



SAMOA OCEAN STRATEGY

-For Immediate Release-



Researchers return from 8 day expedition to study marine life

Apia, Samoa - Local and international researchers have just completed an 8-day expedition across Samoa's coral reefs. While they were met with bad weather, including high winds and rough seas, they

were able to complete 490 dives sampling 36 sites across the nearshore waters of both islands to collect information on the status of Samoa's coral reefs, fish populations, and water quality.

Today, researchers held an event in Apia to share their initial findings and takeaways with the Government. The expedition data will be processed and published in a scientific report that will be made available to the public in the coming months. The information collected will be used to inform the Samoa Ocean Strategy to guide decision-making on the best ways to manage Samoa's ocean and marine resources.

"We collected information on the amount of fish and invertebrates, and found over 250 different species of fish at our survey sites. Additionally, we collected 3-Dimensional imagery of 36 reefs that will allow us get detailed information about the status of corals and allow us to see how they grow and change over time." said Andrew Estep, Science Director of the Waitt Institute.

The survey techniques are consistent with marine monitoring done by MAFS and MNRE, and the expedition helped fill gaps in data to give an overview of the health of Samoa's nearshore waters.

Additionally, members of the Waitt Institute team will be on Samoa supporting the Samoa Ocean Strategy through the end of the month, and a filmmaker will be capturing stories of how ocean users interact with the ocean to put together a short film on the expedition and Samoa's ocean as a whole.

This expedition was 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.

"This is another step forward in the implementation of the Samoa Ocean Strategy and this expedition is helping to fill the gaps in marine science data which is important for sound decisions on how we can best manage our oceans. This has been possible because of genuine collaborative work with partners including Waitt Foundation and Conservation International as well as our local partners with Fisheries Division of MAF" Seumalo Afele Faiilagi, Assistant CEO at MNRE Division of Environment and Conservation.

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.

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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