

## **Project: Building Community Trust, Empowerment and Resiliency in Improving Coastal Habitats and Coral Reef Management in Pala Lagoon**

### **Purpose**

The proposed project will assist to provide opportunities to communities near and around the Pala Lagoon to learn more about the important resources within the village watershed, particularly the Pala Lagoon, understand the threats impacting these resources, and undertake small community projects to better manage the Pala and the resources within and near it. In addition, the proposed project will assist to build and enhance partnership with resource partners and key stakeholders to foster the management of the Pala Lagoon in a participatory and adaptive approach.



### **Summary**

Nu'uuli is one of the top five priority sites for American Samoa's Coral Reef Management Priorities. It is a site with important resources such as the large aquifer that supplies drinking water to the village and nearby communities. It is also a huge priority watershed with resources from ridge to reefs that are being impacted by several threats such as pollution, poor management, coastal erosion, sedimentation, etc. Pala Lagoon is located in Nu'uuli and it is known to be a spawning ground for some fishes and invertebrates. Adequate water quality is needed to sustain and enhance this spawning ground for these resources. There are existing management plans such as the American Samoa Watershed Management Plan developed to assist the management of Nu'uuli watershed. In addition, a Community PLA was implemented by several environmental agencies in 2010-2011. However, there is a need to build community trust in Nu'uuli and empower different community groups, including schools and businesses, within the village to adopt sections of the watershed and engage in small projects to improve resilience and management of the resources. Three community groups will be selected to work on a community project that will assist to improve the habitat and management of Pala Lagoon. The project will look into an ecosystem-based approach to engage different community groups within Nu'uuli to improve coral reef management.

### **History**

Pala Lagoon is located in Nu'uuli village, which has been identified as one of the top 5 priority sites through stakeholder engagement in the NOAA CRCP Coral Reef Management Priorities document (2011). In 2011, NOAA-PIRO, thru CRCP funds, facilitated a watershed PLA community outreaches and meetings in coordination with the LBSP LAS to better understand the

problems and threats in Nu'uuli watershed (including Pala Lagoon). Five different outreaches were facilitated to five different church groups in Nu'uuli village. The outreaches include presentations on the importance of watersheds, issues impacting the resources in the watershed, and conservation measures for community to better manage their watershed. In addition, participatory tools such as Historical Profile, Resource Mapping, and Identification of Key Issues about the watershed were used to collect information from the communities to better understand the needs to improve the management of the watershed. Two community projects were implemented in coordination and support of local resource partners, which was a coastal clean-up within the watershed and near the Pala lagoon that was conducted in 2011 and 2012 as part of the International Coastal Clean-up. The second project was a marine debris clean-up led by the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources from the mouth of the Papa stream along the coastal area towards Coconut point.

### **Conceptualization**

The Pala Lagoon, home to large mangroves, coral reefs, and important breeding grounds for several fish species, has degraded due to pollution, climate change, and other human uses and disturbances. The lagoon is being affected by several threats such as cutting, filling, land-based pollution, marine debris, coastal erosion, wetland and mangrove degradation, urban runoff, Crown of Thorns breakout, declined fisheries and marine environment. The Pala Lagoon is also the location of a popular public park for many recreational activities. Despite its ecological and recreational significance, the lagoon is one of the most impacted bodies of water in American Samoa due to the fact that it is the drainage point for the most populated watershed, with over 8,300 people and many adjacent industrial activities. In addition, the lagoon's natural exchange with the sea has been significantly impeded by the filling of the lagoon for the airport runway, trapping pollution within the lagoon. If not remedied, these environmental pressures will continue to negatively affect the Pala Lagoon's health, potentially irreparably. The main objective for this project is to build and promote partnerships with strong community support, to facilitate habitat restoration projects and conservation activities in enhancement of resiliency and sustainable management of Pala Lagoon.

