that he was not aware of any progress thus far.
- One ASOPT interviewee reported that in the absence of an effective ORMP, the Coral Reef Advisory Group (CRAG) arose to address some of the nearshore issues.

Effectiveness of the American Samoan Marine Protected Area Program

- Most ASOPT members reported that the American Samoa Marine Protected Area (MPA) program has had mixed success. Interviewees stressed that in American Samoa (unlike on the US mainland), MPAs are developed on the village level, and some villages have been very actively involved in developing MPAs. One interviewee explained that the regulations are primarily set aside that restrict outside fishing but allow local fishing. He noted that this allows the enforcement agency to approach a single point of contact to influence management. Another interviewee cited the MPA in the village of Paloa, where fishing was limited for two years to allow the stocks to successfully return.
- An ASOPT member, who initiated the MPA program while at the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) explained that her work initially was to build capacity at the village level. There are now about 12 village MPAs, with 2 no-take MPA areas under DMWR. She stated that “these are very effective, useful tools” demonstrating a “really good bottom-up approach with proven success.” She emphasized that the DMWR needs to take a stronger role in implementation.
- One interviewee, who agreed that the MPA program is effective in some villages, also questioned the appropriateness of applying “Western ideas about ocean management” to Polynesian ocean resources, given that Polynesians have managed the ocean for thousands of years.
- Another ASOPT interviewee praised the program for its extensive outreach and capacity building in villages, but criticized it for a lack of analytical evaluation of the programs’ effectiveness. Some participants noted that enforcement is weak. One stated that “I go over enforcement records - people are cited but not given fines, so there are no real consequences.”

5. Broader Stakeholder Community Interviews

In addition to American Samoa Ocean Planning Team (ASOPT) members and village leaders, we interviewed a subset of 14 stakeholders representing key interest groups, including:

- Alia fishing (the Alia Fishermen Association)
- Marine educators (Le Tausagi, University of Hawaii Sea Grant at the American Samoa Community College, and high school science educators)
- American Samoa Power Authority
- Resort and Hotel Industry (Sadie's by the Sea)
- Recreational fishing (Pago Pago Gamefishing Association)
- Maritime Industry (Harbor Maritime and Stevedoring Company, Industrial Gasses and charter boat operations)
- Recreation (Paddlers Association)

While these stakeholders represent a diverse set of interests, we detected a (perhaps surprising) helpful level of convergence on several issues and observations. Key findings from these interviews are summarized below.

Stakeholder Engagement Format

- Several interviewees stressed that it is critical to work within the matai system to demonstrate respect and develop trust in order to successfully engage community members. As one interviewee said, "to achieve a high level of credibility and trust, the agencies conducting ocean planning need to have good standing in the community and to work within the matai system."
- A few interviewees suggested focusing efforts on engaging a local champion, who has credibility with others and who can ensure that there is authentic engagement and respect on all sides. One person stated that "This is a close-knit community, and people are hesitant to open up to outsiders."
- One interviewee, who works locally as an archaeologist, explained her process of hiring what she called a "protocol matai" to inform community members of any excavation and construction operations and any necessary conformance. Because of the hierarchical nature of Samoan society, this person needs to be of high enough rank that he is accorded deference/considered credible by the full area involved.
- One interviewee suggested Coast Week (a National Marine Sanctuary program) as a good model of community engagement. Some programs target youth only, others target both kids and their parents, and both are good methods for educating families.
- The Fagamalo Marine Protected Area (MPA) was noted by an interviewee as an example of a well-run government engagement process.
- Several other key factors mentioned regarding outreach to villages included:
 - Effective translation of technical terms is critical
 - Don't tell people what to do; ask for their input and create a sense of teamwork and ownership.
 - "Relate information using a hands-on, feel & touch approach. Enlist them in doing real tasks."

- Several interviewees in this grouping, unlike with our pulenu'u interviews, stated that they had been contacted by agencies to play a leading role in issues of concern (primarily NOAA and AS EPA). Some had been contacted to participate in meetings, others to help convene focus groups/conduct outreach. [Note: since several of these stakeholders were recommended to us as engaged citizens with an interest in ocean planning, this result is not surprising].
- A handful of interviewees stated that they had never been approached by a territorial or federal government agency about their views on marine resource issues.

Agencies/Organizations to Lead Stakeholder Engagement and the ASOP process

- **Outreach:** Most interviewees recommended DMWR or AS EPA as logical leads for conducting outreach. Other agencies mentioned several times were NPS and DOC (Coastal Management Program). Suggested less frequently were OSA, ASCC, UH Sea Grant, CRAG, NMS, NOAA, the Port, and the Department of Education.
- **Planning and implementation:** The great majority of interviewees expressed the view that DMWR is the appropriate agency to lead ASOP planning. AS EPA was also mentioned frequently, and DOC, NOAA and CRAG were also noted. Marine Patrol was also suggested regarding implementation.

Stakeholder Groups Important to ASOP Development and Implementation

- Several interviewees stated that the general public needs to be more involved in ocean planning. They emphasized that community members who fish need to have input to the plan, and to understand the regulations. One interviewee also noted that it can be difficult to get community members interested and engaged in a planning process such as the ASOP.
- Several respondents stated that the village leaders (including both pulenu'u and matai) need to be more involved "or nothing will really happen."
- Another interviewee echoed this sentiment, further suggesting that heads of households should be included.
- A couple of interviewees cautioned that while conferring with the pulenu'u is important, the average citizen cannot be accurately represented by the pulenu'u, and that there is value in reaching out to these individuals as well (through door-to-door surveys or other means of discussion, for example).
- Another interviewee suggested that the Fono (House and Senate) members need to be involved in the planning process.

Threats to Ocean Health

- **Littering:** Littering was (as in other interviews) universally stated as a significant concern, including trash thrown into streams, onto land or directly into the ocean. One interviewee also explained that the island's landfill is nearly full, causing a concern for cost-effective waste disposal options.
- **Coral bleaching:** Several respondents described coral bleaching as a concern due to human activity (see also Climate Change Impacts below). Some noted that coral bleaching events are episodic and not enough is known about the causes or resilience of the local coral reefs.
- **Overfishing and illegal fishing:** Interviewees stressed overfishing, illegal fishing, or fishing using unsustainable methods as threats to ocean health. One

interviewee said “People are increasingly taking smaller fish because that’s all that’s left.” However, interviewees also noted that regulations or market changes have also helped to prevent permanent loss of fish stocks. For example, one respondent stated that bottom fish stocks were nearly fished out several years ago when an export market to Hawaii opened up, but these have rebounded since that export market isn’t as strong anymore. Another noted that reef fisheries are improving since a ban on scuba fishing was implemented, and the shark population has grown since a moratorium was placed on shark fishing. A few stakeholders reported that the largest problem in terms of overfishing tends to come from immigrants rather than locals (primarily Tongans and Western Samoans).

- **Less commonly stated threats:** Other threats to ocean resources noted were: crown of thorns starfish (*Acanthaster planci*), runoff and leakage from septic tanks, boat fouling and oils leaking into streams or coastal waters, and nitrate runoff from piggeries (but the respondent stated that this problem has decreased due to the switch to dry piggeries).
- **None:** One stakeholder stated that community members are concerned about ocean health and “keeping the beaches and ocean clean”, so there are not many existing threats to ocean health. He noted that some fishermen previously used *Ava Niu Kini* (a natural fish poison) to kill fish, but that this is not a current practice since it is banned.

