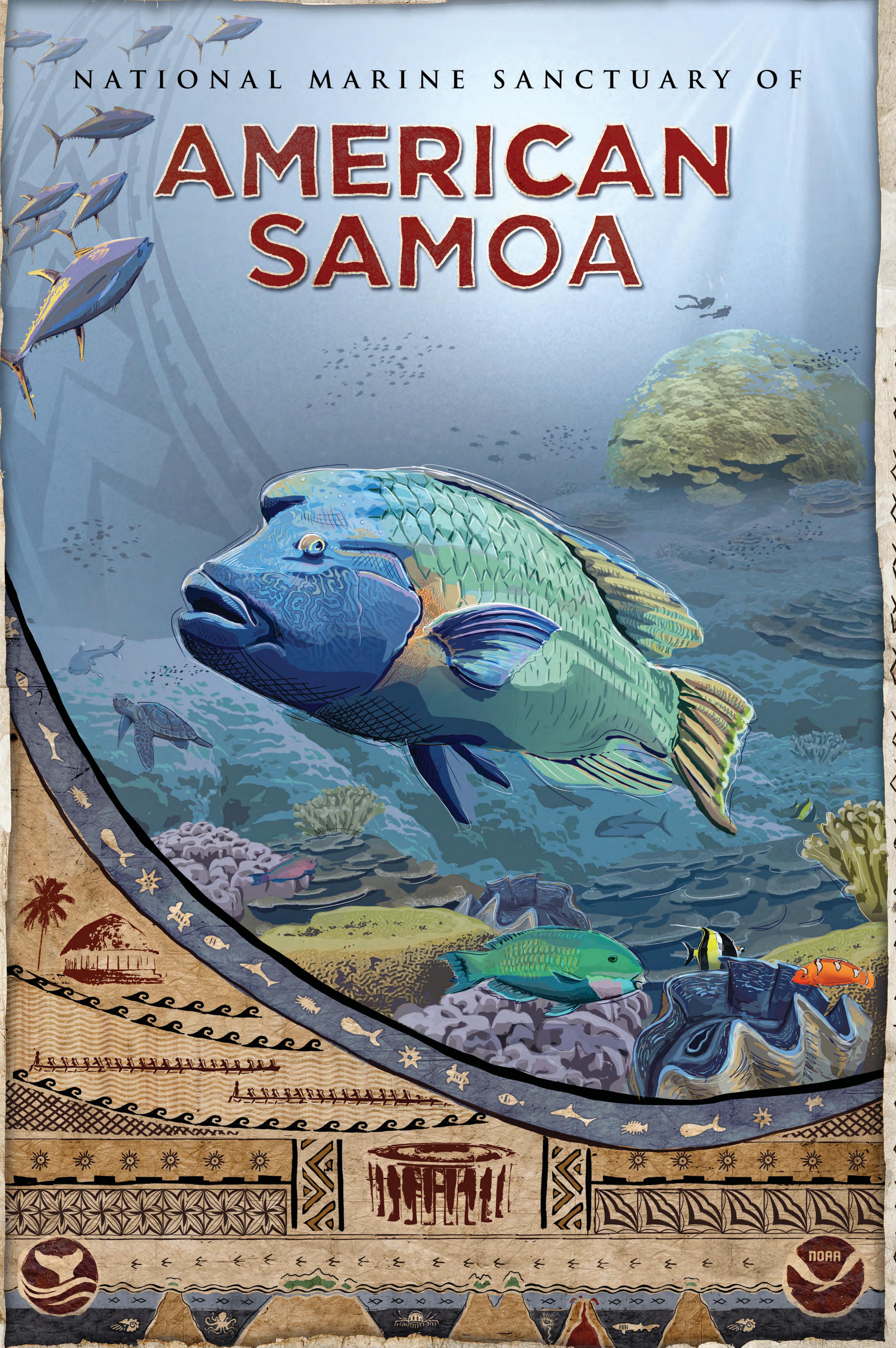


NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY OF

# AMERICAN SAMOA







National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa is located in the cradle of Polynesia's oldest culture. It comprises six protected areas covering 13,581 square miles of nearshore coral reef and open ocean across the Samoan archipelago. The sanctuary protects extensive coral reefs, deep-water reefs, hydrothermal vent communities, and rare marine archaeological resources. NOAA co-manages the sanctuary with the American Samoa government and works closely with local communities, all within the context of Samoan cultural traditions and practices. "Ua o gatasi le futia ma le umele" (We must be of one mind in the undertaking).

## ABOVE

The Ava Ceremony is a unique part of Samoan culture led by *matais* (chiefs) consisting of traditional speeches and a ceremonial beverage distributed according to village hierarchy. The *tanoa* (bowl) usually belongs to the high talking chief or orator of the *fale* (house) who is hosting. The ceremony symbolizes respect, humility, and service. The cup that is shared at the gathering promotes unity and consensus for the good of the village and not the individual.

## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Samoan culture, customs, and language underpin a traditional way of life and stewardship of marine resources. The poster features an *ava* bowl used for ceremonial practices, a Samoan *fale* (house) found in villages, and *fautasi* or long boat canoe. Underwater, tropical coral gardens teem with marine life, including iconic humphead wrasses, endangered hawksbill sea turtles, giant clams, massive *Porites* corals, and colorful parrotfish, while an oceanic whitetip shark and yellowfin tuna swim near the reef edge.



◀ **GIANT CORAL** (*Porites* spp.)  
Valley of the Giants off Ta'u Island hosts some of the world's largest and oldest *Porites* corals—one is over 500 years old. Corals provide shelter for many species.



◀ **YELLOWFIN TUNA** (*Thunnus albacares*)  
Fast moving open ocean predators, *asiasi* are an important part of pelagic ecosystems feeding on small bait fish. They are a favorite for local fishers.



◀ **CLIMATE MONITORING BUOY**  
An ocean acidification buoy in Fagatele Bay provides real time data for carbon dioxide, acidity (pH), and temperature, and tracks changing conditions over time.

▶ **VAILULU'U SEAMOUNT**  
This hotspot volcano's cone extends to just 2,250 feet (685 m) below the surface. Its hydrothermal vents release mineral rich water, fueling a deep-sea ecosystem.



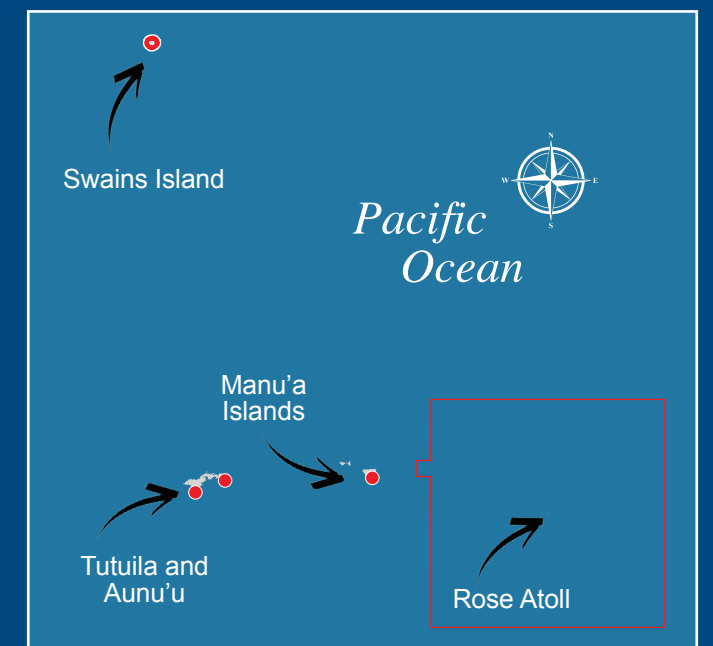
▶ **GIANT CLAM** (*Tridacna* spp.)  
Giant clams, locally known as *faisua*, are not only beautiful, but provide food for people and may help corals recover after bleaching.



▶ **WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon lepturus*)  
A slender white bird with distinctive long tail feathers, *tava'esina* can be seen gracefully maneuvering near the surface as they pluck flying fish straight from the air.



## LOCATION



## QUICK FACTS

### LOCATION

Six individual marine protected areas in the Samoan Archipelago

### PROTECTED AREA

13,581 square miles

### DESIGNATION

Fagatele Bay: April 1986  
Expansion: September 2012

### HABITATS

Coral reefs  
Deep sea  
Hydrothermal vents  
Mesophotic coral ecosystem  
Open ocean  
Seamounts

### KEY SPECIES

Giant clam  
Hawksbill sea turtle  
Humphead wrasse  
Oceanic whitetip shark  
Shallow and deep-sea corals  
Southern humpback whale  
Steephead parrotfish  
White-tailed tropicbird  
Yellowfin tuna

Photos: (ava ceremony) Nerelle Que Moffitt; (Big Momma) Christophe Bailhache/Ol. Collin Seaview Survey; (tuna) NOAA; (buoy) Nerelle Que Moffitt/NOAA; (giant clam) B. Caldwell/NOAA; (white-tailed tropicbird) Russ Morgan; (Vailulu'u Seamount) Ocean Exploration Trust/NOAA; (background photo) Fagatele Bay Matt Montross/NOAA

## AMERICA'S UNDERWATER TREASURES

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 620,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The network includes a system of 15 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments. For more information on the National Marine Sanctuary System, visit: [sanctuaries.noaa.gov](http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov)



● National Marine Sanctuary  
▲ Marine National Monument  
■ Proposed National Marine Sanctuary  
Scale varies in this perspective. Adapted from National Geographic Maps.