

Samoa

Marine Spatial Plan

2025-2035



**SAMOA OCEAN
STRATEGY**



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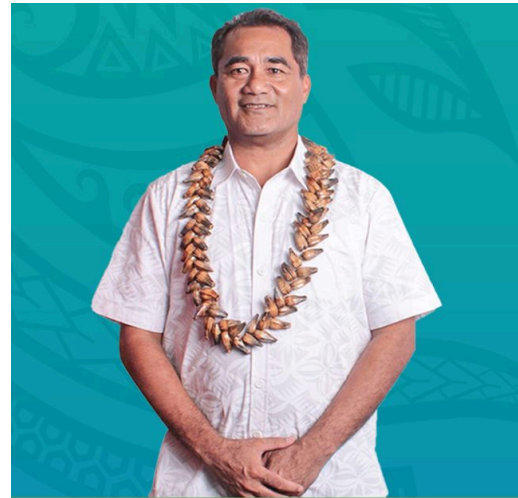
Photo Credit: Kyle Roepke



2. FOREWORD

As Samoa’s Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, I am pleased to present Samoa’s Marine Spatial Plan [2025–2035], which establishes nine new fully protected Marine Protected Areas and integrates other spatially managed marine activities, including an inshore network of community-based marine managed areas, fishing areas, and many others.

In Samoa, we use a simple phrase to capture our way of life: Fa’asamoa. At the core of this concept is respect for others, devotion to family, and a deep appreciation for preserving our natural resources. Fa’asamoa has enabled us to care for our vibrant coral reefs for millennia, ensuring good health and prosperity for everyone in our communities. Now, we must not only preserve our coral reefs, but also sustainably manage all of our ocean so that our children and grandchildren may benefit from the same healthy ocean that our ancestors once navigated to arrive on these islands.



Today, we face greater challenges than ever before. Climate change brings rising sea levels, natural disasters, and many other threats to our way of life. Habitat destruction, overfishing, and pollution also damage our greatest resource—the ocean.

This Marine Spatial Plan establishes an ocean management system designed to protect, and manage the marine resources within Samoan waters. It allows us to balance our conservation goals with the need to provide for our people. This Plan was developed by the people for the people of Samoa. Through this, we will achieve our commitment to sustainably manage 100% of our ocean and fully protect 30% of our ocean.

This Marine Spatial Plan represents the first version of Samoa’s ongoing commitment to ocean management. It is designed as an adaptive framework that will evolve in response to new knowledge, changing environmental conditions, and emerging human activities.

This will require collaboration and engagement from everyone—across government ministries, districts, communities, non-governmental organisations, development partners, and private sector stakeholders. Together, we can create a brighter future for the people of Samoa today and for generations to come.

We are riding on a wave of success, but our work has just begun.

Sincerely,
Toelesulusulu Cedric Pose Salesa Schuster
Minister of Natural Resources and Environment



3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Samoa’s Marine Spatial Plan [2025–2035] (the Plan) establishes an ocean management system designed to protect, conserve, and manage marine resources within Samoan waters. Developed as part of the Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS), the Plan reflects Samoa’s commitment to implementing sustainable ocean governance and protecting marine biodiversity. The SOS serves as a national policy framework to keep Samoa’s ocean healthy and abundant through integrated management, robust coordination, and respectful stewardship, supporting the cultural, social, and economic well-being of the people of Samoa.

The Plan, initiated in 2019, encompasses all Samoan waters. It includes the establishment of nine new fully protected Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), which will be formally designated and implemented pursuant to the *Lands, Surveys and Environment Act 1989*. The Plan also incorporates existing nearshore managed areas. It aims to ensure that various ocean activities are managed holistically.

The Plan’s development was guided by extensive consultations with government ministries, industry representatives, local communities, and other stakeholders under the leadership of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) and the National Ocean Steering Committee (NOSC).

The Plan will be backed by a ten-year Implementation Plan led by MNRE in collaboration with other ministries, working groups, advisory bodies, and technical committees. This Implementation Plan, developed with input from stakeholders and partners, will outline specific management actions aligned with the six strategic priorities of the SOS: Governance and Coordination, Financial Sustainability, Research and Data Collection, Monitoring and Surveillance, Policy and Legislation, and Awareness and Capacity Building.

Designed to be adaptive, the Plan will undergo periodic reviews at least every ten years, with a mid-term review after five years, allowing for adjustments based on new knowledge and changing ocean conditions.

Photo Credit: Kyle Roepke





4. OVERVIEW

This document will serve as Samoa’s Marine Spatial Plan pending passing of legislation.

Name

This Plan is to be cited as the Samoa Marine Spatial Plan [2025 - 2035] (the Plan).

Authority

The responsibility to develop and coordinate the Marine Spatial Planning process in Samoa lies with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE). MNRE is also responsible for preparing, implementing, reviewing and endorsing this Plan in collaboration with other relevant Ministries.

Commencement

This Plan will guide implementation of the Samoa Ocean Strategy, which has been endorsed by the Government of Samoa as a national commitment to protecting Samoa’s oceans and marine environments. The implementation of this Plan will commence in accordance with pending legislation.

Interpretation

Pending legislation will support the interpretation of language used in this Plan. The pending legislation will complement existing legislation, further supporting the designation of areas outlined in this Plan, as well as institutional and administrative arrangements. Existing managing authorities in Samoan waters will maintain their authority with the expectation that management decisions align with the Plan.

Planning Area (120,000km²)

The Plan provides for the management of Samoan waters. The planning area covers all Samoan waters, including Samoa’s internal waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as defined by the Maritime Zones Act 1999. The total planning area for the Plan is 120,000 km².

Review

MNRE will review the Plan once every ten (10) years with a mid-term review after five (5) years. This Plan is iterative and adaptive based on the evolving needs of Samoa.



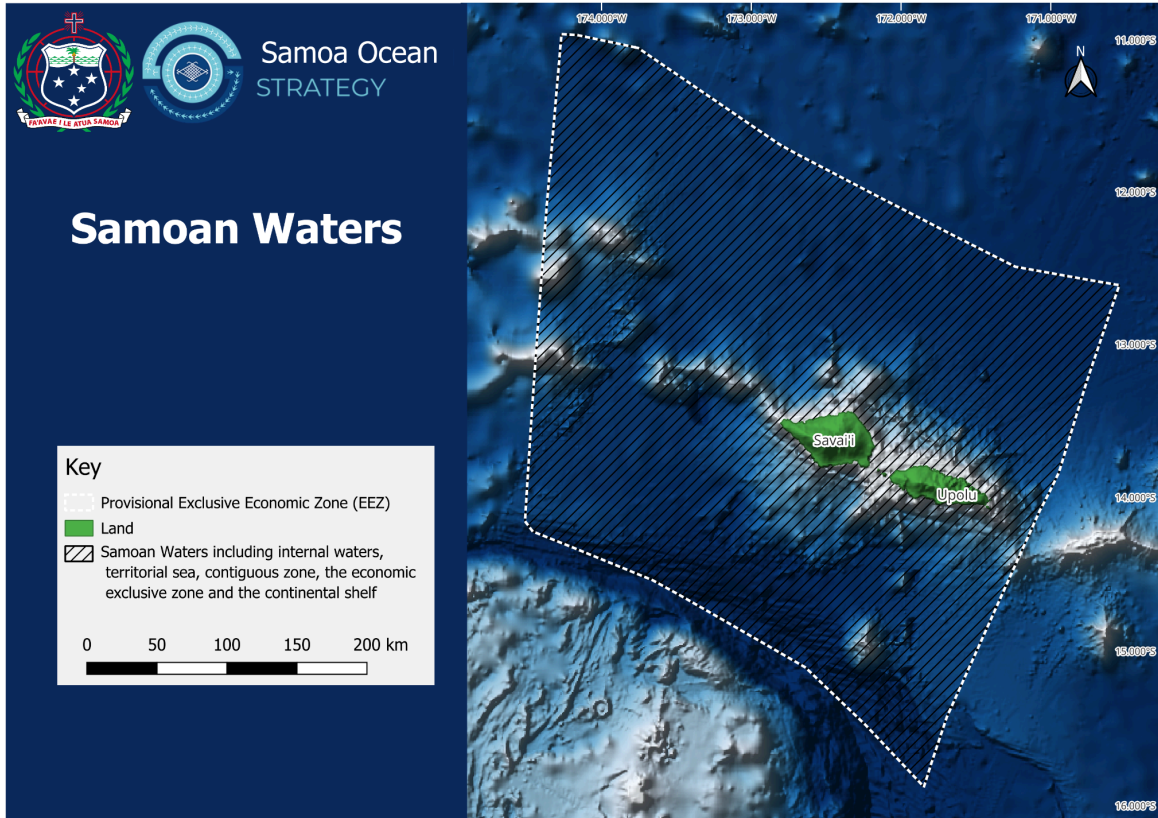


Figure 1: Area encompassing the Marine Spatial Plan.



Photo Credit: Kyle Roepke



5. BACKGROUND

The ocean is our source of life. It has sustained Samoa and its people for generations and remains critical to the nation's economy, culture, and well-being. Samoa's ancestors were master ocean navigators thousands of years ago, establishing a profound and enduring connection with the sea. This deep bond, rooted in respect for and reliance on the ocean, remains central to the nation's culture and traditions.

With the ocean comprising 98% of its territory, Samoa is a large ocean nation. It is home to exceptional marine habitats, such as seamounts, coral reefs, mangroves, and oceanic basins, which contribute significantly to the national economy and the identity of the Samoan people.

However, the ocean faces many challenges, such as habitat destruction, overfishing, and pollution, which reduce vital oceanic ecosystem services and benefits to people, such as food security, livelihood opportunities, and climate regulation. This is especially important as climate change increases ocean temperatures, sea levels, and the frequency and intensity of natural disasters causing coastal flooding.

Like other Pacific Island nations, Samoa is proactively addressing these challenges. The pathway selected for ocean management today will define the welfare of the next generation and generations to come.

International Commitments

Samoa reaffirmed its commitment to protect 30% of its marine area by 2030 at the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the Conference of Parties 15 (COP15) in Montreal in 2022 to address the growing threats to its ocean. During this meeting, Samoa's Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Minister Schuster, emphasised the country's commitment to the Global Biodiversity Framework, including a target of conserving at least 30% of marine areas by 2030. This pledge is part of Samoa's broader Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS). This pledge is also supported by Samoa's membership in the Global Ocean Alliance and the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.

Samoa's commitment to developing a Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) aligns with several other multilateral conventions and platforms, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the S.A.M.O.A.4 Pathway. It further supports Samoa's efforts to implement the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, Convention for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC Convention), International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR), the World Heritage Convention, and the International Coral Reefs Initiative, as well as actions prioritised in Samoa's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC.

At the regional level, the Plan strengthens Samoa's contributions to several significant initiatives focused on ocean conservation and sustainable development. These include the Pacific Oceanscape (2011) and the Noumea Convention, which promote collaboration and environmental protection across Pacific nations. The Plan aligns with the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy (PIROP, 2005) and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP), which guide ocean management, climate adaptation, and disaster risk reduction. It further supports the Future of Fisheries and New Song for Coastal Fisheries – Pathways to Change (2015), which focus on sustainable coastal fisheries management. Additionally, it reinforces the objectives of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS)



Action Platform and the Pacific Island Framework for Action on Climate Change (2015). The Plan also aids in delivering the Pacific 2050 Strategy and the Unlocking Blue Pacific Prosperity Plan, which emphasise sustainable ocean governance and economic growth opportunities tied to ocean health across the region.

Samoa Ocean Strategy

In 2020, the Government of Samoa introduced the Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS), a comprehensive national policy framework that aims to sustainably manage the country's ocean and marine resources. The SOS seeks to balance conservation with sustainable use, ensuring that the ocean's benefits contribute to the long-term wellbeing of all Samoans and future generations.

The strategy is built around six strategic priorities, each of which contains specific goals, solutions, and timelines to guide its implementation:

1. **Governance and Coordination** - Strengthen collaboration between government agencies, stakeholders, and communities to ensure cohesive management of marine resources
2. **Financial Sustainability** - Secure long term funding and institutional capacity beyond 2030
3. **Research and Data Collection** - Improve scientific research, data collection, management, and monitoring within Samoa's ocean
4. **Monitoring and Surveillance** - Enhance monitoring, control, surveillance, enforcement, and protection across Samoa's ocean
5. **Policy and Legislation** - Support policy and legislation
6. **Awareness and Capacity Building** - Increase public awareness and build capacity using traditional knowledge and marine science

The SOS includes a commitment to develop a Marine Spatial Plan (MSP). **The Samoa Marine Spatial Plan [2025–2035]** (the Plan) and its supporting legislation serve as the basis of an ocean management system.

Designed to be adaptable, the Plan will be reviewed every ten (10) years, with a mid-term review after five (5) years. Allowing for adjustments based on new knowledge about marine ecosystems and changing human activities, this review process will ensure that the most effective management strategies are implemented.



6. SAMOA'S MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING PROCESS

Between 2019 and 2024, the Government of Samoa conducted a comprehensive planning process in support of this Marine Spatial Plan (MSP). The Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS) guided this process, which also incorporated traditional science and knowledge, cultural values, and the most up-to-date biodiversity, economic, and biophysical data.

The planning area for the Plan includes all Samoan waters. The planning process was divided into two separate planning areas: the offshore and nearshore areas. For the purpose of this document, nearshore areas included those areas within a 200 metre depth contour and offshore areas included those beyond a 200 metre depth contour.

Guiding Principles

The following principles guide this Plan:

1. Decisions about the development and implementation of the Plan are clear, transparent, and accessible to the public;
2. There is coordination of related plans and activities among marine stakeholders and users;
3. There is integrated decision-making amongst all public entities and regulatory authorities;
4. The Plan incorporates a planning approach that is responsive to threats and risks to the environment, as well as the ocean ecosystem, and is capable of addressing those threats and risks;
5. The Plan encourages and promotes collaboration amongst all stakeholders and users of Samoan waters so that competing interests are managed with the aim of enhanced conservation and sustainable use of the Samoan waters;
6. The Plan incorporates a precautionary approach and is applied to ensure that lack of full scientific certainty does not delay measures intended to prevent environmental degradation;
7. When appropriate, this Plan adopts the Ecosystem Approach, an integrated approach to natural resource management that considers the functioning of wider ecosystems in which resources occur and seeks to safeguard those ecosystems and ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of resources;
8. When necessary, this Plan adopts the Polluter Pays Principle, which requires that an entity that pollutes the environment must pay for the damage;
9. This Plan consistently applies the Participatory Approach, according to which all stakeholders should actively participate in the planning and implementation processes, and which involves meaningful participation in consultations, recognition of culture and traditions, and a full representation of values and experiences; and
10. This Plan considers the principle of sustainable financing, since an MSP's ability to achieve desired objectives requires a sustainable stream of funding.

