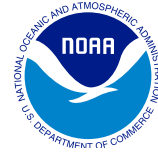
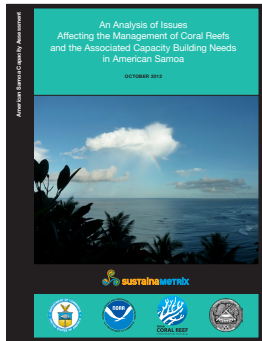


American Samoa



N O A A C O R A L R E E F C O N S E R V A T I O N P R O G R A M

Coral Reef Management Capacity Challenges and Recommendations



The U.S. territory of American Samoa consists of five volcanic islands and two atolls, all of which are surrounded by fringing coral reefs. Coral reefs in the territory exhibit high biodiversity, with more than 2,700 species identified. However, continued threats from development, pollution, climate change, and overfishing

challenge the future state of these resources.

American Samoa coordinates its territorial coral reef conservation activities via the Governor's Coral Reef Advisory Group, in which both territorial and federal agencies participate.

A team of experts supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program conducted a coral reef management assessment for this territory. The resulting report, *An Analysis of Issues Affecting the Management of Coral Reefs and the Associated Capacity Building Needs in American Samoa*, is available on the coral program's website at www.coralreef.noaa.gov. Some of the findings are summarized below.

NATIONAL SUMMARY

As part of a capacity-assessment process, a team of specialists identified challenges common to all seven U.S. coral reef jurisdictions and provided recommendations to overcome them. These findings are summarized below.

CHALLENGES

- A lack of political will and formal commitment for increased coral reef management
- A lack of long-term and sustainable financing
- A lack of supportive and informed constituencies
- A need to move from planning to implementation
- A need for improved enforcement and compliance
- A need for increased support for the effective function and structure of management agencies

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support for a collaborative approach for the reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000
- The expansion and institutionalization of staff capacity-building programs in the jurisdictions
- Establishment of a working group of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force focused on improving the enforcement of laws that safeguard coral reefs
- Strategic engagement of governors to champion coral reef conservation and management
- Facilitation of peer-to-peer learning exchanges among the jurisdictions

Read the full report, *A Synthesis of Issues Affecting the Management of Coral Reefs and Recommendations for Long-term Capacity Building in U.S. Jurisdictions*, at www.coralreef.noaa.gov.

American Samoa

CHALLENGES

Building informed and supportive constituencies:

It is broadly accepted within the coral reef management system that building broad-based support is critical for natural resource conservation among a wide range of constituencies.

Building capacity within the current Coral Reef Advisory Group governance structure: Addressing capacity challenges and improving function within the structure of this organization would pay dividends across American Samoa's coral reef management infrastructure.

Working within cultural protocols using Western government approaches: As an incorporated U.S. territory with a history, culture, and language independent from the U.S., American Samoa faces challenges in marrying federal initiatives to the cultural context of Samoa.

Developing a library of training programs to improve coral reef management: There is a strong need for staff member trainings throughout the natural resource management system. Trainings should be developed and offered in an integrated, strategic, and synergistic manner that maximizes efficiency and cross-pollination among trainees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clarify and document the purpose and function of the Coral Reef Advisory Group through the development of an organizational handbook.

Create clear definitions for all terms used by the Coral Reef Advisory Group to address capacity challenges and improve function within the structure of the Coral Reef Advisory Group.

Integrate plans at the village level. Natural resource management plans can focus on wetlands, marine protected areas, watersheds, and other resources. Without coordination, villages can be overwhelmed by multiple plans.

Provide outreach and field experience to key decision makers to encourage an understanding of the cultural and economic importance of reefs and to motivate people to actively support coral reef conservation. Develop a list of needed training modules.



MORE INFORMATION

This capacity assessment was conducted by Sustainamatrix under contract to the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program. We would like to thank the many partners who participated in this process. The assessments are available at www.coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/capacityassessments.

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