Climate Change Impacts

- **Coral reefs:** Several respondents emphasized coral bleaching, coral degradation, and loss of associated species as impacts to ocean health due to climate change. Two interviewees said that coral bleaching events are becoming more frequent due to increased ocean temperatures. Another stated that corals are showing a level of resilience to higher temperatures, implying that there may be greater resilience than previously thought. Bleaching events can lead to a cascade of impacts.
- **Ocean acidification** was mentioned as a potential future problem, but the interviewee noted that not much is known yet about impacts of acidification.
- **Warmer water temperatures:** One interviewee expressed concern that water temperatures impacting fish habitat/migration patterns could negatively impact the tuna fishery, the primary employer on the island.
- **Coastal erosion:** A couple of interviewees noted that coastal erosion has increased due to climate change. One interviewee explained that the perceived increase in erosion could in fact be due to an increase in sea walls, which increase wave reflection and velocity.
- **Warmer climate:** A couple interviewees noted that warmer temperatures can negatively impact tourism.
- **Sea level rise:** Two interviewees have noticed higher sea levels, one noting that higher water levels changes the way fishing boats dock. Another expressed concern about higher sea levels in the longer term, although it is not yet a problem for the island.

ASOP Topics Needing Community Input

- Inner harbor development: “We can’t depend on our canneries forever. The Territorial government needs to be more forward thinking about the economic future.”
- Improving the education level both among the broader public and in schools. Bringing back Polynesian traditions of protecting the reef.
- How human activities (trash, chemicals, debris, laundry detergent, fertilizers) affect marine resources and human health.
- Pollution of nearshore marine resources, dirty water and land-based pollution
- Wastewater disposal

Perceived Misconceptions in the Community About Ocean Resources

- **Human impacts to the marine environment:** Several interviewees emphasized that there is a widespread lack of understanding of how human activities impact ocean resources in the longer term. In general they felt that overfishing isn’t a critical or pressing issue, but the impacts of littering, runoff (nutrient loading, sewage, oil and chemicals, pesticide use) puts stress on the ecosystem that most community members aren’t aware of.
- “There’s a big knowledge gap when it comes to knowing how to keep your resource healthy.”
- Another interviewee also emphasized a general lack of understanding regarding the connections between human activity, coral reef and broader marine health, and the local economy.

Community Concerns for the Long-term Health and Quality of Ocean Resources

- We asked stakeholders what they thought the communities’ main concerns regarding the health and quality of ocean resources are. Respondents overwhelmingly stated that the communities’ main concerns revolve around the sustainability of commercial fishing as well as their own local fisheries. One explained that “the entire American Samoan economy revolves around fishing, as well as government.” Another stated that “the main concern of the community is making sure there are still fish to catch.”

Effectiveness of the American Samoan Marine Protected Area Program

- Most respondents were either not familiar with the Marine Protected Area (MPA) program, or somewhat aware but not clear how effective it is (either in terms of whether the regulations are in place, they are enforced, and if so whether these have led to improved marine ecosystems).
- A few interviewees who were familiar with the MPA program noted that the effectiveness of the program is mixed. One stated that the program is “as effective as the individual villages want it to be.” The respondent elaborated that enforcement is a challenge, especially considering that “most people in the village can’t swim” (so villagers are not able to enforce) and that the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) doesn’t work at night when a large degree of poaching occurs. A respondent from Alofau (an area protected by an MPA) stated that the program has not been effective due to lack of enforcement at night (he stated that he at times chases night poachers away from his village).

Another respondent stated that the program is most effective when DMWR staff come from/live in the MPA area.

- One person said that he has observed while diving in both MPA and non-MPA areas that the MPAs are relatively small areas, so he sees improvement in shellfish populations (clams, lobsters), but that there is little difference below 300 feet/in fish populations which have a larger range.

Modifications Needed to the Federal Agency Approach

- Some respondents expressed frustration about the approaches used by federal government agencies. Several interviewees complained that public hearings and meetings run by federal (and some territorial) agencies follow a “decide, announce, defend” model, rather than genuinely seeking stakeholder input. As one interviewee colorfully described the traditional mode of operation: “Most stakeholder engagement meetings are like ‘seagull meetings’: government officials come down, flap their wings a lot, then fly off and leave a pile of excrement. They don’t really listen, they just end up doing what they want to do.”
- Interviewees also felt that by and large, federal agencies need to do a better job of understanding and working with the local culture. As an interviewee noted: “Most federal agencies don’t have a clue how to deal with Samoans.” This respondent praised the National Park Service (NPS) approach as an exception, as this agency hires Samoans on staff and actively engages with the community. One interviewee noted that previous outreach efforts run by the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) (a territorial agency) were more effective in terms of incorporating public input into decision making.

Challenges to Planning and Implementation of the American Samoa Ocean Plan

- While most interviewees stated that they support the idea of an integrated ocean planning process, several emphasized that enforcement capability of existing or potential future regulation is lacking, and that this is a key barrier to seeing improvement in ocean health.
 - One interviewee explained that the enforcement issue in part stems from the fact that “everybody knows everybody” and enforcement agents are hesitant to enforce citations against friends and family. To remedy this problem, he suggested employing enforcement agents with an arms-length relationship with the regulated communities, such as off-islanders.
 - Another interviewee stated that pulenu’u and matai need to better understand the purpose and need for ocean regulations in order to make these a priority, and allow for internal enforcement.
- A couple of interviewees described interagency “turf wars” and pressure to meet grant requirements make for a political and cultural environment which make interagency collaboration (within the territory) difficult. Another stated that agencies need more continuity and experienced professionals.
- Another interviewee stated that island culture emphasis on consensus can forestall decision-making and implementation

6. Village Leader Interviews

One of the most important aspects of this Stakeholder Engagement Support Project was gathering input from American Samoa's village leaders. This was done primarily by group and individual discussions with pulenu'u during March and May, 2017. The Office of Samoan Affairs (OSA) played a key role in providing access for the Team to meet with a large group of pulenu'u during two of their semi-monthly meetings at the OSA. In addition, the Team worked through OSA to reach village leaders throughout Tutuila and Manu'a for individual, in-depth interviews. American Samoa Community College (ASCC) translators provided translation services and protocol advice for all the group meetings and interviews. The list of individual villages where we conducted interviews and the request letter sent to pulenu'u of those villages is included in *Appendix E. Request Letter to Pulenu'u*.

Findings from these interviews are summarized below separately for Tutuila and Manu'a villages, according to major topics.

A. Tutuila Village Leader Interviews

Stakeholder Engagement Format:

- The village leaders interviewed almost universally agreed that the following sequence of steps would work well to initiate and structure stakeholder engagement: (1) contact the Office of Samoan Affairs (OSA), (2) arrange for the OSA to contact pulenu'u, (3) arrange for pulenu'u to contact matai, then (4) matai and pulenu'u (perhaps with DMWR) contact village councils and village communities (organize sit down, face-to-face meetings).
- A handful of pulenu'u noted that working through schools presents important opportunities for both education and outreach.
- The pulenu'u of Pago Pago suggested that outreach be conducted by attending a *to'ona'i* (traditional Sunday feast) that brings together many local matai twice per month at Paramount Chief Mauga's guest house. He suggested that ocean planners use the *to'ona'i* as an opportunity to discuss ocean issues with the matai. The matai can then schedule a specific day with the whole village to share the issues.
- The Village Coalition program was also identified as a possible model for targeted stakeholder engagement. This program is administered by the DOC, which helps villages address the specific problems they face for social issues such as suicide and drug addiction. One suggested the coral reef monitoring program as a program that effectively included village perspectives.
- Churches represent another potential means for targeted stakeholder engagement in villages where one or more congregation(s) is (are) active in village improvement projects.
- Most interviewees noted that this current stakeholder engagement initiative was the first time they have been approached by anyone representing government for their views on ocean planning. They were also unaware of the ASOP process until the March 6 OSA meeting at which this Stakeholder Engagement Support Project was first described to them.