Vision

The Plan mirrors the vision set out in the SOS, which states that Samoa's ocean will remain healthy and abundant through integrated management, robust coordination, and respectful use and stewardship that support cultural, social, and economic opportunities for Samoa's people.

Marine Spatial Plan Development Team



The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), with guidance from the National Ocean Steering Committee (NOSC), led the Marine Spatial Planning process from 2019-2024.

In 2020, the MSP Support Working Group was established to oversee the development of the Plan. The MNRE Chief Executive Officer chaired the MSP Working Group and guided the Marine Spatial Planning process.

MSP Support Working Group members were represented by:

- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)
- Ministry of Samoa Police, Prisons and Corrections Services (MOPPC)
- Ministry of Women, Community Service and Development (MWCSO)
- Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure (MWTI)
- Samoa Ports Authority (SPA)
- Samoa Shipping Corporation (SSC)
- Samoa Tourism Authority (STA)
- Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations Inc. (SUNGO)
- National University of Samoa (NUS)
- Conservation International (CI)
- Waitt Institute (WI)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Planning Process Timeline

Between 2019 and 2024, the planning process followed three key steps (outlined in Table 1) to ensure the Plan’s ecological, economic, and social objectives were met through a rigorous, scientifically driven, and transparent approach.

1. **Step One** secured government endorsement of the proposed work plan.
2. **Step Two** involved data collection and the creation of spatial planning tools.
3. **Step Three** focused on broad stakeholder engagement, involving consultations across government agencies, the private sector, and communities to collaboratively develop the endorsed Plan.

Table 1: Marine Spatial Planning Process

MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES	YEAR
Step 1: Government commitment, policies, objectives	
Activities	
Develop the Samoa Ocean Strategy (2019-2020)	2019/2020
Establish an MSP Team	2020
Conduct legal review	2021
Conduct marine ecosystem service valuation	2021
Commit to strengthening the national Marine Protected Area (MPA) network	2020



Develop communication and consultation strategy	2020 → ongoing
Step 2: Data collection & MSP planning tools	
Activities	
Collate data sets (ocean uses, biological and physical)	2019 → ongoing
Identify and map Special and Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs)	2020
Confirm Samoa's marine bioregions	2020
Define ocean zones defined (draft)	2021
Step 3: Develop an MSP and an ecologically representative network of fully protected Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	
Activities	
Identify the MSP core consultation team	2020
Develop consultation framework	2022
Undertake the first round of public consultations	2021
Conduct national sectoral consultations	2022
Identify an ecologically representative network of MPAs	2022
Conduct sectoral consultations and expert workshops	2022
Undertake the second round of consultations	2022
Conduct internal government and stakeholder review	2023
Adapt the system of MPAs	2023
Conduct ongoing consultation with government agencies and stakeholders to revise the network of MPAs	2024
Finalise proposed network of MPAs	2024

Identifying Samoa’s Network of MPAs

In Step 3 of the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) process (Table 1), a key focus was identifying an ecologically representative Marine Protected Area (MPA) network across Samoa’s waters. Recognising the significant differences between nearshore and offshore habitats, this analysis was divided accordingly, with one analysis focusing on nearshore waters and another analysis focusing on the waters beyond. For this analysis, nearshore areas included those areas within a 200 metre depth contour and offshore areas included those beyond a 200 metre depth contour. As new information is provided, this definition may be updated in future iterations of this document.

Using data from Steps 1 and 2 of the MSP process and recognising Samoa’s commitment to protecting 30% of its ocean, MARXAN software was applied to systematically prioritize areas for protection in both nearshore and offshore areas. This process balances conservation goals and while minimizing conflicts with human activities.

In the nearshore, a map was initially created highlighting priority areas for protection to maximize the benefits of an MPA network. These maps were shared during consultations (see Consultations Section). Following consultations, the decision was made to postpone identifying any new inshore MPAs until the Implementation Phase of the MSP and after further community consultations.

For the offshore, the MARXAN analysis produced a first (zero draft) candidate map of MPAs, which underwent extensive review in consultations with ministries, communities, and stakeholders. Multiple iterations of the new MPAs were generated and refined through this consultative process, ultimately leading to the selection of the most suitable option.

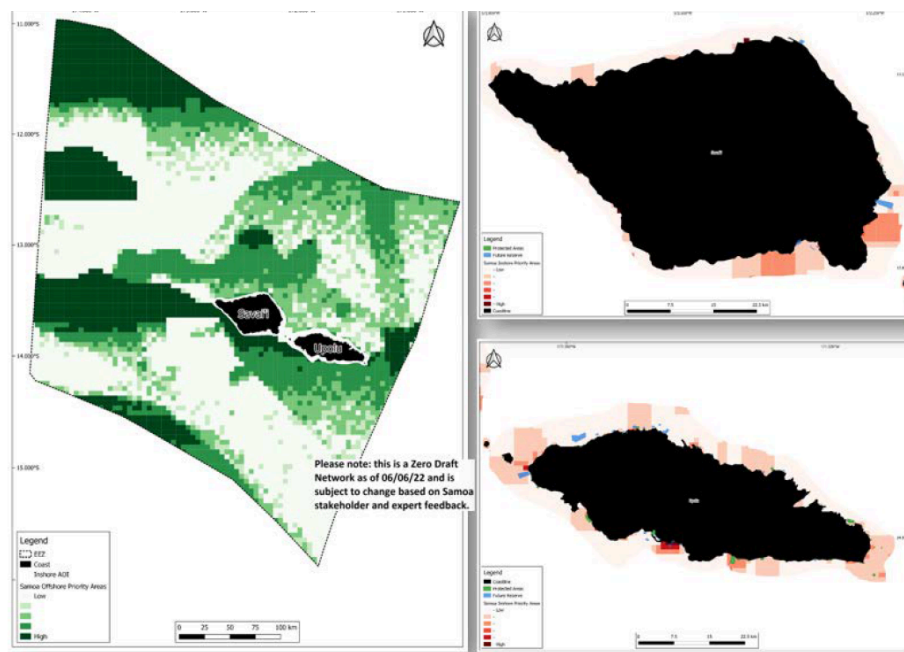


Figure 2: Offshore and inshore priority areas identified by the Prioritization tool. Offshore: Green - higher priority and white - lower priority. Inshore: Red - higher priority and white - lower priority.

Biophysical Design Principles¹

¹ Ceccarelli DM, Matoto V, Raubani J, Jones GP, Harris P, Fernandes L (2018) Biophysical design principles for offshore networks of no-take Marine Protected Areas. MACBIO (GIZ/IUCN/SPREP): Suva, Fiji. 56 pp. & Ceccarelli, D. M., Davey, K., Jones, G. P., Harris, P. T., Matoto, S. V., Raubani, J., & Fernandes, L. (2021). How to Meet New Global Targets in the Offshore



Below are ten design principles that informed the modelling process to develop the proposed network of fully protected MPAs.

1. Represent at least 20-30% of bioregions.
2. Represent at least 10-30% of each known habitat type.
3. Represent whole features/habitats, wherever possible.
4. Have at least three replicate MPAs within bioregions and include at least one example of each habitat or feature.
5. Include critical habitats and biologically or physically special or unique sites.
6. Make MPAs larger rather than smaller.
7. Use simple MPA shapes that maximise area-to-edge ratios.
8. Maximise connectivity between MPAs in an MPA network.
9. Choose permanent over temporary protection.
10. Reduce or eliminate threats across the area that the entire MPA network lies within by applying other types of MPAs or Spatial Management Areas throughout it.

Benefits of MPAs

MPAs are designated areas where human activities are restricted to protect and restore ocean habitats and resources. The most effective MPAs are fully protected or “no-take,” which prohibit all extractive activities (fishing, mining, etc.) to give marine life the opportunity to grow and reproduce.

MPAs have been shown to provide far-reaching benefits, including increasing ocean health and biodiversity, restoring habitats, mitigating climate change, supporting sustainable fisheries, generating economic benefits, and promoting recreational opportunities.

A network of MPAs offers additional benefits that a single MPA cannot achieve on its own. When multiple MPAs are connected, networks achieve enhanced ecological interconnectivity between habitats and protection of migratory species, and promote larger-scale conservation efforts.

Consultations

MNRE, together with the Core Consultation Team (CCT), conducted nationwide public consultations. The CCT consisted of 15 members, including representatives from MNRE, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), Conservation International (CI), Maritime Police, and SUNGO. This extensive effort included two components: a series of nationwide consultations at the community level, and additional targeted consultations with key sectors.

Nationwide Community Consultations

Thorough and detailed consultations with national stakeholders, including academic institutions, the tourism and fisheries sectors, and communities, were undertaken from 2021-2022 and were crucial to the development of the Plan. Led by MNRE, two phases of consultations were conducted: the first from August - September 2021 and the second from August - September 2022. During each phase, more than 1,500 individuals were consulted through 96 workshops across 185 coastal village communities (Table 2).

Realms: Biophysical Guidelines for Offshore Networks of No-Take Marine Protected Areas. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2021.634574>



Village Communities

Throughout the consultation phase, MNRE consulted with all sections of the village communities, including the Village Fono (seating of chiefs/titled men and women), women, men, and youth, regarding:

- The use of marine or coastal resources by coastal villagers and communities, including ownership, customs, livelihood, and economic activities.
- Location and use of fishery reserves, existing MPAs, and community conservation areas.
- Community perceptions of current protected areas and ocean use systems.
- Degree of community support for new protected areas and Marine Spatial Planning.
- Traditional practices, protection, conservation, sustainable use, and management of marine resources in the Plan.
- Monitoring and enforcement of protected areas, and location and size of potential MSP zones and the activities allowed and prohibited in each zone.

Table 2: Sector and community representatives who attended the draft review consultations

Sector/ Islands	Consultations	Phase 1			Phase 2		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Key Sector	Tourism	9	8	17	7	9	16
	Fisheries	20	13	33	18	21	39
	Government & NGOs/CSOs	22	12	34	15	6	21
Savaii Island	Vaisigano 1 & 2	36	18	54	21	18	39
	Falealupo & Alataua i Sisifo	30	26	56	21	17	38
	Salaga 1 & 2	38	20	58	22	21	43
	Palauli 1	46	24	70	17	10	27
	Palauli 2	19	26	45	9	29	38
	Satupa'itea	55	38	93	8	10	18
	Fa'asaleleaga 1	16	27	43	6	1	7
	Fa'asaleleaga 2	40	22	62	12	20	32
	Fa'asaleleaga 3	43	19	62	16	5	21
	Fa'asaleleaga 4	38	32	70	13	11	24
	Fa'asaleleaga 5	46	30	76	21	18	39
	Fa'asaleleaga 5 & Gaga'emauga 1				78	57	135
	Gaga'emauga 2	38	41	79	25	19	44
	Gagaifomauga 1	28	15	43	24	23	47
	Gagaifomauga 2	39	21	60	17	25	42
Gagaifomauga 3	42	23	65	25	22	47	
Upolu Island, including Manono Island	Vaimauga 4 & 5	19	9	28	4	1	5
	Vaimauga 2 & 3	20	26	46	8	7	15
	Vaimauga 1	25	36	61	0	5	5
	Anoama'a 1	31	27	58	14	36	50
	Anoama'a 2	31	25	56	29	20	49
	Va'a-o-Fonoti	37	33	70	14	24	38



Aleipata Itupa-i-Lalo	46	26	72	27	30	57
Aleipata Itupa-i-Luga	42	57	99	17	19	36
Lepa & Lotofaga	31	41	72	19	28	47
Falealili 2	26	27	53	35	27	62
Falealili 1	29	42	71	22	6	28
Siumu	39	30	69	13	17	30
Safata 2	28	25	53	24	20	44
Safata 1	40	32	72	15	7	22
Lefaga & Faleseela	15	20	35	18	12	30
Falelatai & Samatau	30	6	36	13	12	25
A'ana 1,2 & 3	26	22	48	29	7	36
Manono Island	26	36	62	33	28	61
Aiga-ile-tai	35	56	92	23	16	39
Palauli 3	25	28	53	19	24	43
A'ana 4	53	26	79	27	16	43
Sagaga 3 & 4	33	10	43	17	10	27
Sagaga 1 & 2	26	45	6	18	2	20
Faleata 3 & 4	33	10	43	3	2	5
Faleata 1 & 2	20	26	46	13	14	27
Total	1353	1160	2513	751	675	1426

Consultation with Key Industry Sectors

In addition to community consultations, key sectors were targeted for ongoing engagement. These key sectors included fisheries, tourism, government ministries and organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and civil society organisations (CSOs).

Expanded Sector Consultations

The primary offshore industries in Samoa were dominated by the fishing sector, with the transport sector also active through cargo shipping. From 2019 to 2024, MNRE worked closely with MAF and key stakeholders in the fishing industry to ensure the alignment of conservation objectives with the interests of these sectors, especially concerning the proposed MPAs in offshore waters.

Through regular consultations and meetings, a collaborative approach was adopted. MNRE and MAF engaged in continuous dialogue with the fisheries sector to review and refine the proposed MPA network. This process allowed adjustments to the MPA locations to minimise conflicts with commercial fishing activities. These efforts helped balance conservation goals and the goals of the fishing industry.



Photo Credit: Will McClintock



7. EXISTING MANAGEMENT LEGISLATION AND AREAS

The Plan incorporates existing management areas. Existing managing authorities in Samoan waters will maintain their authority with the expectation that management decisions align with the Plan.

Key existing legislations in Samoan waters are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Key Legislation Governing Samoan waters.

Name of Legislation	Purpose
Maritime Zones Act 1999	Make provisions with respect to the internal waters, territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and the continental shelf of Samoa, and related matters.
Maritime Zones Order 2017	Provide the official geographical coordinates for which the breadth of the territorial sea, outer limits of the contiguous zone, EEZ, and continental shelf of Samoa are to be measured.
Fisheries Management Act 2016	Regulate and control the conservation, management or development of fisheries and the licensing of Samoan and foreign fishing vessels and for related purposes. Including Part 8 (Village Fisheries Bylaws) Sections 86-89 providing for a village Fono to make village fishery bylaws, consistent with this Act.
National Parks and Reserves Act 1974	Provide for the establishment, preservation, and administration of national parks and reserves for the benefit of the people of Samoa.
Land Surveys and Environment Act 1989 Including Marine Wildlife Protection Regulations 2009 and 2018 Amendments	Consolidate the Land Ordinance 1959 and its amendments, and also to make provision for the conservation and protection of the environment and the establishment of National Parks and other forms of protected areas and to enlarge the functions of a Department of State.
Planning and Urban Management Act 2004	Establish the Planning and Urban Management Agency and implement a framework for planning the use, development, management and protection of land in Samoa in the present and long-term interests of all Samoans and for related purposes.
Marine Pollution Prevention Act 2008	Provide for the prevention of pollution to the marine environment and for responses to marine pollution incidents emanating from vessels, and other matters related to the implementation of international marine pollution conventions, in accordance with MARPOL.
Shipping Act 1998	Consolidate and amend the law relating to Shipping and Seamen and control the registration, safety and manning of ships, and to give effect to various international maritime conventions, and for related purposes.



