

**Marine Conservation Areas Open House
American Samoa Meeting
October 9, 2008
Compilation of Verbal Public Comments**

Historic and Scientific Interest

Questions for discussion: Are there specific areas, living marine resources, cultural or historical resources, or artifacts of scientific or historic interest? For example: items or areas of interest related to World War II; areas important to telling the culture or history of the Pacific Islands; unique or special areas, ecosystems or living or non-living marine resources.

- Rose Atoll is a nesting site for the green sea turtle and endangered humpback whale; bottlenosed dolphins are also common
- Over 300 research reports have been written in the last century on Rose Atoll; that says a lot about the importance of area
- Rose Atoll is the most important seabird area in Territory
- Rose Atoll is an important element for the Territory; the only refuge we have that provides important attributes

Recognition

Questions for discussion: Should these places be given national recognition. For example: items of interest to the nation; opportunities for education and research; highlight for tourism.

- I'm for the recognition and the Monument, as long as American Samoan people get the benefit and the funding
- I recommend the President leave Rose Atoll as status quo and provide adequate funding. We know the current limitations and won't be surprised in the future.
- Is designation of a monument permanent? What happens when you designate the monument? Make it adaptive
- It is essential that the decision balances both the human need and the scientific need
- In other parts of the world (i.e. Venezuela) subsidies are provided for fishermen that are forced out of conservation areas. We would like the same consideration
- Although we are commercial fishermen, we are local residents and would like to know Governor's position
 - *[Facilitator Comment] The Governor of American Samoa did send a request asking for consideration. He visited Rose Atoll in March on a NOAA research vessel. He saw the significance of that ecosystem to the whole Territorial environment and natural resources. When he returned, he wanted to ensure its protection, because the island is so remote, we don't have resources to protect and monitor the area. He wrote the President asking for consideration to better our ability to monitor the site. It was never the intent of the Governor to discredit fishers; this is a breeding area for the resources you fish, and we need to sustain it for future generations. The Governor had the option to request 200 nmi or more; but he limited it to 12 nmi. The Governor did not ignore we had to go through this process and allow public input;*

that's why we're here. In reference to consulting with residents of Manua, some consultation is reflected in the 300 research reports.

- I don't think any of us question the importance of Rose Atoll; we have always learned that island has importance and value. We can't go there because we could damage resources. What does the Governor want the President to do?

- *[Facilitator Comment] The Governor asked the President to declare Rose Atoll as a National Monument. A monument provides more visibility and resources. Financial resources have always been a problem. This will provide more attention to continue with research and monitoring.*
- *Within the Governor's request, there certainly is room to consider future generations. In 1993 a fishing vessel grounded at Rose Atoll and discharged over 100,000 gallons of fuel. That has a lot of impact to the reef and species of area. A major outbreak of coral bleaching also occurred around the same time. People couldn't get there soon enough to collect information on impacts or how it is recovering. The Governor wants to make sure the area is not out of mind and sight so that we are better prepared in the future. Current 3 nmi may not be enough; 12 nmi provides additional buffer. His foresight is to ensure there is not a reoccurrence and that resources remain for future generations. He did not recommend 200 nmi, but recommended 12 nmi recognizing the needs of stakeholders.*

Coordinated Management

Questions for discussion: Would the areas benefit from improved management? For example: could there be better coordination among federal agencies, or better local-federal coordination? How? Why?

- Rose Atoll should be part of local fisheries management in the future. American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources should be involved

- Rose Atoll should be part of local fisheries management in the future and American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources should be involved. Scientific research should also be allowed

- What are the conditions and limitations of National Monument? We want to understand the difference between different designations. Isn't it the responsibility of the Federal Government to monitor?

- A cooperative agreement between the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources and the US Fish and Wildlife Service should be developed to manage Rose Atoll

- What are the limitations?

- *[Facilitator Comment] The Governor did not say the federal government could take over; any monument needs to include the local government. When we develop a management plan, we want to ensure your concerns are not left out.*

- I am concerned that the local fisheries management does not currently have a say in the management process

Strategic Implications

Questions for discussion: The President directed in his letter that any measures this assessment recommends needs to consider several strategic issues. Please comment on the strategic implications regarding the following activities: continued ability to carry out the military mission; compatibility with recreational and commercial fishing; compatibility with energy and mineral resources, opportunities for scientific study.

- We are concerned and don't want to be forced further out from these areas. We're commercial fishermen and we need these areas. We understand you want to protect the reefs, but we want pelagic areas left open to us. We're already further out than 50 nmi at Rose. At Jarvis and the other sites, we don't want to be that far out. We don't want the door slammed on us at all of these places
- If they take more water from us, we have no waters left to fish. Somehow we always lose waters. We are very, very concerned
- The Senate is passing a law to allow Taiwanese purse seiners to fish inside these waters. The President wants something completely different. This is very confusing
- I share the same concerns that additional waters beyond 50 nmi at Rose Atoll not be set aside.
- Currently, there are no closures around other islands except for the CNMI northern islands.
- I'm waiting for one group to come through here to protect fishermen. Venezuela and Equador protect their fishermen; the U.S. does nothing. You need to balance conservation with the needs of fishermen
- When they make rules, they make rules for everybody. We fish for tuna, albacore, skipjack - they are pelagic and move. What you're doing is protecting the place for us? Somebody else gets the fish. We should not have the same rules for longliners as for bottomfishers or purse seiners. We should have different rules for different types of fishing
- I support the idea of the monument and I would be proud to have national recognition as long as the actions that are taken and the funding provides some benefit for the people
- One of the concerns raised by some members of the fishing community is that future generations won't be able to fish around Rose Atoll. Designation as a monument will surely make that happen. Maybe the final language should include a statement to facilitate allowing our grandchildren to fish in the future
 - *[Facilitator Comment] Upon the Governors request we are certainly looking for conservation and protection for future generations. In 1993 one of the fishing boats was grounded at Rose and discharged fuel with a significant impact on the coral reef. In addition there was a coral bleaching event around the same period. We couldn't get there soon enough to determine the impact and we didn't have sufficient baseline data. We wanted to ensure that Rose isn't out of sight out of mind in the future and another event doesn't happen in the future.*
- The Taiwanese shipwreck was a problem not only to reef, but to the fishing industry. We all have VMS and the federal government knows where we are. We need to keep the need for conservation in balance with the need to develop our economy through means like commercial fishing

Protections

Questions for discussion: Should there be additional protections put in place to limit adverse effects from existing or future activities, or to maintain the character and resources of the area?

For example, from: development (cables, pipelines); discharges (dumping, wastewater); extraction (fishing, mining, energy development); other (ship groundings, anchoring).

See previous discussion.

Other Comments

- I was hoping there would be more people here to provide input, because the President will make the designation. Whatever the designation is, I'm sure it will be good for one part of the equation, but I was hoping we would have more input and public opinion. It's really good we can get our recommendations voiced, so that when the President makes his decision, it can be based on what benefits not only the researchers but the people who rely on those resources. Whatever the designation, we would like to include these comments in his decision making.

- I personally feel we are the wrong audience for this meeting. If possible, involve older generation who are closer to Rose Atoll and seek their input. They might have some important additional knowledge.

- I would like to request that they seek the input of the people involved. We don't know how the sport fishermen would react. Not everyone is represented here.