

American Samoa Archipelago

Motu Lipoti

2024 Flag Day Tournament -21st Steinlager I'a Lapo'a Fishing Tournament

The Steinlager I'a Lapo'a Flag Day Fishing Tournament took place in American Samoa, attracting 15 boats and 57 anglers from New Zealand and Western Samoa. Despite a delayed start due to inclement weather, the event showcased remarkable catches and fierce competition.

In the Ladies Division, notable catches included a 15.8-pound Wahoo and an 11.2-pound Dogtooth. The Juniors Division saw a young angler from Manu'a dominate with a 59.2-pound Sailfish, a 22.4-pound Wahoo, and a 13.2-pound Dogtooth.

The Men's division showcased a wide array of catches, resulting in a highly competitive event. Team Fu'a II came out as the top team, accumulating 2,265 points, largely due to their successful catch and release of marlins and spearfish including a 347.6-pound marlin which was the record high in this event. Following close behind, Team Viking/Uno Mas earned 2,130 points scored mostly by catching and releasing 10 marlins. Team Brave Hart/Double Trouble secured third place with 1,415 points from their Spearfish catches. Overall, the tournament totaled 9,329 points with 1166.9 pounds of fish landed.

Summary	
Team	Total Points
Fu'a II	2264.80
Viking/Uno Mas	2130.60
Brave Hart/Double Trouble	1415.20
Deep Calling	1260.00
Grandee/Double Shot	1115.20
Tautai A'e	265.40
Mumua	219.80
Tava'e Ula	194.60
Avaiki	164.70
Mumbo	135.80
Blessings	103.20
Noelani	42.00
DMWR	15.60
Total Points	9326.90





Deep Sea Mining interests in American Samoa

American Samoa is being considered as a potential source for deep-sea minerals, a development that could create high-tech jobs and diversify the territory's fishing economy. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is set to review a license application from the American Samoa Economic Development Council (ASEDC) in July. In November, ASEDC signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with California-based Impossible Metals Inc. to mine polymetallic nodules and process them into battery-grade metals. According to the ASEDC Executive Director, John Wasko, there is an estimated 10 billion tons of subsea electric vehicle critical minerals on the ocean floor within American Samoa's EEZ. The discovery of these polymetallic nodules has triggered a race to the sea floors in Pacific waters that are needed for global transition from fossil fuels to clean energy.

The project aims to utilize the port infrastructure in Pago Pago and employ local residents, potentially establishing American Samoa as a hub for critical mineral receiving and refining, thereby enhancing local employment opportunities. The proposed mining method is minimally invasive, using autonomous robotic systems with artificial intelligence and computer vision to selectively harvest nodules. Critical minerals are vital for national security and economic policies, as emphasized by the Biden Administration's Inflation Reduction Act.

Despite the economic potential, deep-sea mining has raised concerns among Pacific island nations that depend on blue economy sectors like fishing, tourism, and renewable energy. Potential ecological impacts have led to calls for a moratorium, with countries such as Palau, Fiji, Samoa, and the Federated States of Micronesia advocating for a halt to such activities. The deep-sea mining initiative in American Samoa represents a significant opportunity for economic diversification and technological advancement, but it must carefully balance potential economic benefits with environmental stewardship and regional geopolitical considerations.

16th Pacific Communities Heads of Fisheries Meeting

Archie Taotasi Soliai, Director of Marine and Wildlife Resources, chaired the 16th Pacific Community Heads of Fisheries Meeting in New Caledonia. Soliai highlighted the urgent challenges of overfishing, climate change, and marine ecosystem degradation. He underscored the need for unified action and strategic collaboration to ensure the long-term sustainability of marine resources. Soliai voiced commitment to finding solutions and leveraging cultural heritage and ocean knowledge to build resilience. The meeting aimed to address climate change impacts and improve fisheries and aquaculture data management, seeking actionable steps for sustainable fisheries.

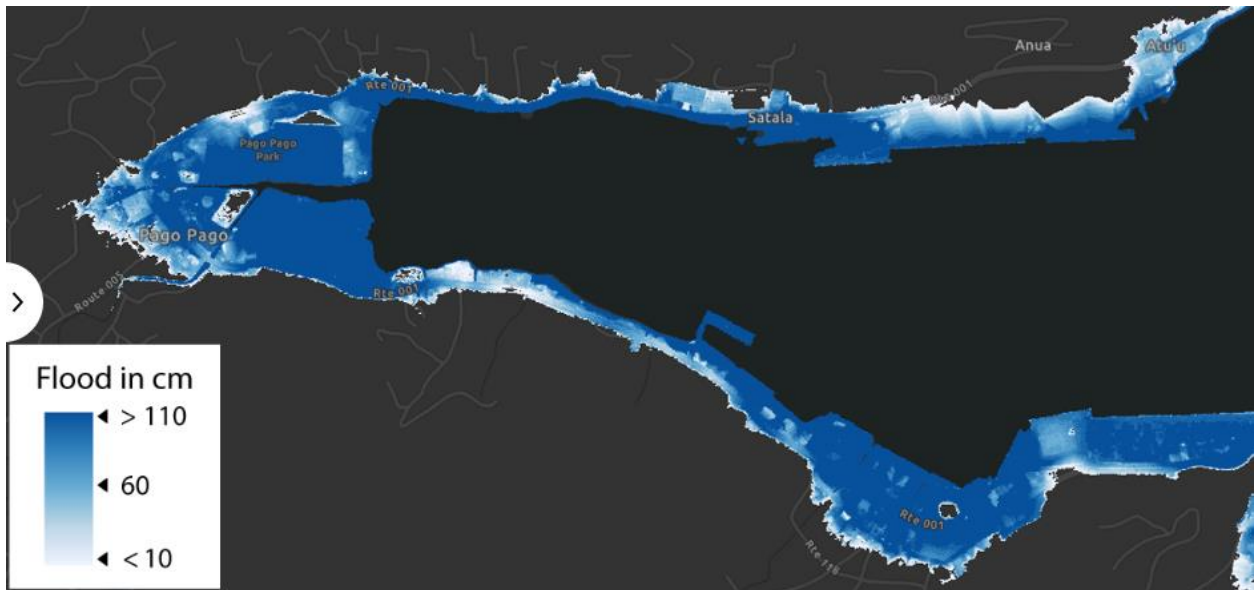
American Samoa Sinking Land Speeds Up Sea Level Rise