Waste Management Act 2010	Provide for the collection and disposal of solid wastes and the management of all wastes in Samoa.
Quarantine (Biosecurity) Act 2005	Consolidate the law relating to the importation of regulated articles and associated biosecurity risk, and the control of pests and diseases of animals, plants and the wider environment.

Existing Marine Spatial Plan Zones

The Plan incorporates the existing activities within Samoan waters that are spatially managed (Table 4), along with their corresponding legislation and managing authorities. Several of these are illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Existing spatially managed areas.

Managed Area	Managing Authority	Legislation
Samoa National Marine Sanctuary to protect sharks, rays, turtles and marine mammals	<i>Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE)</i>	<i>Marine Wildlife Protection Amendment Regulations 2018</i> <i>Lands, Surveys and Environment Act 1989</i>
Domestic Alia Fleet (exclusive access from 12–24 nautical miles)	<i>The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF)</i>	<i>Fisheries Management Act 2016, Samoa Tuna Management and Development Plan 2024 - 2029</i>
International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)	<i>Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure</i>	<i>Marine Pollution and Prevention Act 2008</i>
Community Marine Protected Areas	<i>Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE)</i>	<i>National Parks and Reserves Act 1974</i>
Community Conservation Areas	<i>Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE)</i>	<i>National Parks and Reserves Act 1974</i>
Fish reserves	<i>Co-management arrangement, fisheries and communities</i>	<i>Fisheries Management Act 2016, Section 86</i>

Samoa National Marine Sanctuary

Samoa waters have been declared a National Marine Sanctuary for sharks, whales, dolphins and turtles (Figure 3). The *Marine Wildlife Protection Amendment Regulations 2018* provides for the protection of marine wildlife within Samoa's waters, and in particular for the conservation of marine mammals, turtles, sharks and rays. Seventeen species of cetaceans (whales and dolphins) have been recorded in Samoa waters, in addition to five species of turtle and numerous species of sharks and rays. Further, the amendment regulation prohibits the commercial sale, trade, import and export of marine wildlife.

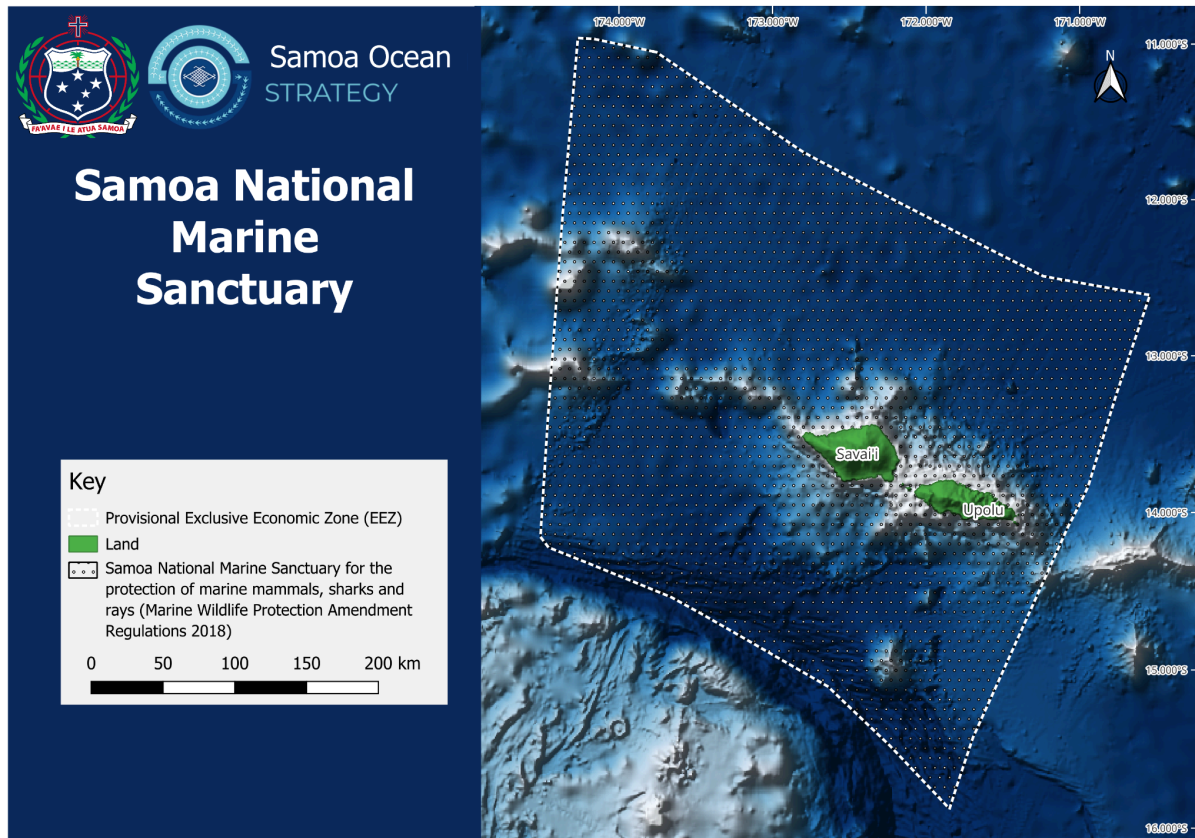


Figure 3: Samoa National Marine Sanctuary provides protection for marine mammals, turtles, sharks and rays.

The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Areas

Samoa is a signatory to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) (Figure 4). MARPOL sets the international standard to minimise marine pollution by controlling the discharge of oil, chemicals, sewage, garbage, and other pollutants into the ocean. MARPOL was adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1973 and has been amended over the years through various annexes, each addressing specific types of ship-generated pollution.

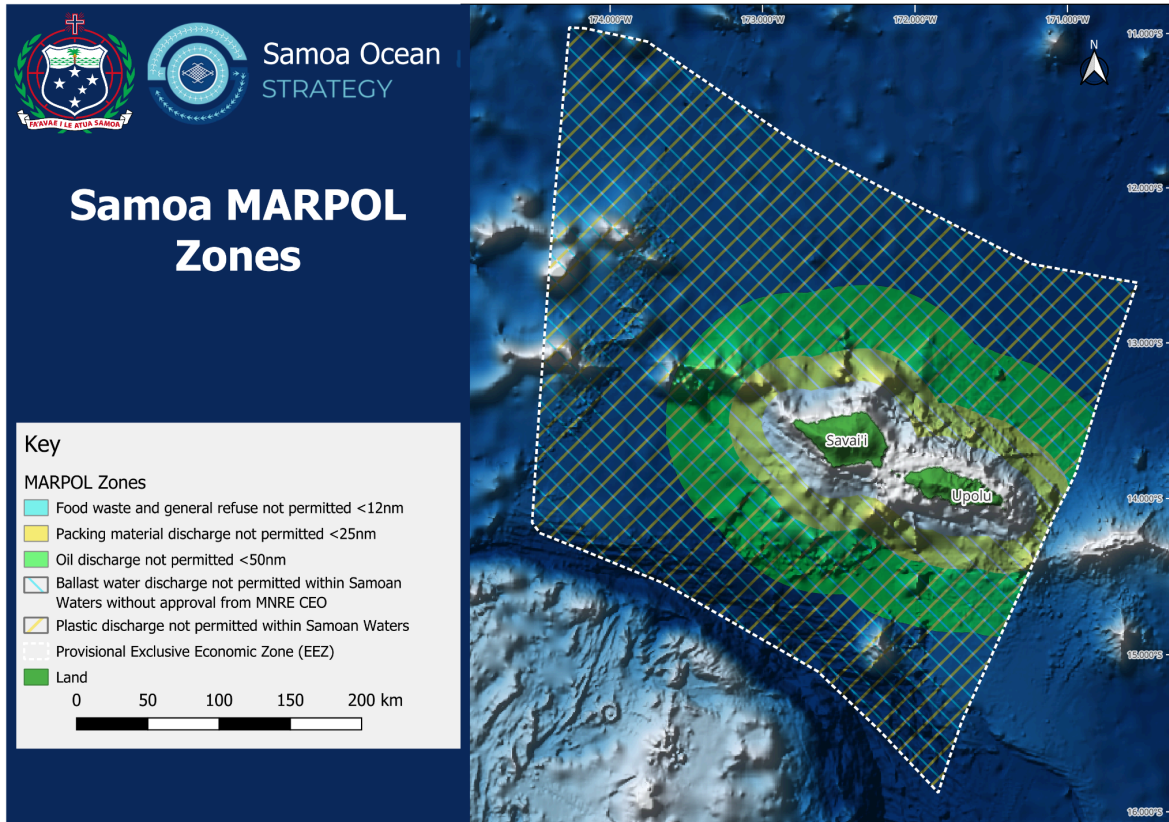


Figure 4: Samoa’s MARPOL Zones, which sets the international standard to minimise marine pollution.



Photo Credit: Kyle Roepke

Alia Boat Fishing Area

Samoa’s domestic long-line tuna fishing vessels, known locally as the ‘Alia’ fleet, are provided exclusive access to all waters within 24 nautical miles (nm) (Figure 5). The Alia fleet was born in the 1970s, when the original plywood Alia was made to mirror the design of traditional Polynesian fishing vessels - a catamaran with twin hulls, often made of wood, which have been fishing Samoan waters for centuries. These were tailored for local fishing needs, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern functionality.

The Alia exclusive 24 nm fishing area ensures these traditional fishing vessels can operate without competition from larger commercial fleets. It also helps to balance traditional fishing practices and modern industrial fishing, preserving cultural heritage and sustainable resource management. While the Alia fleet can venture beyond the 24 nm, they are strongly advised to stay within the 24 nm to minimise risks to the crew, as their smaller size limits the safety gear and navigation equipment they can carry onboard.

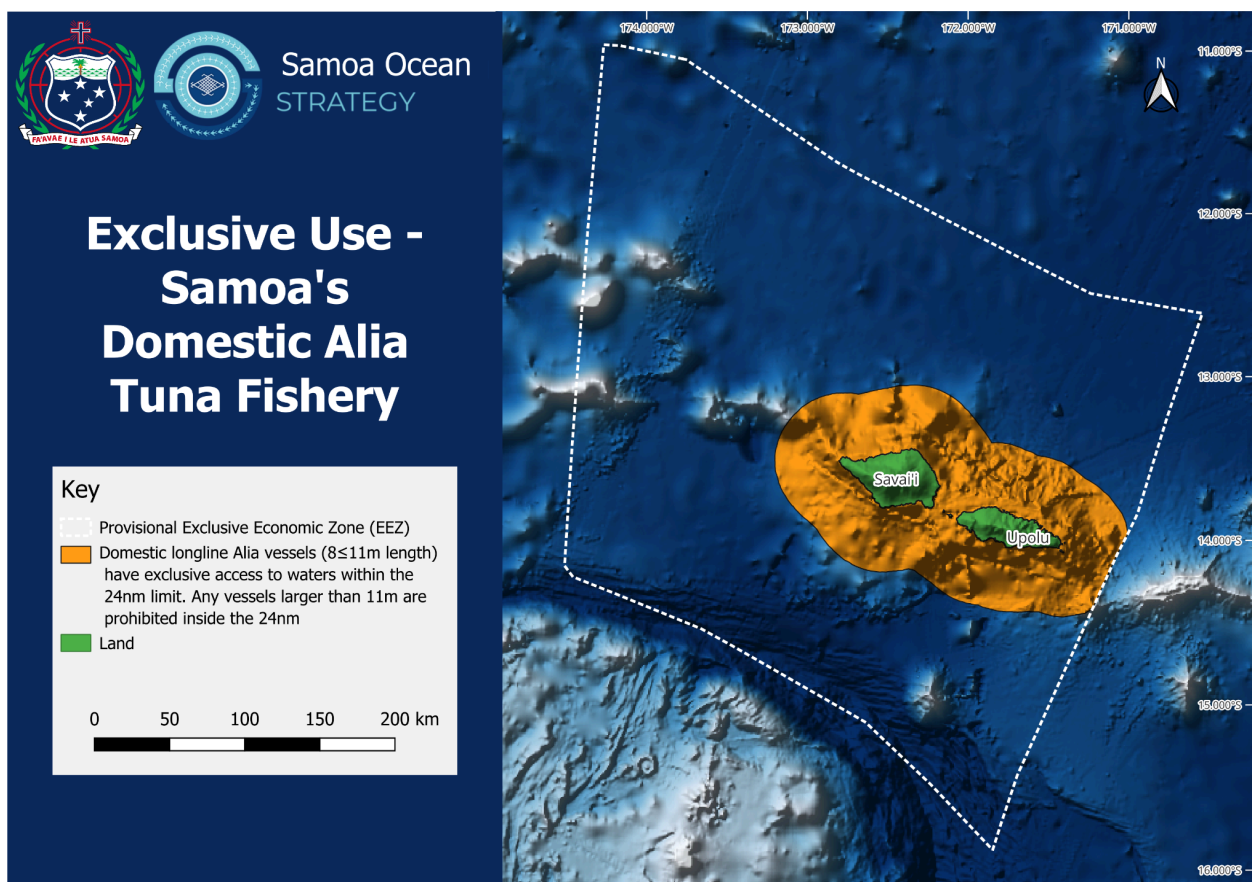


Figure 5: Domestic Alia vessels have exclusive access to waters within the 24 nautical miles (nm) limit.

Existing Community Marine Managed Areas

Village communities throughout Samoa have collaborated with both MNRE and MAF to establish fish reserves, community conservation areas, and MPAs. These areas offer various levels of protection for marine habitats and species. Their goals range from supporting food security and enhancing livelihoods to achieving biodiversity conservation. Each site is a vital resource in safeguarding local ecosystems while addressing ecological and socio-economic needs.

MNRE and MAF will continue to collaborate with communities to refine and update mapping of coastal marine managed areas to enable inclusion into the national MPA network. As this process progresses, future boundary adjustments or the establishment of additional protected areas may prove beneficial. Any changes to existing boundaries will be incorporated into the Plan during its regular review, ensuring the Plan remains adaptive and aligned with evolving environmental and community priorities.

Figure 6 provides the approximate location of these coastal community marine managed areas. In alignment with the SOS, coastal waters cover from the high tide mark to the drop beyond the reef. This plan has given a buffer of around 300 metres beyond the reef. However, future MMA boundary adjustments may be required and shall be reflected in the Plan as appropriate during regular reviews.



Figure 6: Shows approximate location of coastal community fish reserves, community conservation areas, and Marine Protected Areas.