Agencies/Organizations to Lead Stakeholder Engagement

- Nearly every village leader we spoke with identified the DMWR as the key agency associated with ocean planning. The DMWR and its current Director, Henry Seseapasara received positive reviews.
- Other agencies commonly noted included: DOC, AS EPA, the Ports Administration, OSA and the Department of Public Health. Less frequently noted were: Public Works, The American Samoa Power Authority, the Shipyard Services Authority, Department of Parks, Department of Public Safety, and the Governor's Office. Some noted that interagency cooperation is important.
- When asked which organization ought to conduct stakeholder engagement, the most common responses heard were either OSA, the DMWR or a team effort between the two agencies.
- Some respondents expressed mistrust or misgivings about the work of the ASG or the federal government. One concern expressed was it appeared to be a typical "top down" approach used by federal agencies for announcing and defending proposed actions, and in which the only discussion is a fairly formulaic public hearing. Some interviewees expressed concern about the ASG regarding its use of grant funds to pay for agency automobiles and agency staff, as opposed to making more progress on the environment.

Threats to Ocean Health

- **Littering** was universally cited as a significant concern. This includes litter thrown into streams, onto land, or directly into the ocean and ending up in nearshore waters and coral reefs. Some respondents mentioned that littering has declined over the past few years, although it's still an issue. One described a Department Of Commerce (DOC) program that installed nets across streams to keep trash from flowing into the reef, and to effectively "trap" the litter, which also helps to identify the source of the litter. Several village leaders described local groups (composed primarily of youth church groups or *Aumaga* (men without matai titles)) that conduct regular litter clean ups (e.g. one Saturday per month). In one village, two church youth groups are reportedly paid for their work. A few village leaders specifically referenced the Keep American Samoa Beautiful (KASB) program administered by the AS EPA beginning in 2016. Pulenu'u (village mayors) who have taken a training course under this program are authorized to enforce territorial government anti-littering regulations.
- **Runoff from erosion into streams.** Most villages identified runoff and stream erosion as significant and persistent threats to their nearshore waters. This is primarily due to construction and over-clearing of vegetation near streams.
- **Destructive fishing methods:** Several village leaders described fishing methods using Clorox bleach, dynamite/cherry bombs, *Ava Niu Kini* (a natural fish poison) or mesh lay nets as being harmful to their nearshore waters. Many noted that these methods are now practiced only by poachers from outside the village. Some described sophisticated evasive methods used by poachers to avoid detection during nighttime fishing. In several cases, non-Samoan immigrants were described as the main violators.
- **Discharge of washing machine and septic system effluent:** Washing machine effluent often runs directly into streams and then into coastal waters, damaging

reefs. Some villages also have inadequate septic systems, although the AS EPA and ASPA have concentrated on this in recent years and reduced the pollution and public health threats from them.

- **Piggeries:** Historically, piggery effluent was often discharged directly into streams. Several pulenu'u/matai noted that these threats are not as serious than they used to be due to regulatory action by the AS EPA, which now requires septic systems and dry feed for the piggeries. There are also fewer piggeries than in the past.
- **Less commonly stated threats:** Other threats to ocean resources noted include ships leaking oil and flushing ballast tanks in the harbor (Pago Pago), cannery waste (Pago Pago and nearby villages outside the harbor), and oil leaking into streams from auto shops and other sources.

Importance and Use of Ocean Resources

- Nearly all Tutuila village leaders noted that local villagers fish, mostly with poles cast from shore or spear fishing. Several also mentioned reef gleaning for shellfish or other resources such as octopus, *limu* (edible seaweed), and *palolo* worms. While some described fishing as "very important" to the village, none noted that their villagers are primarily dependent on fishing for income or for subsistence. One noted that mainly older residents depend on fish for part of their diets. While we didn't ask all village leaders, when asked directly not a single leader referenced an alia boat member in their village.
- A few village leaders also noted the importance of accreted shoreline sand for coastal buffer or as a resource for village building construction.

Ocean Health/Quality of Fish Stocks

- Villager leaders largely stated that the fish stocks in their waters are abundant, and that the coral reef nearest their village is healthy. One stated that the tuna are getting bigger and the coral is coming back after the removal of crown of thorns starfish (*Acanthaster planci*).
- In Aua, the pulenu'u noted that there is now a greater abundance of fish, shellfish and coral, and he credited stronger enforcement of overfishing, less litter and less effluent from septic systems and washing machines. In Au'asi, the pulenu'u noted that fish stocks have generally improved in recent years.
- Several village leaders noted that the coral has returned or is healthier than before. The reason given was often a decline in fishing methods using bleach or dynamite, and less littering.
- While village leaders emphasized that their fish stocks are abundant, several also mentioned that a few fish species are no longer present. The pulenu'u of Pago Pago mentioned that several fishermen have witnessed that the size and diversity of fish in the harbor have declined. The pulenu'u of Leone and Masefau noted that *akule* (mullet) is no longer seen in waters off their villages, which they both believe is due to overfishing with the use of throw nets. The Leone pulenu'u also noted that a certain type of small crab used to be common in wetland areas, but can no longer be found. The Au'a pulenu'u noted that two species of fish can no longer be found in the waters around the village.

Changes to the Marine Environment

- Some village leaders noted changes to the marine environment over the past 5-10 years include: sea level rise/higher tides, changes in coral distribution, shifting sand, larger and more dangerous waves, more debris onshore. Some offered climate change as a cause.

Regulations

- Villagers referred to rules about restricting fishing or sand/rock removal from their beaches. Almost all village leaders explained that only residents can fish in local waters. In some cases non-residents may ask the pulenu'u or other matai for permission to fish and confirm that they are using appropriate techniques. None described size or catch limitations.
- Most villagers explained that any fishing or sand/rock removal regulations are enforced internally by pulenu'u themselves or by the *aumaga* of the village. One pulenu'u stated that "it's my job, but also the whole village's job, to make sure the village is safe from local pollution and from outsiders."
- The matai of Vatia described a 3-tiered enforcement method: (1) a warning, (2) punishment by the village, then (3) calling in the ASG.

Alia/Longline Fishing Conflict

- When asked, village leaders were generally not aware of ocean use conflicts between alia and longline vessels. Only three pulenu'u were aware of the LVPA ruling. One agreed with the 50-mile ruling and another thought it should be extended to 100 miles. The third had no opinion, but was aware of the regulation changes and some conflict.

B. Manu'a Village Leader Interviews

Team members traveled to Manu'a during May 9 – 11 to interview pulenu'u and other village leaders on islands of Ta'u, Ofu, and Olosega. Due to rough sea conditions that prevented a voyage from Ofu to Ta'u, the Team was limited to in-person interviews with leaders on Ofu and Olosega only. Leaders from Ta'u were later interviewed by phone from Tutuila, and one Ta'u leader living in Pago Pago was also interviewed. The Olosega findings include input from a group discussion with the congregation of the local London Missionary Society church.

