

RECLAMATION OF LAND AND SEA

The boundaries between sea and land are perennially changing. In many sheltered bays and estuaries, the sea is receding, while in other portions of the sea-coast it is continuously encroaching.



The process of reclamation includes maintaining water and air quality, minimizing flooding, erosion and damage to land properties, wildlife and aquatic habitats caused by surface mining. The final step in this process is often topsoil replacement and revegetation with suitable plant species.

Reclamation can occur both on land and on sea. Land may either be reclaimed for reasons of raising the level of existing physical ground or for fill purposes of land being mined for resource extractions.

The most common form of reclamation practices is reclamation occurring in the sea or most simply put, reclamation is the forming of land by filling the sea. The main object of reclaiming land from the sea in Samoa is to increase the area of ground available for establishing various physical purposes. These may range from residential and cultivation purposes to major development projects such as tourism, individual/commercial business ventures, wharfage and other infrastructural improvement.



Reclamation can incur both positive and negative impacts on the coastal environment.



On the one hand it helps add resilience to vulnerability of the sea-and-coast's physical coexistence while on the other it can incur heavy losses to ecosystems of the immediate coastal environment. Placing fill in a reclamation area may affect the water quality of the adjacent sea as well as threatening the thriving existence of fish stocks and habitats found in coastal seas and connecting lagoons. The potential impacts must be fully assessed by comprehensive

environmental studies and minimized by implementing mitigation measures.

Proposed Reclamation Works in Samoa

Samoans predominantly settle along the coasts of villages and this type of human settlement is still continuing today despite limited coastal land availability and a number of life-threatening events such as that of natural disasters and factors of climate change variability. And coupled with numerous coastal development projects and individual business ventures aggravated by economic growth, this continuing trend has given rise to the high demand for reclamation works.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) is mandated with the administration of proposals for reclamations of the sea as it is by law, the government is vested with authority to control all lands lying under the high water mark. And every land formation as the result of reclamation of the sea remains the property of the government which can subsequently be leased only to individual proponents.

Every proposed reclamation is subject to preliminary environment assessments (PEA) and if necessary, environmental impact assessments (EIA). These landuse planning and development tools are used to determine potential impacts associated with the immediate environment of proposed sites and approval/rejection of proposed reclamations is largely dependent on recommendations provided by PEA/EIA reports of the assessor.