8. SAMOA'S MARINE PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK

Samoa has a long history of marine areas co-managed by communities and government, as evidenced by the coastal marine managed areas outlined in Figure 6. One of the Samoa Ocean

Strategy goals is to strengthen and expand this network to achieve 30% protection for Samoa’s ocean. The Plan identifies nine new fully protected MPAs, largely offshore, which will be designated and managed according to pending legislation and associated regulations.

In total, the new fully protected MPAs protect nearly thirty-six thousand square kilometres (35,936km²), or 30% of Samoan waters. Table 5 provides a summary of the key statistics for the MPA network, detailing each MPA by name, size, and the percentage of Samoan waters it protects. Once officially designated, these MPAs will play a crucial role in safeguarding marine habitats and biodiversity by prohibiting all extractive activities.

The expanded Marine Protected Area (MPA) network also aims to promote coherence in ocean-related activities within multiple sector plans. The network is ecologically representative and contributes to both protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services for sustaining ocean health and achieving socio-economic priorities.

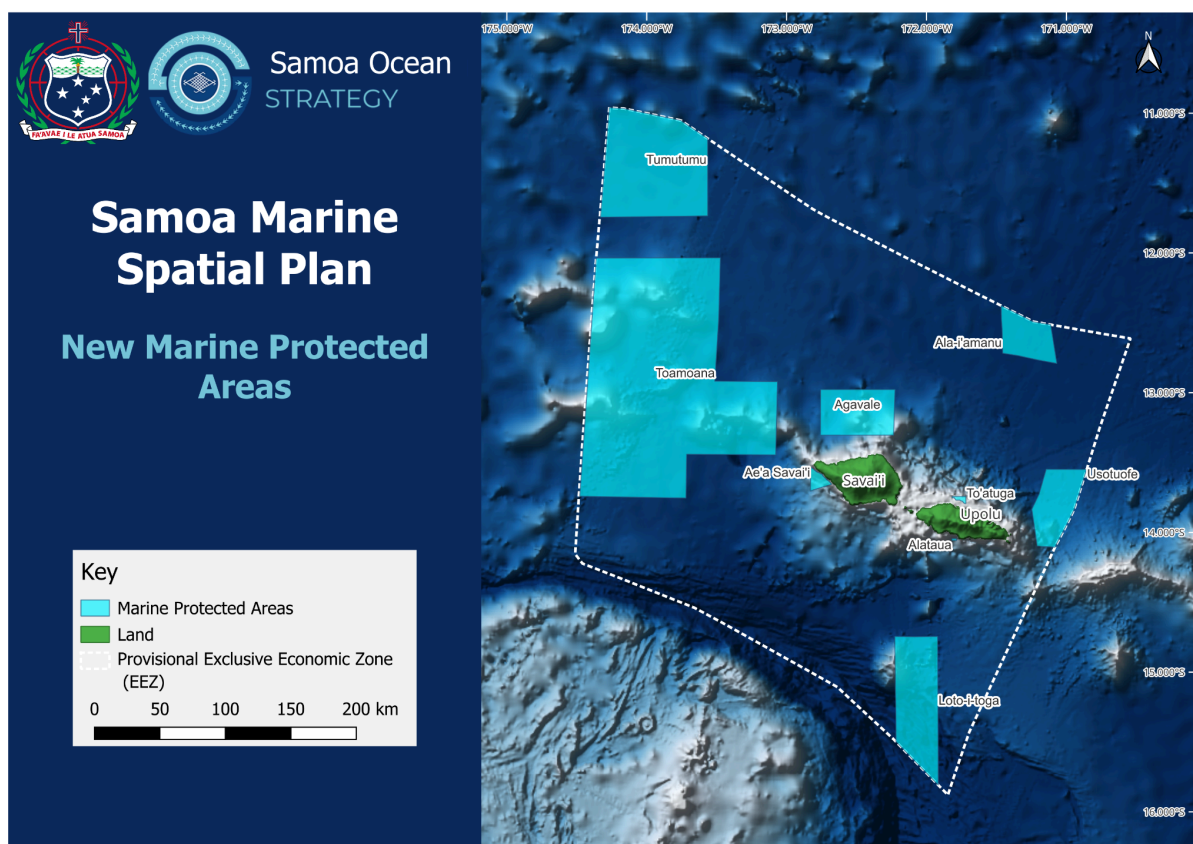


Figure 7: Samoa’s New Marine Protected Areas.

Table 5: Samoa’s New Marine Protected Areas.

MPA	Name	Size (km ²)	Samoa Waters (km ²)	% of marine waters	% of 30% network	Distance from shore (closest point)
1	Tumutumu	6302.73	120000.00	5.25	17.649	212.08 km
2	Toamoana	20908.65	120000.00	17.43	58.551	30.83 km
3	Ala-l'amanu	1280.15	120000.00	1.07	3.585	123.44 km
4	Usotuofe	1682.78	120000.00	1.40	4.712	21.58 km
5	Loto-i-toga	3266.81	120000.00	2.72	9.148	79.22 km
6	Agavale	2068.98	120000.00	1.72	5.794	15.03 km
7	Ae'a Savai'i	162.06	120000.00	0.14	0.454	945 m
8	To'atuga	33.39	120000.00	0.03	0.094	4.612 km
9	Alataua	4.90	120000.00	0.00	0.014	1.909 km
Total MPA Coverage		35710.45		30%		

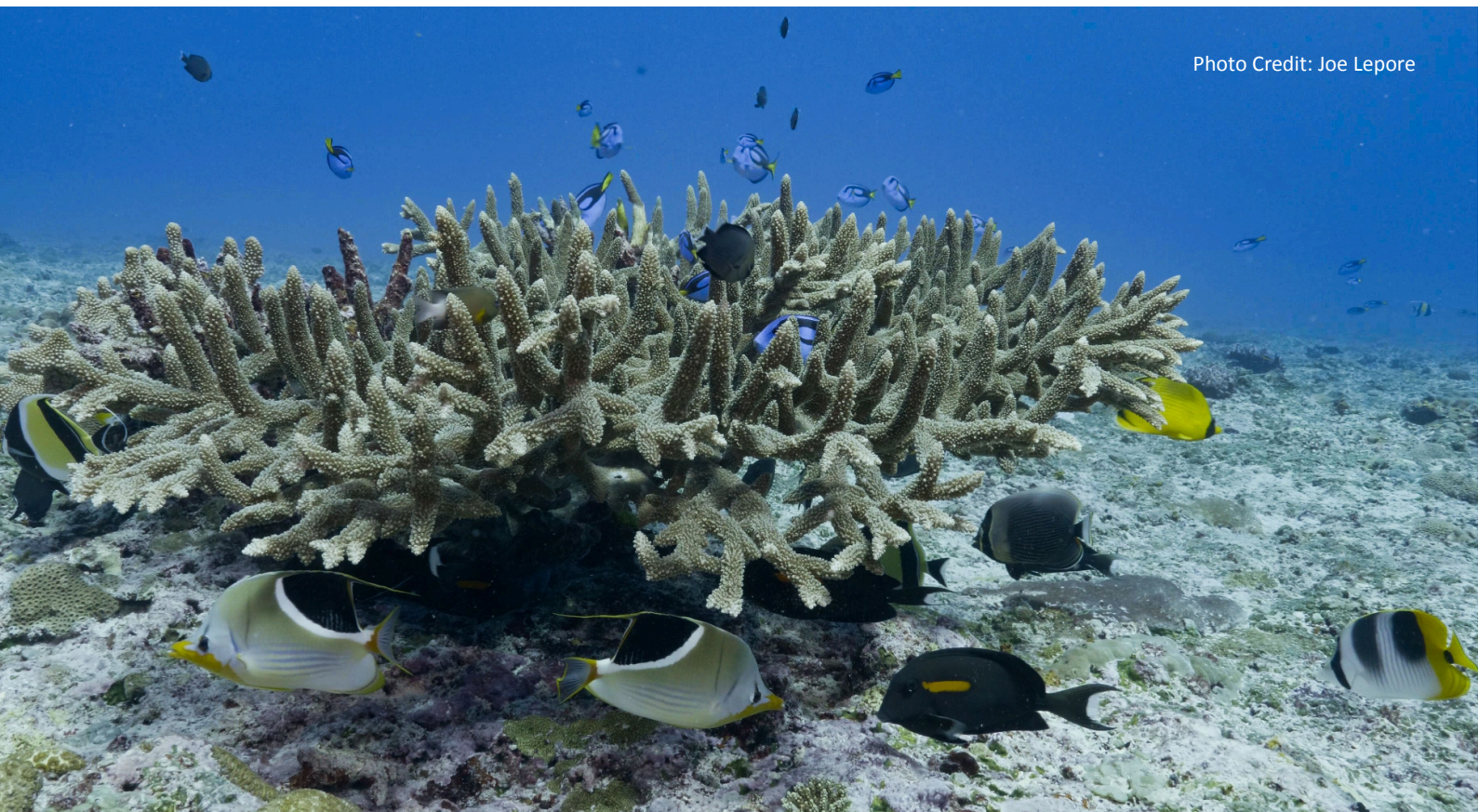


Photo Credit: Joe Lepore



Activities in the new Marine Protected Areas

Identification of the activities allowed and prohibited within each of the nine new fully protected MPAs is provided in the Activity Matrix (Table 6). The Activity Matrix defines which activities are allowed (without authorisation), allowable (with authorisation), or not allowed.

Table 6: Activities in the new Marine Protected Area.

Activity Matrix for offshore fully protected Marine Protected Areas		
Activity		Allowed? <i>(see legend below)</i>
General Use, Access, and Waste Management	Ballast water discharge and exchange	Yes
	Disposal of waste from normal operations of vessels (MARPOL)	Yes
	Recreational use (non-fishing, nature watching, boating, etc.)	Yes
	Non-commercial remote piloted aircraft, drones, etc.	A
Commercial Shipping	Anchoring	No
	Vessel transiting	Yes
Commercial Fishing	All commercial fishing	No
	Anchoring	No
	Vessel transiting	Yes
Commercial Aquaculture	Aquaculture, mariculture	No
Electricity Generation	Wind farms, wave, tidal or floating solar photovoltaic, etc.	No
Commercial Media	Media	A
Commercial Tourism	Non-fishing related tourism (including nature watching, scuba/snorkel tours)	A
	Charter fishing tours (including spear diving tours)	No
Recreational Fishing	All recreational fishing	No
	Anchoring	No
	Vessel transiting	Yes
Mining	Mining operations including exploration	No
	Construction and operation of pipelines	A

Structures and Works	Excavation, erection/maintenance of structures, works	No
	Dredging and disposal of dredged material	No
	Artificial reefs	No
	Fish aggregating devices	No
Research and Monitoring	Research	A
National Security and Emergency Response	National security and emergency response	Yes

Legend

Yes: Activity is allowed in fully protected Marine Protected Areas.
 No: Activity is not allowed in fully protected Marine Protected Areas.
 A: Authorisation required. Activity is allowable, subject to permit and assessment.

Overview of new Marine Protected Areas

Below are descriptions of each of Samoa’s new fully protected MPAs, including their size, the percentage of Samoan waters they cover, their contribution to the 30% protection target, their distance from shore, and a brief explanation of biodiversity values, bioregions represented and the geomorphic features protected. Further information on the geomorphic features found within each MPA can be found in Appendix C.

Samoa’s fully protected MPAs were selected to balance conservation goals while minimising human-use conflicts. They were chosen using the best available science and were guided by the Biophysical Design Principles outlined in the planning process section of this report (reference section *Identifying Samoa’s Network of MPAs*). Developed through public consultations and cross-sector discussions, each of these MPAs contributes to Samoa’s commitment to protect 30% of its waters.

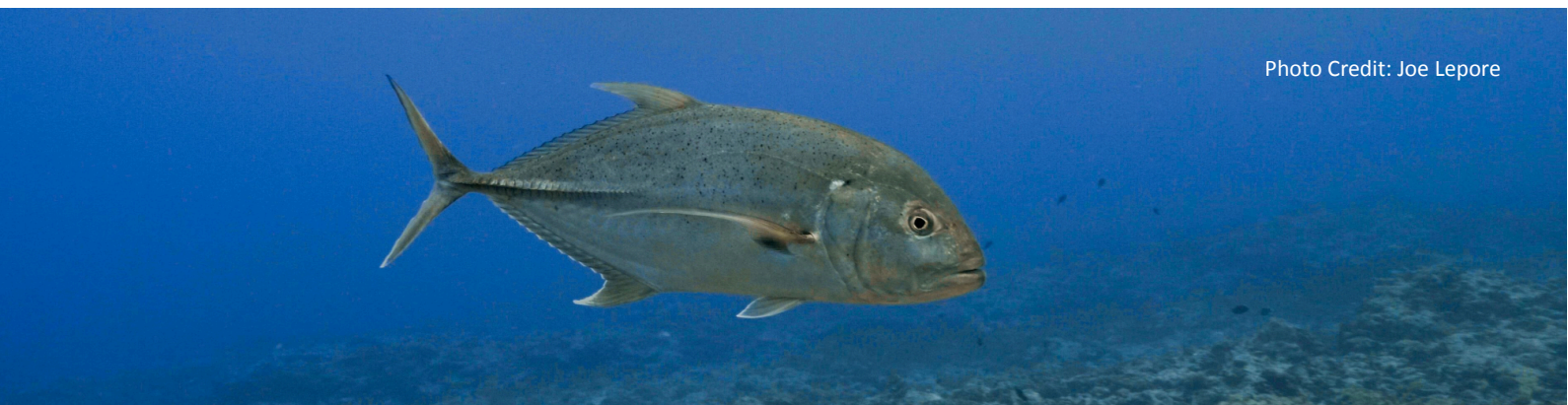
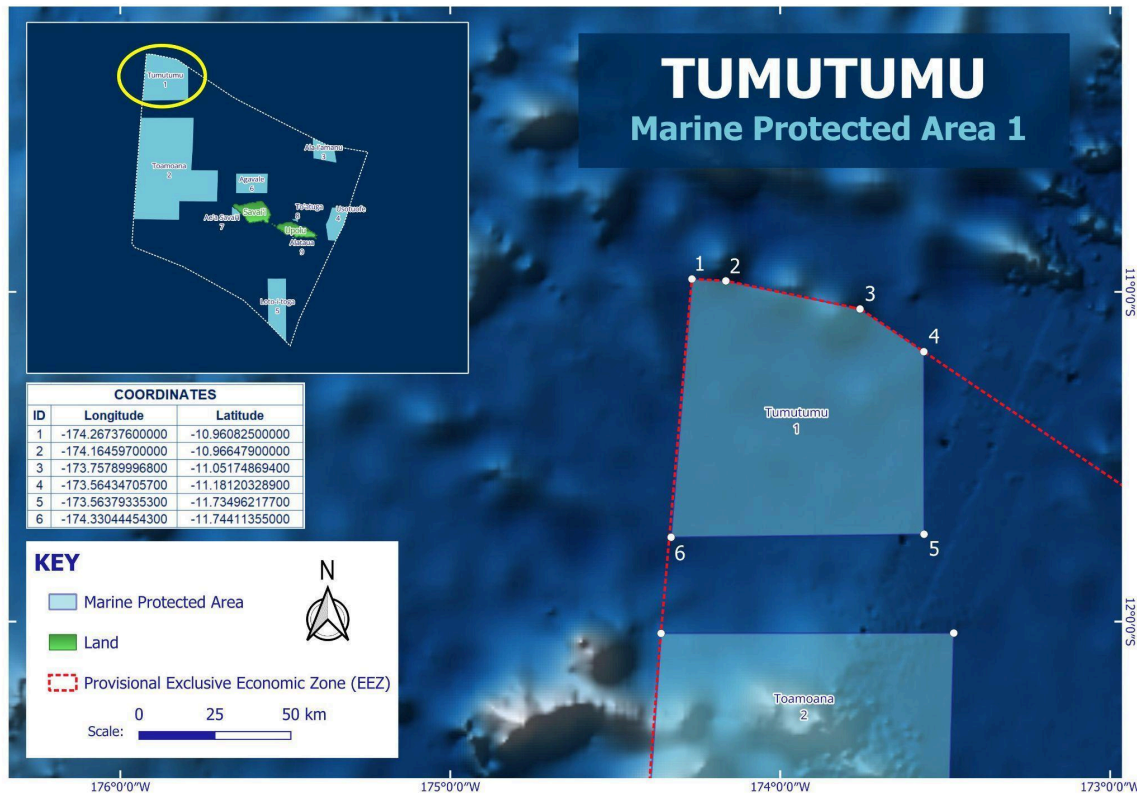


Photo Credit: Joe Lepore

Tumutumu - Marine Protected Area 1



MPA	Size (km ²)	Samoa EEZ Area (km ²)	% of marine waters	% of 30% network	Distance from shore (closest point)
Tumutumu	6302.73	120000.00	5.25	17.649	212.08 km

The Tumutumu MPA is located at the northwest edge of the EEZ, near Tokelau to the north and Wallis and Futuna to the west. The name "Tumutumu" signifies the northernmost MPA.