Stakeholder Engagement Format

Recommendations include:

- Educational classes in villages on ocean planning topics
- Government agencies should approach villages together, rather than separately
- Seek input from village councils – it's the best way to build trust
- Government should come every 6 months and talk to entire villages via church congregations
- If the government consults with village councils and explains that policies and management rules are for the good of future generations, they will be accepted by the villages

Agencies/Organizations to Lead Stakeholder Engagement

- DMWR and OSA recommended by most respondents. AS EPA also mentioned by a few
- Other agencies include National Parks, OSA, EMS, DPS, Governor's office, Ports, Public Health
- None of the interviewees had ever been approached by government for their views on ocean and marine planning issues
- One leader from Ta'u noted that most ASG and federal government agencies tend to avoid travelling to Ta'u

Threats to Ocean Health

- Most commonly cited threats are stream erosion/runoff, trash in streams and on beaches, oil and other chemicals leaking into ground and flowing to ocean, or direct leaks from boats
- One person mentioned some fishermen leave old nets on coral reefs.
- One matai from Ta'u mentioned the threat of more people developing land at higher elevations in the village and causing more erosion and soil runoff.
- One person from Ofu noted that some septic tanks are undersized and/or substandard, leaking effluent into the ocean.

Importance and Use of Ocean Resources

- Traditionally the people of Manu'a relied only on family plantations and the ocean for food. Now the ocean is most important 'when groceries don't come from Tutuila'.
- People also rely on the ocean for bathing when fresh water supplies are low.

Ocean Health/Quality of Fish Stocks

- A few interviewees noted the decline in local fishing abundance. There are fewer reef fish, and they are smaller than in the past. Parrotfish have particularly declined. Pelagic and bottom fish stocks appear to be less impacted. One long time fisherman noted the need to use traditional fishing techniques using fish traps, rather than using large throw nets.

Changes to the Marine Environment

- The most commonly cited concern was the increasingly large waves that threaten coastal areas and have eroded beaches. Respondents explained that nearshore waters used to be safe for kids to bathe in, but now the rough surf poses dangers.
- People on Olosega remarked on the extent of beach loss over the past two decades. Ofu and Olosega communities are particularly vulnerable to inundation due to their diminishing beaches and coral reefs and their minimal area of level land further inland. Some noted that the tsunami and strong cyclones have covered nearby reefs with sand.
- Some respondents also noted coral bleaching, warmer temperatures and rising sea levels, and increasingly erratic weather patterns. One long-term alia boat captain noted a significant change in the currents between Tutuila and Manu'a. One woman in Olosega noted an increase in limu on the reef. One elder from Ofu

noticed fewer streams leading from mountain to ocean, but those that remain are carrying more runoff onto coral reefs.

Regulations

- The concept of over-fishing is not well understood. One participant claimed that God created the fish for man's consumption, so there should not be any limits on sizes or catch totals.
- People also fish at night, which is bad for preserving fish stocks.
- The government should concentrate on controlling pollution by certifying septic tanks and doing a better job of enforcing pollution rules.

Other

- Many people on Ofu and Olosega would like the government to construct a seawall to protect them from large wave damage and tidal inundation.
- There are complaints that many pulenu'u from Manu'a don't live fulltime in Manu'a, so they don't see the real problems.

7. Analysis of Selected Findings

A. Relative Status of Significant Ocean Resources

We asked American Samoa Ocean Planning Team (ASOPT) members and broader stakeholder community members to rate the relative improvement or decline of several significant ocean resources in American Samoa over the past five to ten years. Using a simple Likert-type scale of one-to-five, we asked interviewees if the quality of specific resources was getting much worse (1), somewhat worse (2), holding steady (3), getting somewhat better (4), or getting much better (5) (for a full text of the questions asked, see *Appendix C. Interview Instruments*). The intent was to get a better sense of the perceived state of these different ocean resources within and between different types of stakeholder groups. (Note that we did not ask these same ranking questions to the village pulenu'u and matai we interviewed since we were more interested in getting open-ended responses about their individual village practices, issues, and concerns).

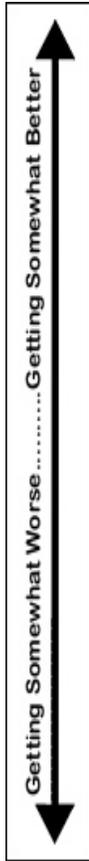
It is important to note that this exercise is not intended as a statistically significant analysis, but rather a way to suggest which issues are perceived to be the greatest problems. This information can provide ideas for subject-area emphasis during future stakeholder engagement and indicate potential focus areas for the ASOP.

Averaged scale rankings for all interviewees are shown in Table 1 below. The averaged rankings for different resources all fell between the values 2.0 (getting somewhat worse) and 4.0 (getting somewhat better). Although there were occasional outliers, there was a large amount of agreement across all stakeholder responses. Average responses indicate that the perception that, as a whole many ocean resources are remaining steady (they are not getting better, but they are also not getting worse). There was a clear sense, however, that coastal shoreline erosion is getting worse. Indeed, this concern was reflected in our interviews, as ASOPT and other stakeholder interviewees described an increase in coastal erosion due to climate change (although

one noted that an increase in sea walls also increases wave velocity and may also contribute to coastal erosion). Although we did not collect quantitative responses from them, several village leaders also described an increase in rates of prevalence of coastal erosion and loss of beachfront. One specifically identified the need for a sea wall to be built to protect his community.

Table 1: Perceived Trends for Different Ocean Resources

Ocean Resource	Ave Score*
	4.0
	3.9
	3.8
	3.7
	3.6
	3.5
Deeper Ocean Water Quality	3.4
	3.3
	3.2
<u>Bottomfish Fisheries</u>	3.1
Nearshore Water Quality, Nearshore and Management of Runoff, Pago Pago Harbor Water Quality, Pelagic Fisheries, Coral Reefs	3.0
	2.9
	2.8
	2.7
Quality and Health of Wetlands	2.6
	2.5
	2.4
Coastal Shoreline Erosion	2.3



*Average across all ASOPT and Other Stakeholder responses

Rankings for these same issues were also averaged separately for ASOPT Members and the broader stakeholder community to identify any significant differences of opinion between the two groups of interviewees. Intra-group average rankings are shown in Figure 2.

Table 2: Perceived Trends for Different Ocean Resources: Comparing Views of American Samoa Ocean Planning Team (ASOPT) Members and Broader Stakeholder Community

ASOPT Members		Broader Stakeholder Community
		Management of Sewage Effluent
Deeper Ocean Water Quality		
		Pago Pago Harbor Water Quality
Bottomfish Fisheries		Deeper Ocean Water Quality
		Nearshore Water Quality, Pelagic Fisheries Management of Runoff
Nearshore and Reef Fisheries		Nearshore and Reef Fisheries
Coral Reefs, Management of Sewage Effluent, Nearshore Water Quality		Coral Reefs; Bottomfish Fisheries
Management of Runoff, Pelagic Fisheries		
Quality and Health of Wetlands		Quality and Health of Wetlands
Pago Pago Harbor Water Quality	Coastal Shoreline Erosion	
Coastal Shoreline Erosion		

These trends were perceived by individuals not necessarily using the same background data or information. However, they are illustrative of basic perceptions among different stakeholders, and suggest possible topics or issues to address in stakeholder outreach. Both groups rated coastal shoreline erosion and the quality and health of wetlands at the lower end of the scale, suggesting these are areas of concern that stakeholders would like to see addressed. The greatest divergences between the two groups were their assessments of Pago Pago Harbor water quality (ASOPT members see this is getting somewhat worse, while broader stakeholder community members think its getting somewhat better), and the management of sewage effluent (ASOPT members think this is holding steady while broader stakeholder community members think this is getting much better). These relatively larger differences suggest that harbor water quality and effluent management may be particularly important topics to address during outreach and stakeholder engagement. Somewhat smaller divergences were found for assessments of deeper ocean water quality and bottomfish fisheries. Assessments of nearshore water quality, nearshore and reef fisheries, and coral reefs were very similar between the two groups. The relatively large degree of convergence suggests a fairly-unified sense of the state of the quality of the marine environment.

