



-For Immediate Release-

Underwater Expedition Studies Samoa's Coastal Marine Habitats

Apia, Samoa - A research expedition made up of local and international marine researchers has just embarked to study coastal marine habitats across Samoa's waters.

This expedition is led by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), in partnership with the Waitt Institute, Conservation International, and supported by Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and CRIOBE. Principal Investigators of the Project are Schannel Van Dijken, Marine Programs Director at Conservation International and Andrew Estep, Science Director at the Waitt Institute.

Using a combination of scientific techniques, researchers will conduct scuba diving surveys to collect information on coral reef health, fish and invertebrate populations, and water quality.

"Building upon local monitoring efforts, this research will paint a picture of how Samoa's coral reefs and marine life are doing and this information can be used to help the government understand the best ways to manage our ocean resources." said Principal Investigator, Schannel Van Dijken, Conservation International.

All data collected will help inform the Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS), which is the national policy framework to sustainably manage Samoa's ocean and marine resources for the well-being of all Samoans now, and into the future. The SOS aims to safeguard the cultural, ecological, and socioeconomic values that Samoans derive from their ocean including: fisheries, tourism, offshore waters, maritime safety and security, biodiversity and ecosystems, food security, and ocean knowledge and traditions.

"We are honored to be learning from MNRE, MAF and other local scientists about Samoa's rich ocean habitats and excited this research will support the Samoa Ocean Strategy." said Andrew Estep, Science Director of the Waitt Institute.

The SOS complements existing plans while strengthening ocean conservation efforts with a focus on marine spatial planning, sustainable fisheries management, and further developing Samoa's Blue Economy. The strategy also integrates the implementation and management of Sustainable Development Goals, regional policies, and international commitments that concern the marine environment.

The marine expedition is part of the support offered under the partnership between the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MNRE), the Waitt Institute (WI), and Conservation International (CI) to assist in the implementation of the Samoa Ocean Strategy 2020-2030 (SOS).

For more information visit
SamoaOcean.org

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The research vessel "Plan b" - photo Waitt Institute.