Key Features Protected

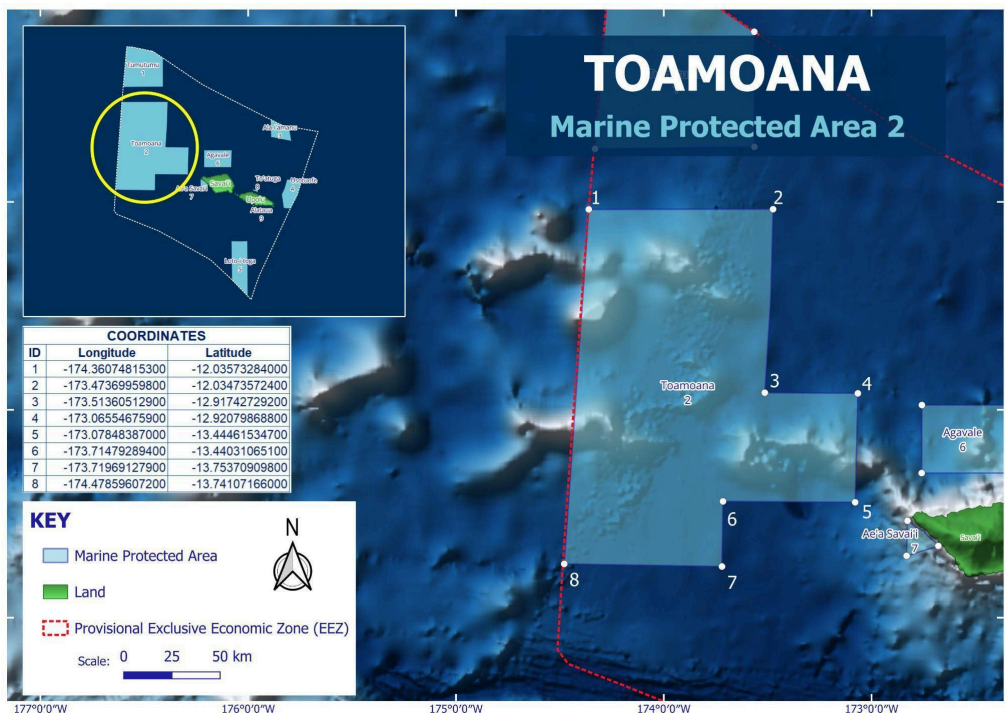
The Tumutumu MPA protects a number of important geomorphic features as well as representing 5% of all deepwater bioregions (12% of La'i). These features play a crucial role in shaping oceanic currents, influencing ecosystems and providing important habitats for Samoa's marine life.

Key contributing features within the Tumutumu MPA include:

- 5% of all deepwater marine bioregions
- 2% of all Offshore Special Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs)
- 6% of all abyssal classifications (hills, mountains & valleys)
- 1% of all escarpments
- 6% of all seamount morphology types*

*Samoa currently has a total of 5 types of seamounts that occur within its ocean space.

Toamoana - Marine Protected Area 2



MPA	Size (km ²)	Samoa EEZ Area (km ²)	% of marine waters	% of 30% network	Distance from shore (closest point)
Toamoana	20908.65	120000.00	17.43	58.551	30.83 km

The Toamoana MPA is the largest fully protected MPA, covering an estimated 20908.65 km², which represents 17.43% of the EEZ. The name *Toamoana* reflects the key roles of the two large seamounts, Toafilemu and Toafea'i, which are seen as warriors protecting the ecosystems and biodiversity within the protected area.

The MPA encompasses several crucial ecological features, including the Pasco Banks, Pasco, To'afilemu, Toafeai, and numerous unnamed seamounts. These areas are considered oceanic "hotspots" of life and are home to diverse benthic communities and pelagic organisms.

The Toamoana MPA also includes mesophotic coral reefs, which cover an area of approximately 279 km² and contribute to the coral reef ecosystem found in this area. Additionally, the MPA comprises two underwater geological formations, Machias and Field Guyots, and their associated escarpments, which are rich in biodiversity. The Si'usi'u and Tuapi'o seamounts, located in the eastern arm of the MPA, are benthic zone features that attract pelagic species and are home to diverse bottomfish stocks.

Key Features Protected

The Toamoana MPA protects a number of important geomorphic features and represents 16% of all deepwater bioregions (55% of Fafa-o-Mauga and 5% of La'i, 12% of Vasa-i-Saute). These features play a crucial role in shaping oceanic currents, influencing ecosystems and providing important habitats for Samoa's marine life.

Key contributing features within the Toamoana MPA include:

- 16% of all deepwater marine bioregions
- 36% of all Offshore Special Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs)
- 17% of all abyssal classifications (hills, mountains & valleys)
- 3% of all canyons classifications (blind and shelf incising)
- 30% of all escarpments
- 99% of all guyots
- 50% of all ridges
- 32% of all seamount morphology types
- 16% of all shelf classifications (high and medium)
- 17% of all slopes

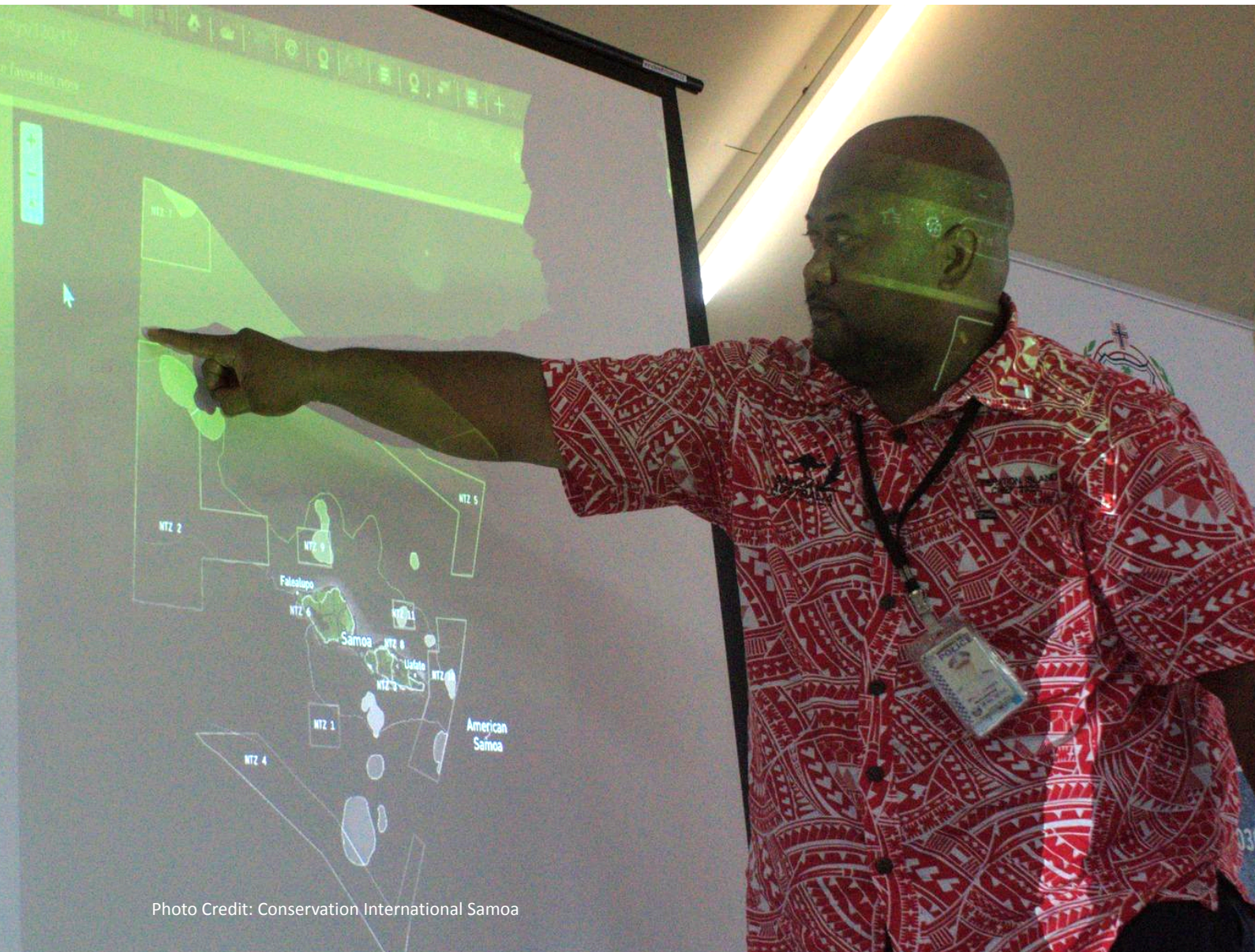
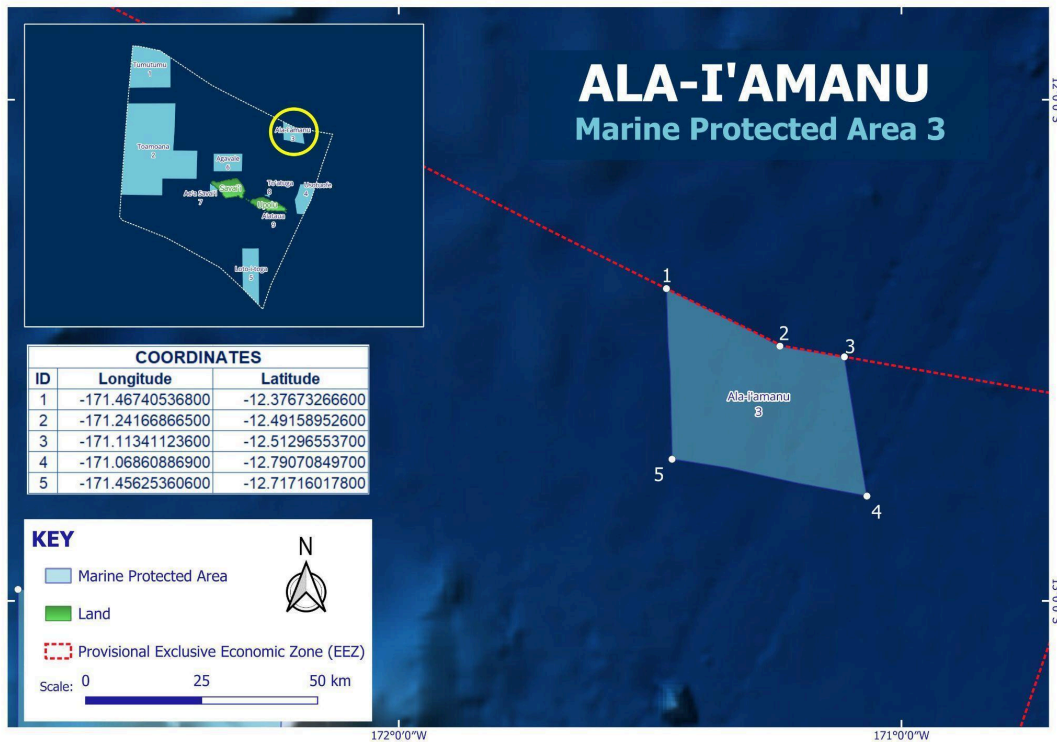


Photo Credit: Conservation International Samoa

Ala-I'amanu - Marine Protected Area 3



MPA Name	Size (km ²)	Samoa EEZ Area (km ²)	% of marine waters	% of 30% network	Distance from shore (closest point)
Ala-I'amanu	1280.15	120000.00	1.07	3.585	123.44 km

The Ala-I'amanu MPA is located along the northwest border of the EEZ boundary, adjacent to Tokelau. It is part of an important migrating route for marine mammals within Samoa's offshore region.

Ala-I'amanu contains 18% of an Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA) (Marine Mammal Protected Areas Taskforce, 2020) and is considered an offshore SUMA. The IMMA area surrounds the main islands, covering an area of 12,548 km² and extending into the southern portion of the O6 SUMA. The protected area aims to preserve the northern part of the whale migration route.