B. Economic Importance of Different Marine Sectors

ASOPT members and broader stakeholder community members were asked to rank the relative importance of six different marine industry sectors according to their importance to the overall American Samoa economy. Again, using a simple Likert-type scale of one-to-five, we asked interviewees if the specific resource was Very important (5), Somewhat important (4), Unsure/no opinion (3) Somewhat unimportant (2), or Not very important (1). The scores were averaged in Figure 3 below. Assessments did not vary significantly at all between the ASOPT members and other stakeholders, so all respondents are shown in Table 3. All the sectors were ranked above the ‘neutral score’ of 3.0. Commercial fishing and Port operations rank highest in terms of perceived importance, and alia boat fishing is also considered somewhat important. The economic importance of cruise ship operations and beachfront hotels and resorts is considered less important to American Samoa’s economy, but still more than just a ‘neutral score’.

Table 3: Relative Importance of Significant Marine Sectors for American Samoa’s Economy

Industry Sector	Avg. Score	
	5.0	
	4.9	
	4.8	
Purse Seine Fishing	4.7	
Port of Pago Pago Cargo Operations	4.6	
	4.5	
	4.4	
Commercial Longline Fishing	4.3	
	4.2	
	4.1	
	4.0	
Alia Boat Fishing	3.9	
	3.8	
	3.7	
Cruise Ship Operations	3.6	
	3.5	
Beachfront Hotels and Resorts	3.4	
	3.3	
	3.2	
	3.1	
	3.0	

C. Comparison of American Samoa Ocean Planning Team Member, Village Leader and Broader Stakeholder Community Responses to Specific Questions and Issues

Table 6.1 presents a side-by-side comparison of insights by the ASOPT members and the combined responses given by village leaders and the broader stakeholder community members (representatives of specific sectors or interest groups) on several ocean planning issues. Generally, there was strong agreement between the ASOPT members and village leaders/broader stakeholder community members regarding threats to ocean health and observed climate change impacts. There are some exceptions however. For example, village leaders/broader stakeholder community members (particularly village leaders) did not cite commercial overfishing as a significant threat to ocean health, but were more concerned with illegal fishing activity by poachers. Village leaders/broader stakeholder community members were also more concerned about oil and fuel leaking into coastal waters. Village leaders/broader stakeholder community members also did not express significant concerns about the longline fishing activities (although a few did remark they supported restoring the Longline Vessel Protected Area to 50 miles). When asked which ASOP topics need community input, ASOPT members primarily expressed the need to address sustainability of fisheries, the impact of fisheries (tuna and small-scale) on livelihoods and how communities view their own impacts on nearshore resources. The broader stakeholder community however primarily expressed the need to address the impacts of littering and wastewater disposal.

There was also strong concurrence between the ASOPT members and village leaders/broader stakeholder community members on effective stakeholder engagement approaches and formats. This bodes well for designing and executing an American Samoa Ocean Plan Stakeholder Engagement Process that will likely be well-received by the community if effectively implemented. Likewise, there appears to be broad agreement that the key agencies for Ocean Plan outreach should be the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, the Office of Samoan Affairs, and the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency.

Our Team also asked ASOPT members and the broader stakeholder community about (1) what misconceptions community members might have about ocean resources and (2) what the community's main concerns are regarding ocean resources. Several ASOPT members expressed concern that many community members are not aware that ocean resources are finite (and overfishing therefore needs to be regulated). When asked about threats to ocean resources and long-term health of ocean resources, village leaders indeed did not bring up overfishing, and in fact many indicated that local fish stocks are doing well. This does not mean that village leaders are unaware of the possibility, but our results indicate that overfishing is not a priority concern. This divergence was also detected when broader community members and villagers were asked what ASOP topics need community input. This is a potential area of disagreement or misunderstanding, which may merit further investigation to clarify areas of agreement and disagreement, areas of scientific certainty, and areas in need of greater research (i.e., pursuing a joint fact-finding approach – see Recommendation 7).

ASOPT members also expressed frustration at the broader communities’ mistrust of the federal government, and in our interviews village leaders did express some concern about a “top-down” regulatory approach, a greater trust of American Samoa agencies and desire for outreach to take the form of meetings in villages (rather than regional, town hall style meetings). However, we did not detect significant levels of mistrust or anger towards federal agencies in our village leader interviews. Village leaders also did not display significant concerns about the longline fishing activities (although a few did remark they supported restoring the LPVA to 50 miles).

In describing the broader communities’ concerns, ASOPT members cited jobs (tuna industry), access to ocean resources/ability to fish in protected areas, litter, sea level rise, and ocean reefs continuing to provide subsistence food. While litter was overwhelming discussed by village leaders, the other issues were not mentioned or only obliquely referred to. This does not of course mean that these issues are not of concern to villagers (and in fact they may be of greater concern to villagers than they are to village leaders). However, they were not emphasized in our interviews.

When we asked broader stakeholder community members about misconceptions in the greater community, several noted a lack of understanding of human impacts on the environment (for example: litter, runoff, etc harming the coral reef). In our interviews, village leaders clearly stated that litter, runoff from erosion, washing machines, septic systems and piggeries cause harm to their local reef and ecosystem. However, village leaders may have a higher level of awareness about these issues than do other community members. In general, village leaders focused their comments very narrowly on their own local reef and fishery, as opposed to the impacts on the broader island or ocean.

Table 4: Summary Comparison of ASOPT Member and Village Leaders/Broader Stakeholder Community Responses to Specific Issues

Issue	American Samoa Ocean Planning Team	Village Leaders and Broader Stakeholder Community
Greatest Threats to Ocean Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runoff from septic systems and piggeries • Littering (especially into streams) • Overfishing by commercial fleets • Construction related erosion due to improper permitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runoff from washing machines, septic systems, piggeries, and soil erosion • Littering (especially into streams) • Destructive and illegal fishing methods • Leaking oil & fuel (ships & other sources) • Coral bleaching • Crown of thorns starfish (<i>Acanthaster planci</i>)

Issue	American Samoa Ocean Planning Team	Village Leaders and Broader Stakeholder Community
Observed Climate Change Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coral bleaching • Coastal erosion • Storm surges • Sea level rise • Rising water temperatures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coral bleaching • Coastal erosion • Storm surges, more erratic weather, larger waves • Higher tides • Sand covering coral (Manu'a) • Loss of certain species
ASOP Topics Needing Community Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbor development • How communities view their own impacts on nearshore resources • Sustainable fisheries • How regulations on fisheries impact village livelihoods • Mapping of ocean uses by type of activity • How communities view their own impacts on nearshore resources • How regulations on fisheries impact village livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbor development • Littering impacts • Wastewater disposal • Littering impacts • Traditional Polynesian methods for resource conservation • Inner harbor development
Stakeholder Engagement Approaches and Formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work through OSA to engage pulenu'u and matai • Work with village councils • Work with village church groups • Avoid large public meetings • Conduct early outreach to give sense of ownership • Multiple forums • Engage key leaders & local champions • Include hands-on education and field trips • Reflect feedback in Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work through OSA to engage pulenu'u and matai • Work with village councils • Work with village church groups • Provide ocean planning workshops in villages • Government agencies should approach villages together, rather than separately <p>Include education as to why rules and regulations are needed to protect future generations</p>
Agencies best suited to lead ASOP Stakeholder Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DMWR • OSA • AS EPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DMWR • OSA • AS EPA • Governor's Office

8. Recommendations

We derived our recommendations below from our in-depth interviews, engagement with the American Samoa Ocean Planning Team (ASOPT), and discussions with key government officials in American Samoa. Our Team employed multiple methods of stakeholder engagement to address different understandings about and experience with ocean resources, problems, and planning.

