

# **U.S. CORAL REEF TASK FORCE MEETING**

**August 20 - 24, 2007**

**Special Session: Regional  
Approaches to Conserving Coral  
Reef Ecosystems**

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# Regional Approaches to Conserving Coral Reef Ecosystems

## THE SAMOAN EXPERIENCE

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# Samoa's Marine Protected Areas Project

# Aleipata and Safata Districts Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)



# Aleipata & Safata MPAs

- Demonstrates a District-level governance Approach to the Conservation of coastal marine biodiversity (marine ecosystems such as Coral Reefs, Mangroves & Seagrass beds)
- 2 large community-based, multi-use, multi-village MPAs established in 2000
- Enables the management of a significant area of coastal marine environment (43 sq miles) which has been achievable at a scale useful for biodiversity conservation, tourism and fisheries management
- Contain 20 'No-Take-Zones' altogether

# Aleipata & Safata MPAs

- Representative of the full range of coastal marine habitats found in Samoa (i.e. largest remaining mangrove forests and extensive areas of coral reef, lagoon and sea grass habitats)
- The Aleipata MPA in particular has also fostered community support and collaborative management for the only offshore islands in Samoa



# Aleipata & Safata MPAs

- Focus on 3 main areas:
  1. Management planning;
  2. Income generation; and
  3. Marine Biodiversity surveys;
- The work which were and are currently done centers around the above 3 focus areas

# What work was & is conducted

## 1. Management planning

- MPAs Committees have been established and play key roles (volunteer on behalf of the districts) in the daily operation & management of the project (includes daily surveillance of the no-take-zones)
- MPAs Management Plans developed and implemented
- Marine education & awareness programs conducted for the communities



# What work was & is conducted

## 2. Income generation

- The fish and shellfish from the 'take zones' are sold to get money
- The local communities also utilize the MPAs for income generation mainly through eco-tourism activities (e.g. beach fales, coral reefs diving & snorkeling, mangrove walk, whale & dolphin watching, etc.) (control of such activities are included in the MPAs Management Plans)
- Levies from these are paid to the MPAs

# What work was & is conducted

## 3. Marine Biodiversity Surveys

- Conducted annually to assess the changes in marine biodiversity (survey results are compared to determine trend/progress over the years)
- Community members are trained on survey methodologies and are involved in the actual conduct of surveys
- Survey results are translated and conveyed back to the local communities

# Strengths & Accomplishments

- Real progress for conservation and sustainable resource use was & is achieved through the:
  1. Collaboration, strong commitment & support of the villages within and between the districts for improved coastal resources management
  2. Availability & community access to information, expertise and resources needed to develop the MPAs

# Strengths & Accomplishments

3. The Project Team acts as advisers, facilitators, trainers, 'secretaries and servants' supporting the prime function of the Committees as decision makers

- Marine biodiversity within the MPAs has improved (including recovery from past cyclones)
- The 2 MPAs Committees cemented partnerships with the establishment of the MPA Society, and within this structure have formed a Trust Fund for long-term management

# Challenges

1. The sectoral nature of government resource management poses significant challenges to communities attempting to deal with multi and cross sectoral issues, particularly in environment, tourism and fisheries
2. The role of volunteerism needs to be encouraged in community-based projects from the start and compensation should not be paid for activities that are the community's responsibility

# Challenges

3. The difficulty, particularly within a project timeframe, managing the impacts of natural disasters such as cyclones
4. The challenge of moving from a project to 'sustainable' MPAs with core government support and technical backstopping



# Recommendations

1. For MPA development, community-based decision making and management is fundamentally important but must be complemented by 'top-down' support and partnerships
2. For the long-term sustainability of MPAs, the role of the project team is important e.g. providing consistent support, building working relationships based on trust, capacity building, etc..

# Recommendations

3. It's important to build the capacity of the communities early in the MPA process for long term sustainability

4. For improved management of MPAs, it is important to actively involve community members (youth, fisherman, women, chiefs) and their traditional knowledge in MPAs activities e.g. biodiversity surveys

# Recommendations

5. There is a need to build MPA management plans from a sound basis of local experience in implementing decisions of priority to local communities

# Regionalizing the Samoan Experience .....

- There's value in linking communities and information across island nations so that nations learn from each other through sharing experiences of the failures & successes.
- Some mechanisms to make this happen may include study tours, regional workshops, establishing focal points, information exchange, etc.
- Coordinating efforts across islands may focus on sharing of local knowledge & experience, and scientific information

## Regionalizing local efforts: some recommendations .....

1. Encourage experience and information sharing through the conduct of regional workshops & trainings, study tours, etc.
2. Carefully document and conserve cultural protocols, heritage sites and their traditional stories

THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
ATTENTION