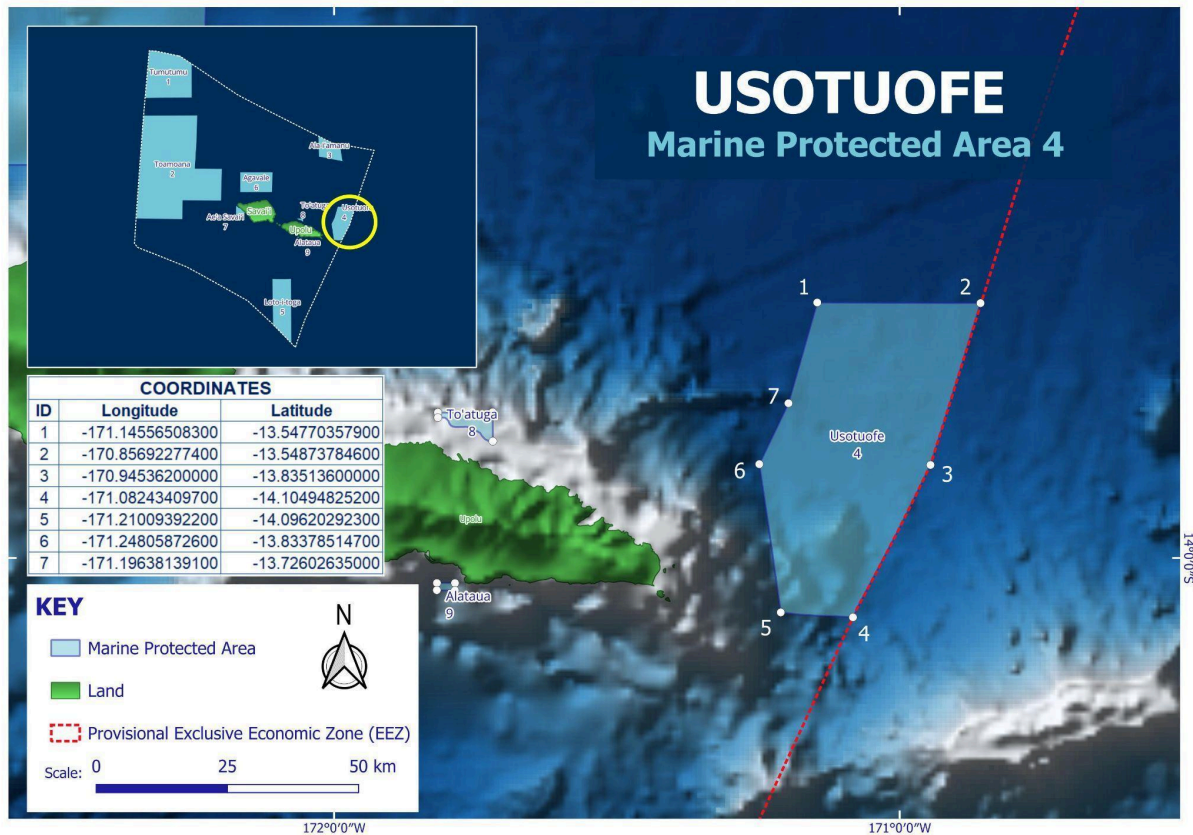
Key Features Protected

The Ala-I'amanu MPA protects a number of important geomorphic features and represents 1% of all deepwater bioregions (2% of La'i). These features play a crucial role in shaping oceanic currents, influencing ecosystems and providing important habitats for Samoa's marine life.

Key contributing features within the Ala-I'amanu MPA include:

- 1% of all deepwater marine bioregions
- 4% of all Offshore Special Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs)
- 1% of all abyssal classifications (hills, mountains & valleys)
- 7% of all basins

Usotu'ofe - Marine Protected Area 4



MPA Name	Size (km ²)	Samoa EEZ Area (km ²)	% of marine waters	% of 30% network	Distance from shore (closest point)
Usotuo'ofe	1682.78	120000.00	1.40	4.712	21.58 km

The Usotu'ofe MPA runs parallel to the border of the Samoa–American Samoa EEZ and is located to the east of Upolu Island. The name Usotu'ofe symbolises the shared borders between the two Samoas as nations with a shared culture, values, and language.

The protected area offers protection to oceanic pelagic and bottomfish species and unique and special habitats, as well as ecologically and biologically significant areas, particularly aggregation and migration areas for marine mammals.

Key Features Protected

The Usotu'ofe MPA protects a number of important geomorphic features and represents 1% of all deepwater bioregions (15% of l'a manu and 1% of La'i). These features play a crucial role in shaping oceanic currents, influencing ecosystems and providing important habitats for Samoa's marine life.

Key contributing features within the Usotu'ofe MPA include:

- 1% of all deepwater marine bioregions
- 8% of all Ecologically Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs)
- 6% of all Offshore Special Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs)
- 1% of all abyssal classifications (hills, mountains & valleys)

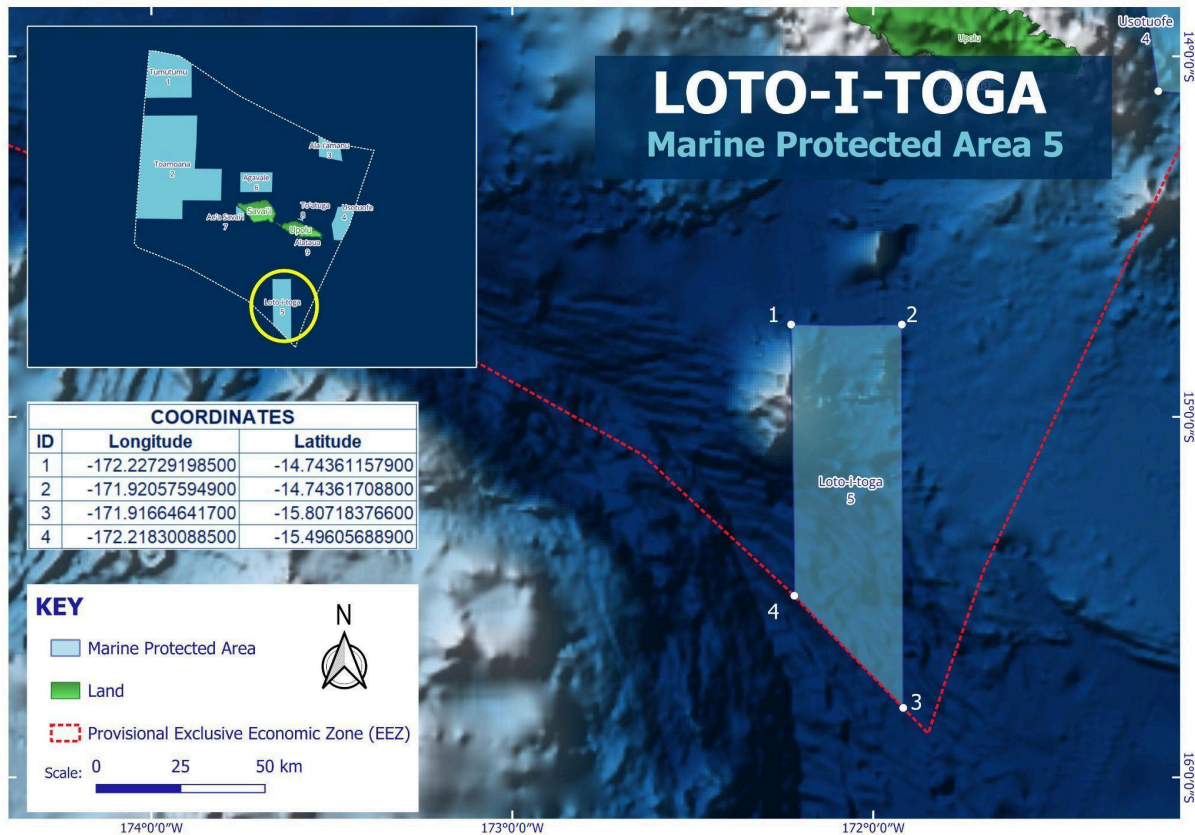


- 1% of all escarpments
- 3% of all seamount morphology types
- 4% of all slopes

Photo Credit: MNRE



Loto-i-Toga - Marine Protected Area 5



MPA Name	Size (km ²)	Samoa EEZ Area (km ²)	% of marine waters	% of 30% network	Distance from shore (closest point)
Loto-i-toga	3266.81	120000.00	2.72	9.148	79.22 km

The Loto-i-Toga MPA is located in the upper northern part of the Tonga Trench and runs parallel to the southern boundary of Samoa’s EEZ against Tonga.

The trench hosts distinct communities with high levels of species endemism. These species have adapted to the extreme conditions of darkness, hydrostatic pressure, low temperature, and limited food supply.

The Loto-i-Toga MPA extends northward and overlaps with a large seamount named Uo-mamae and a small unnamed seamount located closer to the trench. The MPA covers 5.6% of the seamounts found in the EEZ. The seamount lies in an area with very high downwelling eddy frequency and high dissolved oxygen concentration, indicating high primary productivity and the potential for aggregations of marine life.

Key Features Protected

The Loto-i-Toga MPA protects a number of important geomorphic features and represents 3% of all deepwater bioregions (11% of Loto-i-Tonga and 7% of Vasa-i-Saute). These features play a crucial role in shaping oceanic currents, influencing ecosystems and providing important habitats for Samoa’s marine life.

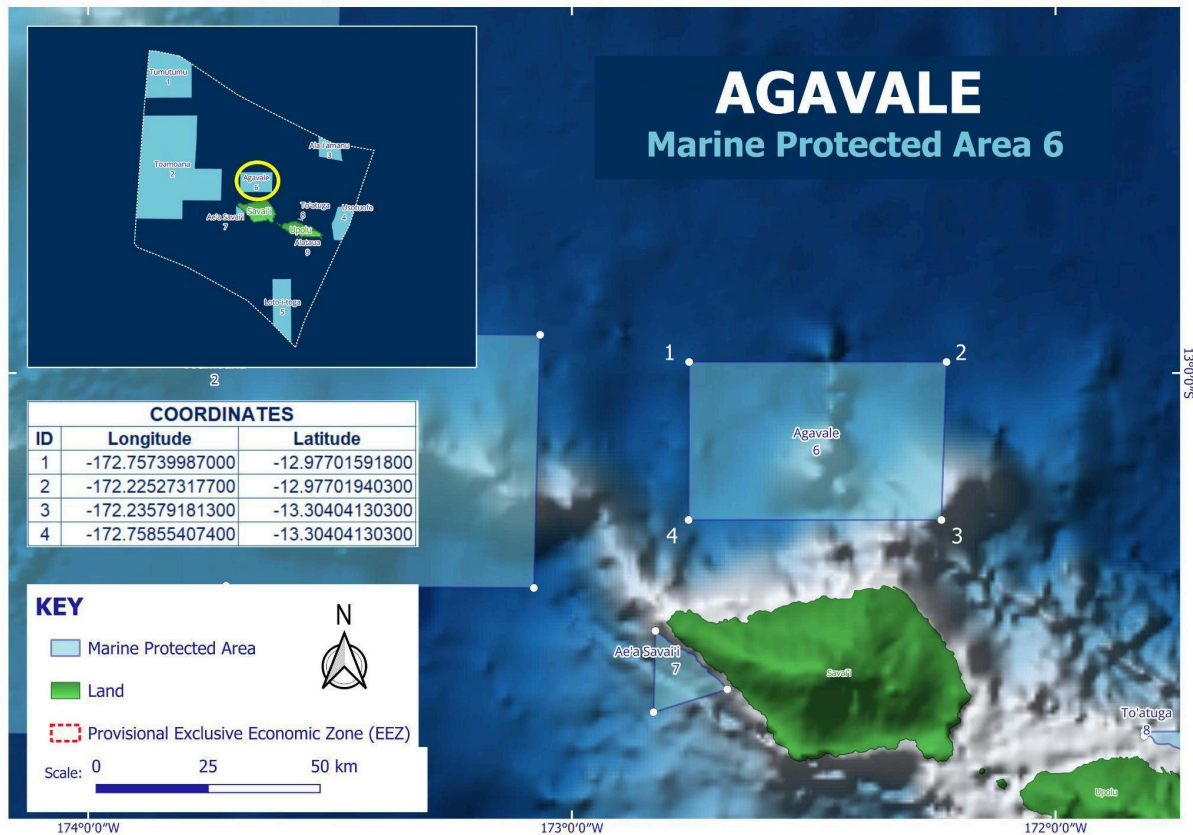
Key contributing features within the Loto-i-Toga MPA include:

- 3% of all deepwater marine bioregions
- 6% of all Offshore Special Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs)
- 3% of all abyssal classifications (hills, mountains & valleys)
- 9% of all basins
- 6% of all escarpments
- 14% of all hadals
- 1% of all ridges
- 12% of all seamount morphology types
- 14% of all trenches



Photo Credit: Kyle Roepke

Agavale - Marine Protected Area 6



MPA Name	Size (km ²)	Samoa EEZ Area (km ²)	% of marine waters	% of 30% network	Distance from shore (closest point)
Agavale	2068.98	120000.00	1.72	5.794	15.03 km

The Agavle MPA is a SUMA that encompasses submarine ridges and guyots, located around 15.98 km from the nearest shore of the north Savaii and extending to the Agavle Seamount, hence the name *Agavle*. The protected area also includes part of Taumatau Seamount.

Agavale Seamount is classified as an intermediate-sized, large, tall, and deep seamount. It stands 1,986 metres tall, with its summit at a depth of 995 metres. On the eastern side of MPA 6 lies Taumatau Seamount, which is 2,220 metres high, with its summit at 820 metres and ocean floor at 3,040 metres. Taumatau Seamount is considered very small, has a volume of 869 km³, is relatively round and regular, and has smooth edges. The two seamounts and clusters of ridges and guyots are classified as offshore SUMAs. The proposed protected area includes 3.4%, or 854 km², of all the offshore SUMAs.



Key Features Protected

The Agavale MPA protects a number of important geomorphic features and represents 2% of all deepwater bioregions (8% of Fafa-o-Mauga and 8% of La'i). These features play a crucial role in shaping oceanic currents, influencing ecosystems, and providing important habitats for Samoa's marine life.