We believe these core recommendations are essential to helping the ASOPT more effectively engage American Samoan government agencies and key community leaders, and the ASOPT is strongly encouraged to consider them in their entirety. It is critical that recommendations 1 and 2 be addressed before moving on to the remaining recommendations. The remaining recommendations should be viewed as an integrated set of approaches. We believe these recommendations will help the ASOPT better develop a comprehensive, integrated and stakeholder-driven American Samoa Ocean Plan.

These recommendations may be viewed as daunting in their scope and the personnel, resources, and time needed to conduct them. Our recommendations are also based on our professional experience that many plans succeed or fail largely based on the receptivity of key stakeholders most influential and important to the issues addressed by the plan. We consider development of the ASOP to be a broad-based and comprehensive effort that cannot succeed if it is not embraced and accepted by the wide range of stakeholders essential to identifying various coastal and ocean uses, issues impacting those uses and the environment, and determining ways to promote complementary uses, mitigate conflicts, and improve the environment.

Collectively, these recommendations are intended to:

- Put forth methods of stakeholder engagement that are likely to be successful
- Provide strategic planning support based on our independent review of ASOP efforts thus far
- Provide an independent and objective review of the potential obstacles to developing an effective, stakeholder-driven ocean planning process in American Samoa and suggestions for anticipating and addressing those obstacles
- Get ASOP leaders on the same page and develop a cohesive strategy for the full range of agencies and other stakeholders that need to be involved
- Recognize and incorporate the importance of the *fa'a Samoa* in outreach efforts, particularly in the more remote villages

Recommendation, Rationale, Actions

Recommendation #1: Further develop and articulate clear leadership to deepen the credibility of the Ocean Planning process.

Rationale: Stakeholders participating in any planning process understandably want to know who is behind the planning effort, and whether there is the capacity to implement

the plan once it's adopted. This is typically dependent upon active and visible involvement of one or more key government agencies, and endorsement by the highest possible local government leaders. These steps should be considered essential prerequisites to establish the type of trust and credibility to seek stakeholder input and involvement in the ASOP.

Recommended Actions:

- A. Establish clear ASG leadership within the ASOPT so it is readily-apparent to all stakeholders that there is strong local commitment to the planning process, and the willingness and capacity to implement the ASOP when completed. (Spring 2017 action that occurred incidental to development of this report: Governor Moliga tasked DMWR as lead agency on behalf of the ASG, and other ASG agencies are to participate by dedicating appropriate staff to the effort)
- B. Clarify the roles of federal agencies and regional partners in the ASOPT as supporting and contributing members to a locally-driven planning process. This is not to minimize any partner's role, but rather to dispel any notions that this is a 'top-down' process being directed and driven by external (non-Samoan) interests. Clarify funding sources and any federal guidelines that might shape Plan components and long-term regulatory requirements.
- C. Clarify any federal and local guidelines that might shape Plan components, funding sources and long-term regulatory requirements.

Recommendation #2: Further refine and communicate a clear and compelling purpose for the American Samoa Ocean Plan.

Rationale: Every planning process should identify and define the fundamental purpose(s) it is designed to serve in the context of overall planning needs. For example, some plans prioritize investments, others guide and justify decisions, others create the basis for rules and regulations, and still others coordinate and harmonize the actions of different agencies. The fundamental purpose of a plan should stem from a collective recognition that some desired activity or outcome is not possible with the existing situation, or that these activities or outcomes could be done more effectively. The 2003 American Samoa Ocean Resource Management Plan (ORMP) accomplished this by recognizing that there was already a comprehensive set of plans that directly and indirectly protect the marine environment, but that the weak links between the regulations and improved ocean health were implementation and enforcement. The ORMP's fundamental purpose was to strengthen interagency cooperation and coordination so that existing plans and programs could be more effective.

While considerable work has already been done to shape the ASOP vision, goals and objectives, both the need for the plan and its fundamental purpose should be clarified and confirmed by the ASOPT. This work should be done before more in-depth stakeholder engagement is pursued. The ASOP's purpose should stem from a collective recognition of what aspects of ocean planning in American Samoa are currently not done effectively, or not done at all. It is important to note that while the ASOP vision statement, goals, and objectives are essential components of the plan, the fundamental

purpose of the ASOP should be a statement about its unique role within the sphere of existing ASG and federal plans, programs, and policies that will ultimately benefit the ocean environment.

Recommended Actions:

- A. The ASOPT should conduct or update a thorough examination of existing ASG and federal agencies roles and responsibilities relative to ocean planning and marine resource management, including land-based activities that impact the ocean. Such an examination might be summarized as a matrix showing specific factors that impact oceans (e.g., reef fishing, trash disposal, grey-water effluent, etc) and the specific agencies, plans, or programs that address these by type of geography (e.g. village-based vs. territorial, terrestrial vs. coastal vs. deep water) and/or functional role (e.g. education and prevention, policy, rule-making and permitting, response and enforcement, etc.). This exercise could support a 'gap analysis' to identify issues and activities that impact the ocean environment that are not sufficiently addressed.³
- B. Draft a clear and succinct Statement of Purpose for the ASOP that defines what it is intended to accomplish and how it relates to existing ASG and federal plans and programs. Ideally, this statement should support and advance the priorities and responsibilities of each involved agency.
- C. Communicate the ASOP purpose to stakeholders so that there is clear understanding of the Plan's intent.

Recommendation #3: Develop and use a range of engagement formats and tools for outreach.

Rationale: Effective outreach and engagement is dependent upon the experience and expectations of those being engaged. The best way to communicate content and seek input is to make the outreach process and setting as comfortable and familiar as possible to the audience, so they are better able to concentrate on what's being conveyed. This often requires different outreach and engagement formats and approaches for various types of audiences. It is also vitally important to respect and adhere to the cultural norms and protocols of the audience for the specific type of outreach and engagement desired. Again, this may call for different formats and approaches for different sub-regions (e.g. urban Tutuila vs. outer area villages, or Tutuila vs. Manu'a) or subcultures (e.g. matai vs women's groups [*aumaga*] or youth groups). Determination of the appropriate format and approach might best be done by trusted and knowledgeable local cultural experts familiar with the types of outreach and engagement desired.

We devised and used four different formats in pursuing communication and information gathering for this Stakeholder Engagement Support Project. We found that

³ Other 'gap analyses' could be done via an exercise wherein a particular action is proposed (e.g., a new telecommunications cable from New Zealand or a new offshore aquaculture endeavor), and then followed by an activity to determine what steps a proposer would take to successfully permit then install the item. This exercise would help identify key gaps in permitting and stakeholder engagement.

using this mix of formats created a sense of comfort with those interviewed while enabling the team to obtain the most relevant types of information from each source.

