PSI2009/278
The Social and Economic Challenges of Marine Protection at Fagalele Bay National Marine Sanctuary

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In American Samoa, the success of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is largely dependant on local governance, regional economics, and cultural norms. The support of local communities is essential for monitoring and enforcement while economics and tradition dictate fishing practices and compliance with regulations. To this end, a socioeconomic assessment was completed in the summer of 2008 to evaluate the human dimensions of marine conservation at the Fagalele Bay National Marine Sanctuary (FBNMS). Exploratory variables included stakeholders and users, the extent of their use, income dependent upon sanctuary resources, and local attitudes towards marine conservation. Interviews were conducted with Village Mayors and key informants in four villages adjacent to Fagalele Bay. Following the initial assessment, a survey was distributed to village residents to identify key socioeconomic challenges that may influence marine conservation. The results of the study will contribute to the review of the management plan and instruct the establishment of future MPAs in American Samoa and throughout the South Pacific.

Number of words in abstract: 160
Keywords: Socioeconomic Analysis - Marine Sanctuary - Governance - Conservation
Technical area: Governance and the Economy: Future Challenges for the Pacific
Special session: Not specified
Presentation: No preference
Special equipment: No special equipment