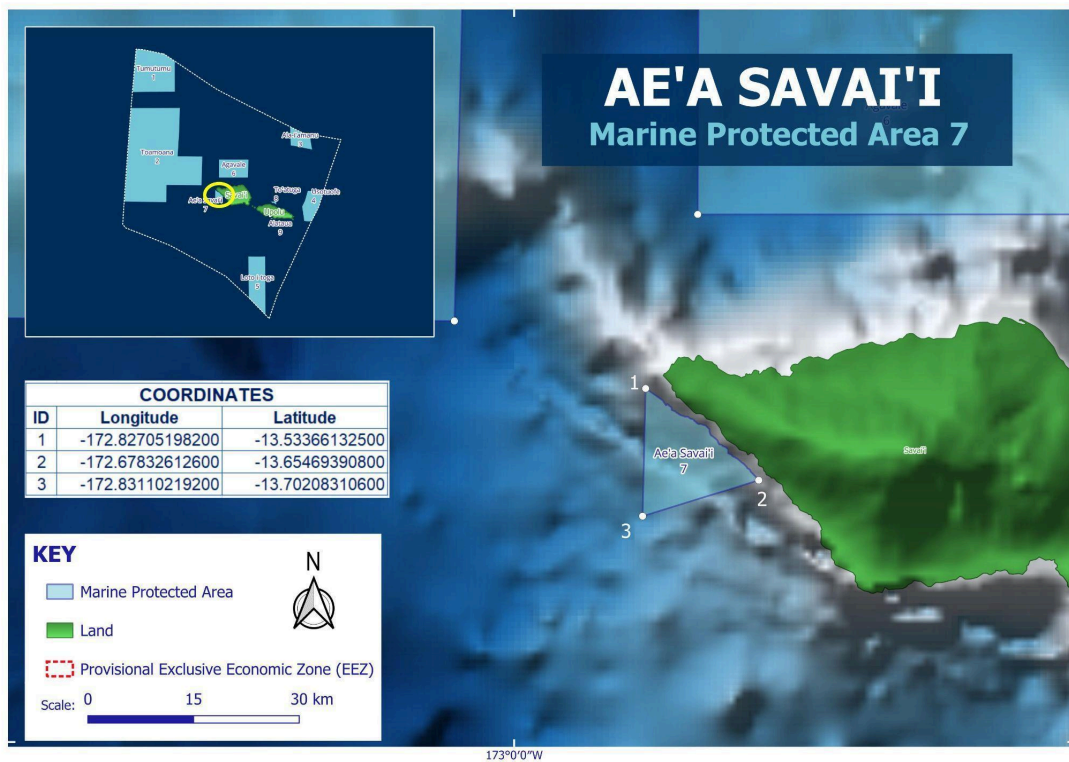
Key contributing features within the Agavale MPA include:

- 2% of all deepwater marine bioregions
- 4% of all Offshore Special Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs)
- 1% of all abyssal classifications (hills, mountains & valleys)
- 10% of all canyons classifications (blind and shelf incising)
- 4% of all escarpments
- 5% of all ridges
- 9% of all seamount morphology types
- 4% of all slopes

Photo Credit: Kyle Roepke



Ae'a Savai'i - Marine Protected Area 7



MPA Name	Size (km ²)	Samoa EEZ Area (km ²)	% of marine waters	% of 30% network	Distance from shore (closest point)
Ae'a Savai'i	162.06	120000.00	0.14	0.454	945 m

The Ae'a Savai'i MPA is situated along the coast of Asau to Samata villages in Savaii. The community villages on the west of the region are traditionally known as Ae'a Sisifo, and those located on the east are known as A'ea Sasa'e. The MPA is located 0.93 km from the nearest shore of Savai'i Island and falls within the Territorial Zone, which extends 12 nautical miles from the coastline.

The MPA covers an area of 162 km², which is equivalent to 0.14% of the EEZ. 0.4% of the Vasa-i-Saute subregion overlaps with Ae'a Savai'i MPA. Although most of the MPA lies in the offshore region, a small level of coastal ecological communities overlap with MPA 7.

Coastal ecological coverage includes less than 0.1% of coral, less than 0.1% of coral/algae, and 4.3% of unknown substrates. The MPA includes a portion of the coral reef seafloor benthic zone, which supports several ecological structures.

Key Features Protected

The Ae'a Savai'i MPA protects a number of important geomorphic features. These features play a crucial role in shaping oceanic currents, influencing ecosystems and providing important habitats for Samoa's marine life.

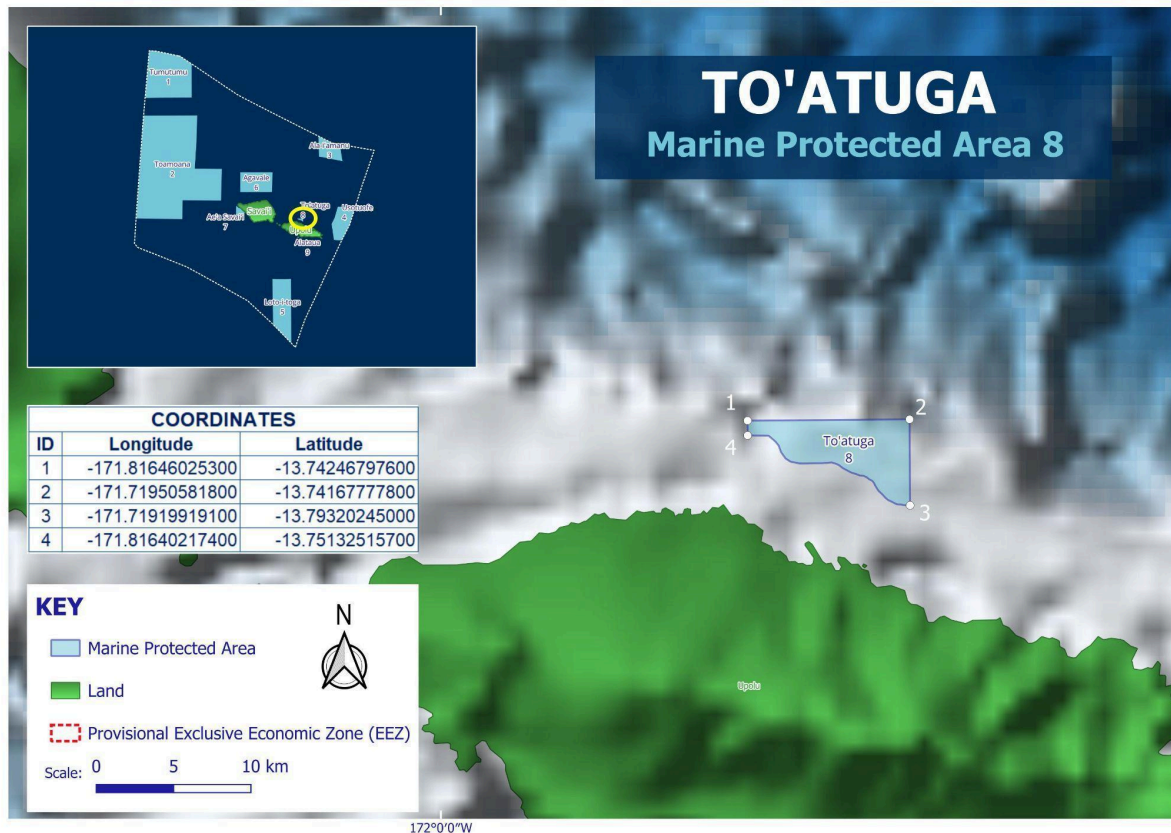
Key contributing features within the Ae'a Savai'i MPA include:

- 1% of all escarpments
- 1% of all ridges
- 1% of all slopes
- 2% of all shelf

Photo Credit: Kyle Roepke



To'atugā - Marine Protected Area 8



MPA Name	Size (km ²)	Samoa EEZ Area (km ²)	% of marine waters	% of 30% network	Distance from shore (closest point)
To'atugā	33.39	120000.00	0.03	0.094	4.612 km

The To'atugā MPA, also known as Five Mile Reef or To'atugā Reef, is a SUMA located approximately 4.44 km from the nearest shore north of Apia Harbour, off the north coast of Upolu Island.

The MPA is named after the traditional name of the reef To'atugā, meaning a place to relieve after facing the challenges of the ocean. It has an area of about 34 km², representing 0.03% of the EEZ. The MPA encompasses Five Mile Reef, an elongated ridge that extends in an NW-SE axis, with a broad reef top of 1,303 hectares. The depth ranges from 15-22 metres and descends to a sand and rubble bottom at 35-40 metres. Small ridges and depressions with low topographic relief characterise the reef top.

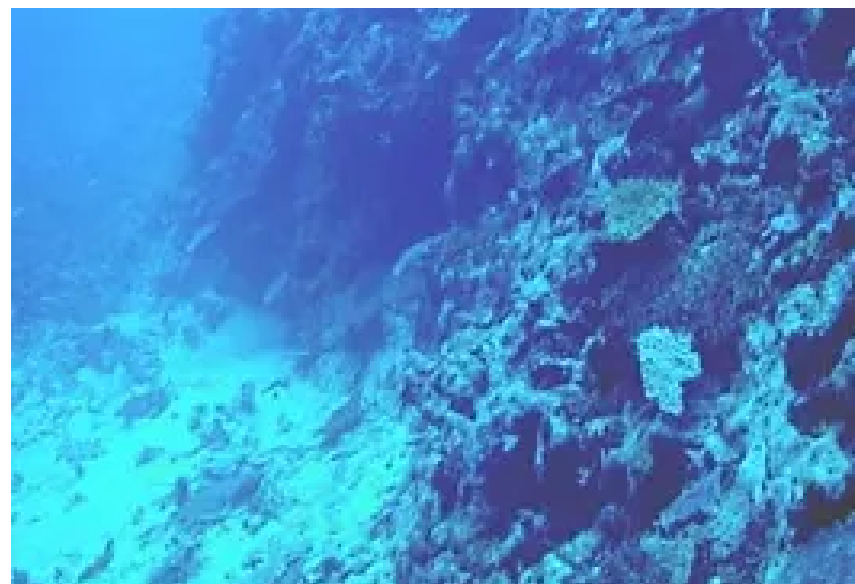
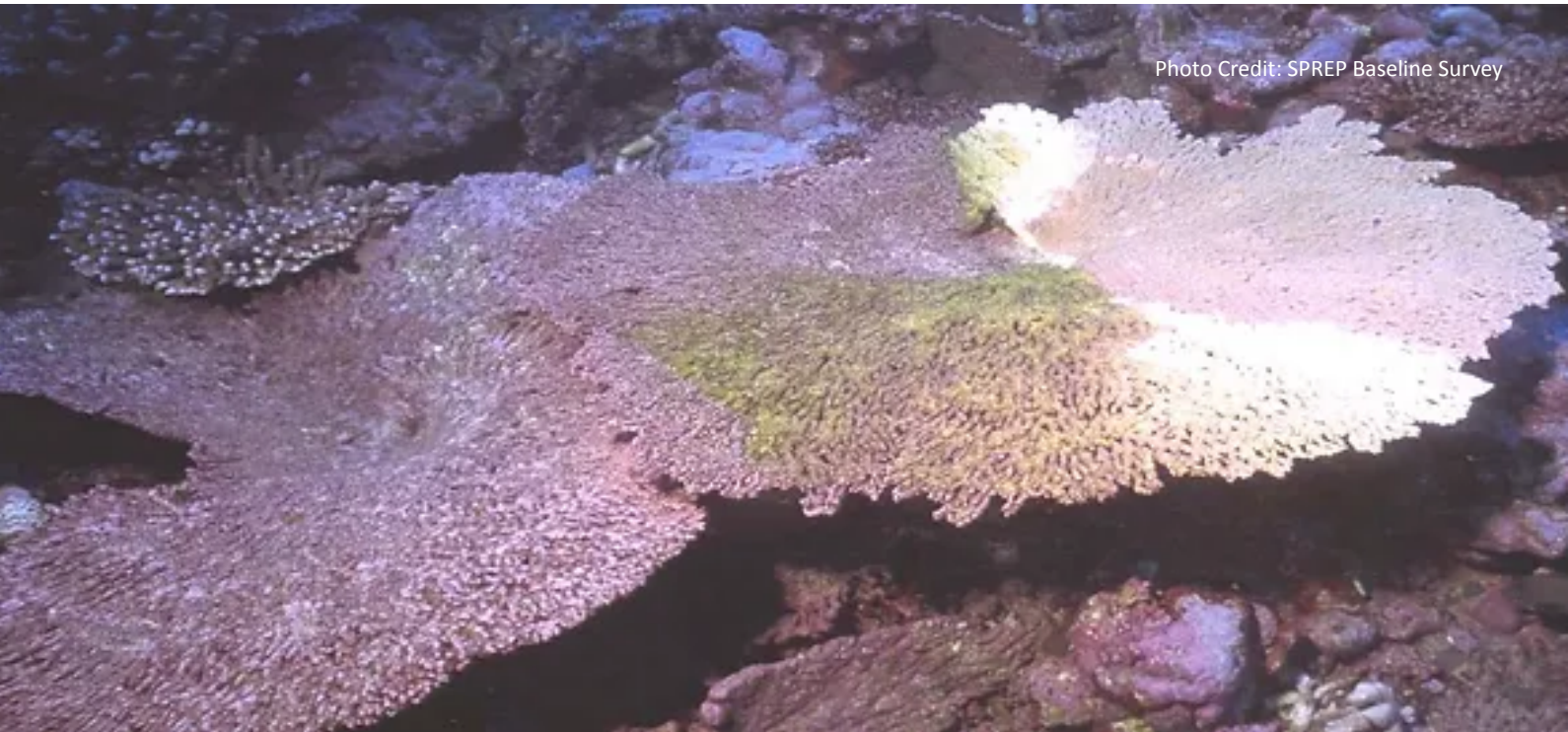
The MPA also includes the reef top, which is home to diverse coral reef species and ecosystems. It also provides partial protection for oceanic and coastal species. The protection site primarily aims to preserve unique, special habitats, coral reef ecosystems, and biodiversity. The MPA will also protect the source of reef fish larvae, recruiting young fishes to the surrounding reef areas of Upolu Island. Protecting coral reefs and ecosystems on the To'atugā reef will strengthen resilience to high-energy waves impacting Apia Port and facilities.

Key Features Protected

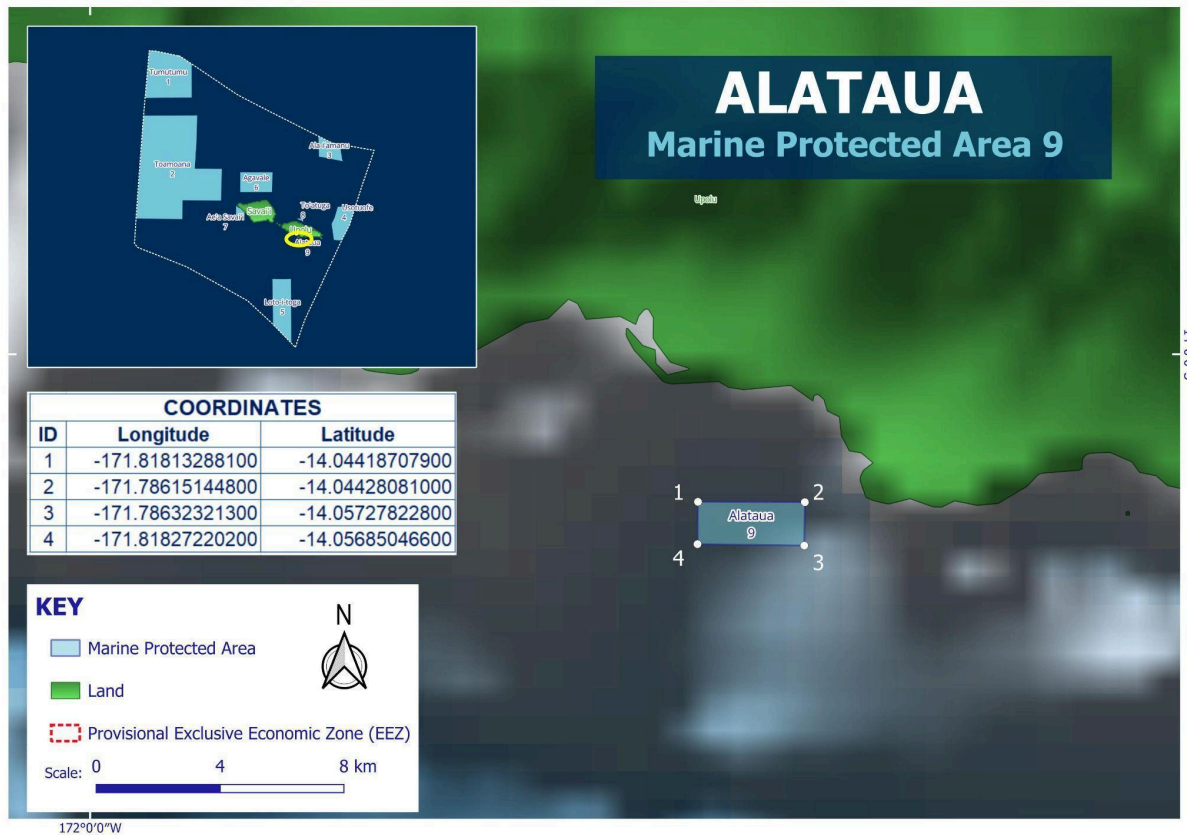


- 0.1% of all Offshore Special Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs)
- Less than 0.1% of all Ecologically Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs)
- 5.7% of all Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)
- 1.6% of all shelf
- Less than 0.1% of all escarpments

The MPA also overlaps with 0.1% of the Fafa-o-Mauga offshore marine bioregion.