Recommended Actions:

- A. The ASOPT should determine the most important points during the planning process for engaging different stakeholders. Ideally these should be at stages when there is sufficient important content or issues to react to, and there is still latitude within the planning process to adjust according to input received.
- B. The ASOPT should appoint a subcommittee of its members who have extensive experience conducting outreach in different communities and with a variety of stakeholders in American Samoa. This subcommittee should recommend the timing, format, and other important details of the ASOP stakeholder engagement effort.
- C. The ASOPT should consider identifying one or two representatives from each major stakeholder group to help determine the best time and approach to use when engaging the stakeholders they represent.
- D. The ASOPT should consider engaging Samoan language and cultural experts, as appropriate, for specific needs to plan and conduct stakeholder engagement. Consider augmenting existing expertise with staff at the Office of Samoan Affairs, the Institute of Samoan Studies at the ASCC, and members of Le Tausagi.
- E. The ASOPT should emphasize formats likely to be effective and conversely avoid or limit the use of engagement and outreach formats that would be least effective. Formats likely to be less effective are large ‘public meetings’, and emailed or online surveys. While these formats are expedient and minimize the personnel and resources needed to conduct them, they will almost certainly limit the range of people engaged and the quality of their input. Furthermore, the ASOP may still be able to distinguish itself from other planning exercises that included minimal outreach and engagement, and thus achieve a level of appreciation and goodwill simply through the effort to conduct more thorough, broad-based, and culturally appropriate outreach.

Recommendation #4: Work with both the Office of Samoan Affairs and key resource agencies to engage villages.

Rationale: The Office of Samoan Affairs (OSA) is the branch of the American Samoan government that deals with cultural issues and traditional village governance. They coordinate American Samoa’s pulenu’u, or ‘village mayors,’ who are responsible for monitoring the territory’s villages and enforcing local rules. American Samoa’s villages are the foundational building blocks for the development of an effective ASOP. Given development and settlement patterns on American Samoa, villages are simultaneously the primary source of human activities that threaten the ocean environment, and also the best focus for mitigating harmful activities. The villages also best understand the uses of the coastal and ocean areas adjacent to their village and can provide input on acceptable uses of their areas. The OSA convenes bi-weekly meetings of all pulenu’u that offer effective opportunities to reach this important constituency as a group.

Several key resource agencies in the ASG also have experience and capacity for conducting village-based outreach for specific programs and activities. In some cases, personnel from these agencies have developed good working relationships with pulenu'u and others in different villages that might be brought to bear for conducting ASOP outreach and stakeholder engagement. The stakeholders we interviewed identified DMWR and AS EPA as the two most commonly associated with outreach on ocean planning issues. However other agencies were also associated with outreach, including the Departments of Commerce, Public Safety, and Public Health, and the American Samoa Power Authority. This was most likely due to the unique situations and history within individual villages relative to these agencies.

Recommended Actions:

- A. OSA already has representation on the ASOPT. The ASOPT should strengthen its relationship with OSA leadership and work together to provide regular updates to the pulenu'u meetings about the ASOP planning process as it unfolds.
- B. The ASOPT should convene a special workshop, or series of workshops, for pulenu'u on the key issues to be addressed in the ASOP. The workshop(s) could focus on the identified territory-wide resource issues that arose through our stakeholder interviews, and solicit pulenu'u input on best ways to address these problems at the village level. Workshops can and should include both educational elements (e.g. an explanation of the impacts of nitrate runoff from piggeries on local coral reefs, which then affect where people might choose to snorkel, dive, or paddle) and a clear incentive for involvement (see below).
- C. The ASOPT should structure outreach to pulenu'u geographically by convening subcommittees of pulenu'u from adjoining villages that share a reef or other ocean resources to focus on more specific spatial problems and solutions. As a further step, these sub-regions could then choose one pulenu'u representative to serve as a liaison to the ASOPT.
- D. In response to requests from village leaders to receive more education on ocean issues, the ASOPT should plan and convene a series of workshops throughout the territory to present the latest information on critical ocean issues (e.g. coral bleaching, sustainability of current fishing practices, coastal shoreline erosion, bio-fouling) in a concise form. Ideally, two or more agencies should co-sponsor each workshop to demonstrate joint commitment on the part of multiple agencies and the importance of an integrated government approach to the issues.

Recommendation #5: Frame compelling incentives to all stakeholders to fully engage in the Ocean Planning process.

Rationale: While the term 'ocean plan' is familiar to some resource managers, it is not necessarily in wide usage and may understandably be a vague concept to many people. The ASOP is intended to be comprehensive, from 'ridgetop to reef and beyond' - covering the coastal areas, nearshore and ocean waters, and also include impacts of

inland watershed activities on the coast and ocean. This comprehensive plan scope needs to be clearly articulated in ways that resonate with different agencies and interest groups. Ideally, every agency and interest group (including territorial and federal government agencies, villages, commercial interests, educators, scientists, and recreationalists) will 'see themselves in the ocean plan.' This means the Ocean Plan should be relevant to each constituency's areas of concerns and responsibilities. This relevancy should be clearly defined and articulated at the beginning so that each group sees its own role(s), and the benefits that will flow from the plan.

Recommended Actions:

- A. Combine outreach efforts with substantive framing of ocean issues and relevant current and proposed uses to link stakeholder engagement to widely recognized tangible problems and potential solutions. Our interviews made clear that issues of broad-based concern and importance to all stakeholders include: litter, coastal shoreline erosion, sustainability of (local and deepwater) fisheries, Pago Pago harbor water quality and health of local coral reefs.
- B. Use the Findings from this Stakeholder Engagement Support Project to identify and focus on the specific major concerns of each type of stakeholder, and build upon these in plan development and future outreach.
- C. Ensure that successive outreach efforts build upon previous engagement with the same stakeholder groups. Identify what the ASOPT learned from this Stakeholder Engagement Support Project and previous outreach from other planning efforts. Strive to meaningfully address major concerns by deepening the ASOPT's knowledge or awareness of them, and/or discussing with stakeholders potential ways for government and the community to resolve issues.
- D. Identify and reconfirm specific priorities and responsibilities of individual ASOPT member agencies as they relate to the implementation of the Ocean Plan. Identify opportunities to leverage and build upon existing efforts by individual agencies through new inter-agency partnerships.
- E. Identify ways in which the Ocean Plan can be developed to help local agencies become more competitive for grant proposals. Communicate these advantages to local agencies and other stakeholders. Develop the Ocean Plan such that it positions local agencies well to compete for funding opportunities.

Recommendation #6: Devise strategies to anticipate and overcome obstacles the Stakeholder Engagement team faced.

Rationale: Our Stakeholder Engagement Support Team found it difficult in some instances to contact certain individuals we wanted to interview. In most cases the Team contacted individuals several weeks before our second visit to American Samoa and were still unable to reach some of them. Some individuals were away on travel, but others simply did not respond. In addition, the Team found it challenging to conduct interviews with individuals in Manu'a due to travel logistics and the vagaries of weather conditions that stymied interisland travel.

Recommended Actions:

- A. For key stakeholders who are challenging to reach, consider identifying trusted and familiar intermediaries who may be able to reach out to them for their participation.
- B. Build in sufficient time to conduct stakeholder engagement in Manu'a to account for delays and travel changes that may occur.
- C. Consider combining ASOP stakeholder engagement with other scheduled agency visits to Manu'a.

