

## **TWO SAMOAS: TAKING AN ARCHIPELAGO-WIDE APPROACH TO ADDRESSING MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION ISSUES**

*Doug Harper, American Samoa Department of Commerce*

**KEYWORDS:** Ecosystem based management, transboundary, cross-jurisdictional, conservation, natural resources, fisheries management, collaboration, research, policy.

The Samoan archipelago is a chain of islands spanning roughly 520 km and including the jurisdictions of American Samoa and Samoa. The distance between the main populated islands of Samoa and American Samoa is only 60 km, and the two jurisdictions share a similar environment, geography and culture, as well as common vulnerabilities and challenges. Transboundary currents of wind and water ensure that species and pollutants from the two jurisdictions are linked. Recognizing the interconnectedness of the archipelago and the need for collaboration to effectively conserve resources, the Prime Minister of Samoa and the Governor of American Samoa called for annual meetings to be held to initiate collaboration on management and conservation issues. They discussed several issues to be included in the meetings, such as the creation of an archipelago-wide Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network, sharing of knowledge on the US Coral Reef Task Force, Coastal Management Program, and National Parks and the development of uniform regulations for the protection of certain fish species.

Since the proclamation in 2007, several formal meetings have been held between the governmental and non-governmental organizations from both jurisdictions and a list of topics for collaboration has been created. Some of the main topics discussed and worked on since the initial meeting include: planning effective invasive Myna bird eradication, sharing of regulations and procedures, working towards a coordinated MPA network, shared and coordinated research, and the creation of shared events calendars, message board, and expert contact lists.

The expected benefits include:

- Maximizing the use of limited human and other institutional resources;
- More effective conservation of biodiversity;
- Better management of natural resources;
- Enhancing the ecological resilience of the archipelago;
- Strengthening and empowering Samoan communities and governments to be better environmental stewards.

This presentation will cover how the Two Samoas Initiative has been set-up, what actions have been undertaken, and next steps.

Doug Harper  
PO Box 6351

*Proceedings of Coastal Zone 09  
Boston, Massachusetts  
July 19 to 23, 2009*

Pago Pago, American Samoa 6351  
684.699.9764  
doug.harper1@gmail.com