

Samoa 2012

Environmental Outlook

Developing a vision for the next 50 years



Fa'a-Samoa ^{diversity coral reef} ^{environment}
integrated management
conservation ^{island nation}
^{community} ^{climate change} ^{livelihood} ^{indicators} ^{water}
^{sustainable Pacific Ocean} ^{forests}
^{development} **culture**

Samoa's rich history, culture, and future livelihood is tied to our environment

Samoa's rich cultural heritage and future prosperity depends on a healthy environment. Over the past 50 years, Samoa's environment has been pressured by increasing population and development, agricultural expansion, invasive species of plants and animals, and disasters such as tsunamis, cyclones, and fires. Each of these threatens the health of our environment, thereby threatening the wellbeing of Samoan people and *Fa'a-Samoa* – our traditional way of life.

About 81% of total land area is under customary ownership. Creating partnerships between communities and government will ensure the sustainable management

of resources and monitoring of any adverse impacts to our livelihoods.

The State of the Environment outlook report for Samoa will provide key information from which the country can chart its course over the next 50 years. People can learn how to use limited resources more efficiently. Sustainable management practices coupled with changes in behaviour will reduce pressure on the environment, leading to a healthier, more sustainable and biodiversity-rich environment. This will improve quality of life for all Samoans, now and for future generations.



Expert assessment of Samoa's environment



Cloud forest–Very good; Uplands–Fair

Cloud forest habitat is in very good condition, with high forest cover, minimal invasive species, and presence of key mammal (flying fox) and bird species. In comparison, upland native forest habitat is in fair condition, with moderate to high rates of clearing for agriculture and grazing, and high numbers of invasive species, yet supporting key mammal and bird species.



Rivers and Streams–Good to Poor

Upslope streams are generally in good condition with low levels of nutrients, high dissolved oxygen, and high abundance of fish and prawns. This declines to poor condition further downstream towards the coast, as streams pass through cleared, agricultural, and developed lands. Rivers and streams in some areas are being abstracted for water supplies and hydropower generation, affecting this important habitat.



Lowlands–Poor

Native forest cover is limited to steep slopes; most areas are occupied by settlement, agriculture and other uses. Remaining vegetation is mainly secondary growth and includes many plant and bird species that are introduced or have become invasive. However, flying foxes and several other native species are increasing in numbers and are adapting well to changing habitats.



Nearshore Marine–Fair

High disturbance from cyclones, tsunamis and crown of thorns outbreaks has reduced live coral cover in many areas, and fish abundance is low due to overharvesting and habitat disturbance. This is balanced by high diversity of fish and coral species, strong observed coral recruitment, healthy seagrass and macroalgal beds and generally good water quality in most areas, due to strong ocean flushing.



Coastal Strand–Poor

This habitat has the most development, including Apia, and is expected to have associated impacts from land alteration, waste disposal, and invasive species. Shoreline modification is extensive, however remaining intact stands of mangroves are in good condition, supporting a high diversity of fish, birds, and crabs, and strong ability for regeneration.



Offshore Marine–Fair

While pelagic fisheries are reduced and whale and turtle populations are low or declining, dolphins and seabirds retain resident and migratory populations, and deep benthic habitats are historically undisturbed.

Very good  Very poor

The 2012 State of Environment outlook report for Samoa: the way forward!

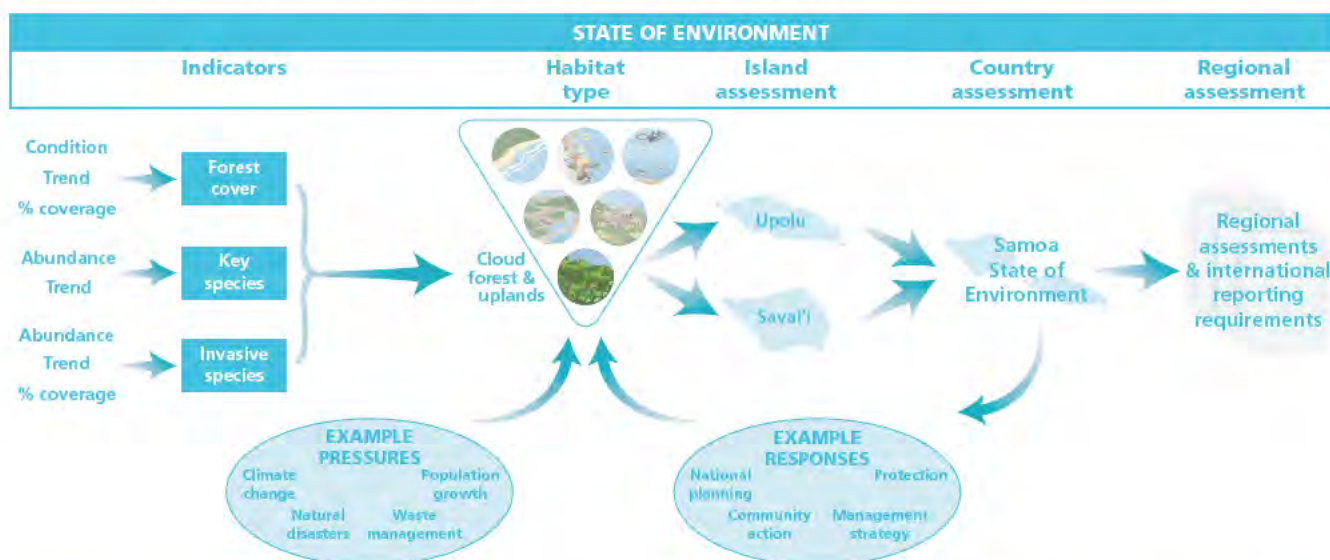
This document is the initial stage of assessment for Samoa's State of the Environment (SoE), which is currently underway. Understanding the current status of our resources is critical to advise policy and develop management plans to ensure that cultural and environmental resources are conserved for future generations. This developing framework is intended to support national planning processes including the SDS, NBSAP, NAPA, NAP, IWRM, and NEMS.* It will also contribute to the development of a regional framework that will simplify and reduce regional and international reporting requirements for Samoa and other Pacific island countries.

A workshop was held in Apia in April 2012 to develop an assessment framework based on six key habitats in Samoa: cloud forest and uplands, lowlands, coastal strand, nearshore marine, offshore marine, and rivers

and streams; as well as other key resource areas such as climate change, air quality, waste disposal, renewable energy, and population pressures. It will also assess the status of Samoa's species of high conservation value, especially those that are endemic and critically endangered.

The health of each of these habitats will be combined to describe the overall condition of Samoa's environment and culturally important natural resources. Samoa is leading the Pacific in the use of this habitat-based assessment, which will be important in the development of common regional approaches.

Based on preliminary evaluations of each habitat, these resources are currently under threat. However, acting now can ensure that our environment is protected, while supporting sustainable use and improving the quality of life in Samoa.



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*SDS = Strategy for the Development of Samoa; NBSAP = National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan; NAPA = National Adaptation Programme of Action; IWRM = Integrated Water Resources Management Strategy; NEMS = National Environment and Development Strategies; NAP = National Action Programmes for Sustainable Land Management