Recommendation #7: Consider the use of a Joint Fact Finding (JFF) process to address any areas of significant technical disagreement and uncertainty.

Rationale: Joint Fact Finding (JFF) is methodology that brings diverse participants to the table in a neutral forum for sharing information and conducting evidence-based deliberations. JFF is a mediated process. Once assembled, participants formulate common questions and then seek to gather and interpret pertinent facts. JFF does this in a sustained manner rather than a one-off public meeting and through courteous, evidence-based debate. The discussions occur over an extended period of time and through a disciplined study structure that fosters collaborative discussions on science-intensive, politically sensitive matters. JFF is most appropriate when there are genuine disagreements over the technical and scientific impacts of actions. JFF processes are NOT appropriate when there are disagreements over personal, cultural, religious, or political beliefs underpinning actions.

JFF might be used as a part of the American Samoa Ocean Planning process to develop a common and scientifically robust understanding of various ocean planning issues. For example, our Team identified disagreement, misunderstanding or lack of information around a handful of issues, including:

- the status of various fish stocks
- the status of coral reefs and impacts of climate change
- need for and impacts of sea walls
- the perceived conflicts between alia boats, longline vessels and purse seine vessels

As an illustrative example, should members of the ASOP choose to convene a JFF process to address longline, purse seine and alia fishing conflicts, we recommend the following approach:

Recommended Actions:

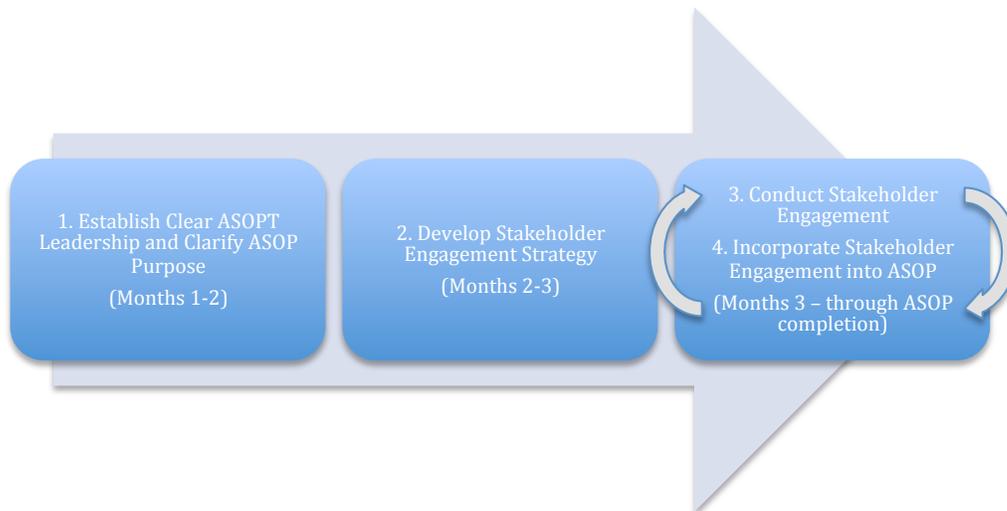
- A. Seek strong participation to a Joint Fact Finding Panel that includes representatives of all key fishing sectors, including alia boat fishing association, the commercial longline and purse seine fishing industry, subsistence fishers, and sport fishers.
- B. Panel members should outline their areas of factual agreement and disagreement. Areas of agreement serve as a foundation for mutual

understanding a future cooperation. Areas of disagreement serve as the basis for further scientific research or study.

- C. Independent technical or scientific advisors should be recruited to provide neutral and balanced input to contribute to a deeper understanding among all participants of the technical issues being considered.
- D. The Joint Fact Finding panel should consider drafting a single text document that characterizes the areas of agreement or disagreement.

9. American Samoa Ocean Planning Team Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan

The broad sequential stages of the recommended Action Plan are illustrated in the diagram below. Steps 1 and 2 must occur before Steps 3 and 4 can begin. Steps 3 and 4 should be considered iterative, with stakeholder input feeding into ASOP development on an ongoing basis.



Step One: Establish Clear American Samoa Ocean Planning Team Leadership and Clarify American Samoa Ocean Plan Purpose (Recommendations 1 & 2) (Months 1-2)

- Establish clear local leadership for the ASOP process
- Clarify local, federal, and regional roles in the ASOP process
- Define clear purpose(s) for the ASOP process vis à vis existing plans and programs

Step Two: Develop Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (Recommendations #3, 4 & 5) (Months 2-3)

- Appoint a subcommittee of ASOPT members with significant stakeholder engagement experience to plan the stakeholder engagement process, including:
 - Identify key milestones in the ASOP process where stakeholder input will be sought.

- Frame major ocean planning issues defining key subject areas and requiring stakeholder input.
- Identify effective format(s) for outreach to specific stakeholder groups.
- Identify stakeholder representatives from each stakeholder group who can function as liaisons.
- Frame ASOP talking points for each specific stakeholder interests, including: clear explanation of the ASOP process and compelling incentive to each interest group to fully engage (See Recommendation #5). Emphasize the ASOP as an opportunity for locally-guided and coordinated ocean management.
- Work as needed with translators and cultural experts.
- Ensure stakeholder engagement strategy is aligned with Office of Samoan Affairs leadership and process.
- Work with the Office of Samoan Affairs to determine logical regional village groups and potential key leaders and process champions.

Step Three: Conduct ASOP Stakeholder Engagement (Recommendations #3 & 4) (Months 3 – through ASOP Completion)

- Conduct stakeholder engagement effort according to format, foci, framing, and subject areas determined by ASOPT stakeholder engagement subcommittee.
- We recommend that outreach include (but not be limited to) development of Territory-wide subcommittees composed of pulenu’u representing contiguous coastal areas. These efforts should include:
 - Conduct outreach to pulenu’u to identify sub-regional group leaders who can represent specific geographies in Territory-wide committee
 - Convene Territory-wide workshop including sub-regional village representatives and stakeholders from other interest groups.
- Represent all workshops as an ASOPT effort (not individual agency effort), and have at least two or more ASOPT agencies represented at each workshop.
- Maintain a continuous log of stakeholder input and reiterate what previous stakeholder input has said.
- Conduct JFF processes among key stakeholders to resolve issues of scientific or technical uncertainty or disagreement (Recommendation #7)

Step Four: Incorporate Stakeholder Engagement into Ocean Plan (beginning with initial stakeholder engagement and continuing through ASOP Completion)

- Based on stakeholder engagement effort, work to address key stakeholder issues and themes in the Ocean Plan
- Fully explore each major issue in terms of data, findings, options, and recommendations
- Convene stakeholder focus group to vet draft American Samoa Ocean Plan findings and recommendations
- Incorporate feedback on an ongoing basis into American Samoa Ocean Plan as it’s developed. Iteratively report back to stakeholder groups on how stakeholder input has been incorporated into the Ocean Planning Process.

10. List of Appendices

See companion document, *Appendices to the Stakeholder Engagement Support Project and Recommended Action Plan for the American Samoa Ocean Planning Process*, for the following appendices:

- A. Schedule of Interviews
- B. Schedule of Meetings
- C. Interview Instruments
- D. Agendas for Selected ASOPT Meetings
- E. Request Letter to Pulenu'u
- F. Bibliography