Alataua - Marine Protected Area 9



MPA Name	Size (km ²)	Samoa EEZ Area (km ²)	% of marine waters	% of 30% network	Distance from shore (closest point)
Alataua	4.90	120000.00	0.00	0.014	1.909 km

The Alataua MPA is situated offshore along the traditional district of Safata, known for having the fiercest warriors in warfare. The protected area is located about 1.92 km from the closest shore of Sa'anapu/Sataoa Mangrove Protected Area. It covers an area of approximately 5 km², less than 0.1% of the EEZ. The MPA overlaps with less than 0.1% of the l'a-manu offshore bioregion. The MPA covers a minimal portion of the ecologically/biologically significant areas.

The Alataua MPA protects the residential and pelagic species that breed in offshore sites. It is crucial for preserving the biodiversity that migrates to the nearby coastal mangrove areas. Mangroves serve as nursery grounds for inshore and offshore species. Scientific research has shown a direct correlation between the offshore abundance of adult fish and the presence or absence of mangroves (IUCN, 2017).

Key Features Protected

- 0.1% of all escarpments
- 0.1% of all ridges
- 0.2% of all canyons



9. ADMINISTRATION & IMPLEMENTATION OF SAMOA MARINE SPATIAL PLAN

Legal Authority for Management

Section 116 of the *Lands, Surveys and Environment Act 1989* outlines the legal framework for the Plan, designating MNRE as responsible for developing, implementing and reviewing the Plan. Current sectoral legislation that applies in Samoa’s water will remain and be operative with the expectation that management decisions align with the Plan.

The Plan incorporates areas currently managed under Samoan law for specific purposes and identifies nine new fully protected Marine Protected Areas in offshore waters. Pending legislation will define the types and process for incorporating marine spatial zones in future iterations of this Plan, including their specific locations, sizes, and activities that are permitted or prohibited within each zone to identify, protect, conserve, and manage the use of marine resources in Samoan waters.

Plan Revision

MNRE, in close consultation with all line Ministries, will review the Plan every ten years, with a mid-term review every five years in alignment with the State of Environment (SOE) review.

This process will involve:

- Evaluating the plan’s effectiveness against the Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS)
- Monitoring the delivery and performance of the Implementation Plan.
- Assessing zoning and management effectiveness.
- Identifying future goals and objectives.

The review will also guide ongoing adaptive management on an as-needed basis and inform the development of new Implementation and Zoning Plans for the Plan.

Phased Implementation of New Marine Protected Areas

Once formally designated, the implementation of protection measures will occur in two phases, as outlined below.

Table 7: Marine Protected Area Network Phases.

Phases	MPA #	MPA Name	Date
First	1	Tumutumumu	2025 (In accordance with the <i>Lands, Surveys and Environment Act 1989</i>)
	2	Toamoana	
	3	Ala-i’amanu	
	4	Usotu’ofe	
	5	Loto-i-Toga	
Second	6	Agavale	2027 (In accordance with the <i>Lands, Surveys and Environment Act 1989</i>)
	7	Ae’a Savai’i	
	8	To’atugā	
	9	Alataua	

Implementation Plan

The Plan is supported by a ten-year Implementation Plan led by MNRE in close coordination with other line Ministries and with the direction and support of any associated working groups, advisory, and technical committees established. The Implementation Plan will be further developed and



supported through input and consultation with stakeholders and partners, and will comply with requirements set out in supporting regulations.

The Implementation Plan outlines the management actions to be undertaken during the ten-year timeframe of the Plan. The Plan will include actions aligned with the six strategic priorities within the SOS: Governance and Coordination, Financial Sustainability, Research and Data Collection, Monitoring and Surveillance, Policy and Legislation, and Awareness and Capacity Building.

Provided below is an initial outline of priority implementation needs to immediately progress actions. These build on the extensive efforts already underway by individual Ministries in support of the SOS.

1. Policy and Legislation

Ensuring coordination across legal and policy frameworks within Samoa is vital for effective implementation of the Plan. Implementation should be primarily guided by the framework outlined in pending legislation and associated regulations, but should also take into account any existing legislative statutes, policies and entities managing Samoan waters.

2. Governance and Coordination

Because the MSP is multi-sectoral and relevant to different ministries and other entities across government, implementation must be a coordinated effort.

3. Financial Sustainability

Achieving financial sustainability is essential for the successful implementation of the MSP. To ensure the Plan's effectiveness, the Implementation Plan must include a Funding Strategy that builds on existing government resources, international donor and grant funding, and other financing mechanisms. Further, it must support processes and systems that secure sustainable financing.

4. Monitoring and Surveillance

A robust monitoring and surveillance strategy is essential for MPAs to ensure adherence to regulations, prevent illegal activities, and safeguard the long-term sustainability of these marine environments. These strategies will be guided by an initial assessment of existing monitoring, compliance and enforcement capacities, as well as available resources and government priorities.

5. Research and Data Collection

Robust research and data collection, management, and sharing are fundamental to successful monitoring of the Plan's effectiveness. Monitoring will be guided by objectives of the SOS and outlined in a Monitoring Plan.

6. Awareness and Capacity Building

A Communications Plan will ensure clear and transparent communication with relevant stakeholders to encourage and improve compliance with the MSP's rules and regulations.

Further, resources will be allocated to building the necessary capacity to implement the Plan across the relevant sectors.

A photograph of a diver underwater, seen from above, swimming in clear blue water.

Photo Credit: Joe Lepore



10. GLOSSARY

Marine Protected Area (MPA): A clearly defined geographical space or area within or adjacent to the marine environment (together with its overlying waters and associated flora, fauna, and historical and cultural features), which is recognized, dedicated, managed and reserved, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

Fully Protected Marine Protected Areas: A Marine Protected Area where no extractive uses are permitted.

Special Unique Marine Area (SUMA): Special and/or Unique Marine Areas as identified in Samoa (Ceccarelli, D.M., Wendt, H., Kaitu'u, J., Mulipola, A., Satoa, M. and Chinnamma, R. (2020)).

Bioregions / Bioregionalisation: The classification of the marine environment into spatial units that host similar biota, which can serve to provide spatially explicit surrogates of biodiversity for marine conservation and management (Ceccarelli, D.M., Wendt, H., Kaitu'u, J., Bhurrah, M., Mulipola, A.P., Chinnamma, R. (2021)).

Samoa Waters: All areas of Samoa's internal waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone and Exclusive Economic Zone (as defined by the Maritime Zones Act 1999).

Internal waters: Any areas of the sea that are on the landward side of the baseline of the territorial sea of Samoa.

Territorial waters: Comprises those areas of the sea from the baseline, the low-water mark of any reef or low-water line along the coast of Samoa, to 12 nautical miles from the nearest point of the baseline.

Contiguous Zone: Comprises the part of the sea within 24 nautical miles from the baseline from which the territorial sea is measured.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): Includes the area of the sea, seabed, and subsoil that are beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea, extending to 200 nautical miles seaward from the nearest point of the territorial sea baseline.

Marine Spatial Plan Zones: The separation of uses in the marine environment that are thought to be incompatible (adapted from UNESCO-IOC/European Commission (2021)).

Marine Spatial Planning: A public process of analysing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives that have been specified through a political process (UNESCO-IOC/European Commission (2021)).

Existing Spatially Managed Areas: For the purposes of this report, an area with different spatial extensions where activities are prohibited or allowed.



Offshore Waters: Samoan waters beyond the 200 metre contour depth to the boundary of the EEZ.



Photo Credit: Andy Estep



11. ACRONYMS

CCT	Consultation Core Team
CI	Conservation International Foundation
CSO	Community Society Organisation
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
MESV	Marine Ecosystem Service Valuation
MNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MOP	Ministry of Police
MSP	Marine Spatial Plan
MWCSD	Ministry of Women, Community Service and Development
MWTI	Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructures
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
SCS	Samoa Conservation Society
SOS	Samoa Ocean Strategy (2020-2030)
SPA	Samoa Port Authority 6 SSC Samoa Shipping Corporation
SSS	Samoa Shipping Service
SUMAs	Special Unique Marine Areas
SUNGO	Samoa Umbrella for Non-Government Organisations



APPENDIX A

Strategic Priorities outlined in Samoa Ocean Strategy:

Samoa Ocean Strategy Strategic Priorities

The SOS outlines six strategic priorities, each with specific solutions, objectives, and timelines.

- Governance and Coordination
 - Create a National Ocean Steering Committee
 - Formally define Samoa's Maritime Boundaries
- Financial Sustainability
 - Develop sustainable ocean financing mechanisms
- Research and Data Collection
 - Improve scientific research, data collection, and monitoring within Samoa's ocean
 - Complete a Marine Spatial Plan for Samoa's ocean
- Monitoring and Surveillance
 - Strengthen monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement across Samoa's ocean
 - Strengthen the national Marine Protected Area network
 - Establish effective protection and management of endangered marine migratory species
- Policy and Legislation
 - Strengthen policy and legislation for Coastal Ecosystem Services protection
 - Integrate Ecosystem-Based Approach into existing climate change adaptation management plans and initiatives
 - Review existing policies and establish legislation, where appropriate, to manage risks posed by deep-sea and seabed exploration
- Awareness and Capacity Building
 - Strengthen effectiveness of coastal management using traditional knowledge, innovation, and marine science
 - Improve waste and marine pollution management at a national level

APPENDIX B

NOSC members include:

- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF)
- Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Ministry of Finance (MOF)
- Office of Attorney General
- Ministry of Police (MOP)
- Ministry of Customs and Revenue
- Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure (MWTI)
- Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO)

NOSC Observers include:

- Conservation International (CI)
- Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
- National University of Samoa

APPENDIX C

Samoa Geomorphic Features

Conservation International, GRID-Arendal and Geoscience Australia recently collaborated to produce a map of the global distribution of seafloor geomorphic features.

The global seafloor geomorphic features map represents an important contribution towards the understanding of the distribution of blue habitats. Certain geomorphic features are known to be good surrogates for biodiversity. For example, seamounts support a different suite of species to abyssal plains. A detailed description and analysis of the global geomorphic features map can be found in the scientific paper published in Marine Geology (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.margeo.2014.01.011>). The map and the underlying spatial data can be accessed from <http://www.bluehabitats.org/>.

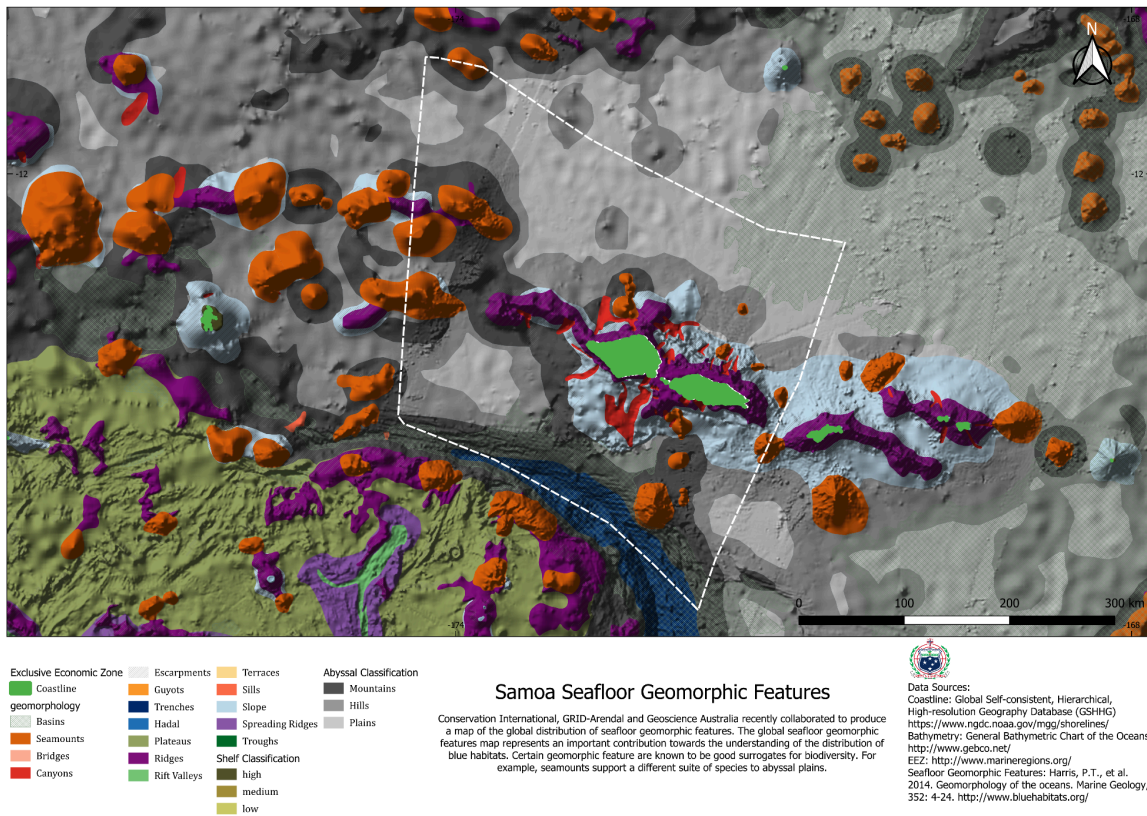


Figure 8: A map of the global distribution of seafloor geomorphic features in Samoa.