The article "American Samoa's Sinking Land Speeds Up Sea Level Rise" by Kimberly M. S. Cartier highlighted the significant threat that land subsidence poses to American Samoa in conjunction with climate change. American Samoa is experiencing sea level rise at four times the global average, largely due to the land sinking as the Earth's crust relaxes after a 2009 earthquake and tsunami. This dual effect of rising water and sinking land endangers infrastructure, water supply, and ecosystems.

Researchers have created an interactive tool to help residents understand and plan for the future risks of flooding. This tool allows users to see detailed projections of sea level rise under various greenhouse gas

emissions scenarios and to explore vertical land motion. The tool has proven useful for local decision-makers and community planning, aiding in grant applications for coastal infrastructure improvements.

Future plans for the tool include expanding its coverage and improving digital elevation maps to better understand subsidence patterns. The initiative has raised awareness among residents about the urgency of addressing the impacts of sea level rise and adapting to the changing environment.



AS Shipyard Services

Shipyard CEO urges transfer of tugboats to shipyard

Carlos Sanchez, the CEO of ASG Shipyard, issued a warning regarding the critical state of tugboat services at the port, and urged the government transfer of their management to the shipyard. In a letter to Lt. Governor Laapui Talauega Ale on May 7th, Sanchez emphasized the need for the port to have two tugboats, each with over 3000 horsepower, and a firefighting vessel to maintain operational efficiency. Currently, the port operates with only one tugboat, which Sanchez doubts even meets the claimed 3000 horsepower, which is critical in operations where winds are above 10 miles per hour. He also urged that this could potentially lead to Coast Guard intervention if left unaddressed.

Major shipping agencies, the Petroleum Coop, and other port users have voiced their dissatisfaction with the Port Administration's services and have offered financial assistance to help the shipyard acquire two new tugboats with 4000 and 5000 horsepower, contingent on the shipyard managing these vessels. Additionally, they are demanding a new professional crew from the United States, criticizing the current American Samoa crew for operational delays influenced by non-operational factors.

Despite initial agreement from the Port Director, the Port Administration has revealed plans to acquire two repaired tugboats from Honolulu, with repair costs escalating from \$2.5 million to \$7 million. Sanchez argues that the shipyard could instead purchase two brand new tugboats with the same funds, highlighting the shipyard's superior expertise and readiness for boat maintenance and repair. He addressed the Port's poor maintenance history, citing examples of neglected vessels, including the government-owned boat sold to Samoa that is now profitable, another that sunk, and the MV Sili, which is now slated for sale.

Sanchez states that the shipyard is better equipped to manage tugboat operations, promising to deliver two new tugboats by the end of the year if given the responsibility. He highlights the shipyard's advanced technical capabilities and continuous maintenance discipline, contrasting sharply with the Port's inadequacies.

Repair of Container Vessel Mount Cameron

The ASG Shipyard successfully repaired a broken crane on the container ship Mount Cameron, which was crucial for unloading food containers and loading StarKist Samoa products for shipment to the US. CEO Carlos Sanchez was contacted late Tuesday about the issue, and his three-member team worked from Wednesday morning until early Thursday to fix the crane. This marked the first such repair on a container ship crane on the island. If the crane had not been repaired, the ship would have had to return to the mainland with both the unloaded and unshipped containers.



Congressional Corner

Amata advocates for a larger USCG presence

Congresswoman Uifa'atali Amata attended a hearing of the Homeland Security Committee's Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security, which focused on Coast Guard acquisitions and their impact on resource allocation and presence in the Indo-Pacific region. During the hearing, Amata highlighted the significance of the planned Offshore Patrol Cutter, which will be crucial for operations in the Pacific. She thanked Chairman Carlos Gimenez for allowing her to participate in the committee and emphasized the importance of a robust Coast Guard presence in American Samoa, particularly in deterring illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing by Chinese vessels. Amata stressed that a strong Coast Guard presence is a top priority for Pacific Island leaders, alongside the Peace Corps.

In February, American Samoa welcomed Commandant of the Coast Guard Admiral Linda Fagan and hosted the USCGC Harriet Lane at Pago Pago Harbor as part of its inaugural Blue Pacific mission. Amata reiterated that American Samoa is prepared to host a larger permanent Coast Guard presence, which would reinforce the U.S. commitment to the Indo-Pacific region.

