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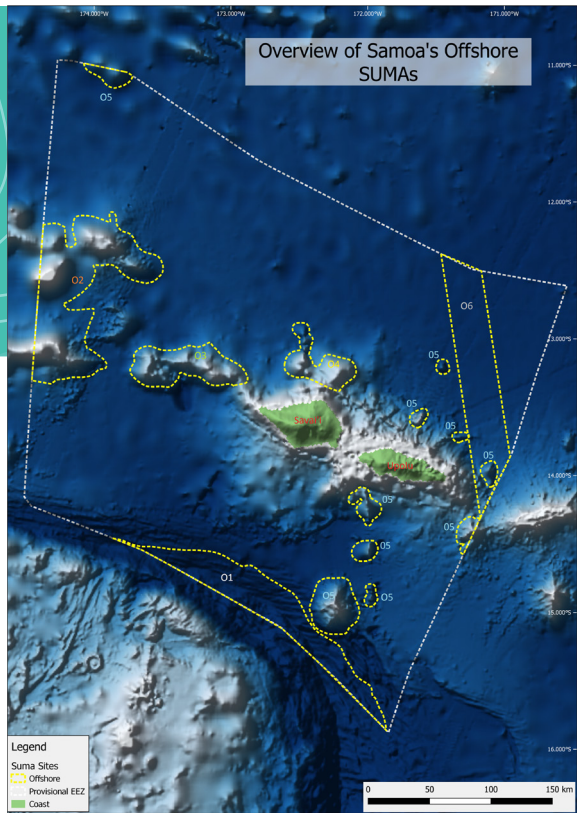
Biophysically special, unique marine areas of Samoa



Samoa has a vast range of marine biophysical features, many of which are special or unique, and potentially require particular consideration when planning for the optimal use and management of the country's ocean, which makes up ~98 percent of the area under Samoa's jurisdiction.

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is a way of balancing the demands of human activities with the health of the ecosystems on which those activities depend. One of the steps in the MSP process is to identify special, unique marine areas (SUMA) in Samoa and determine their need for research, management or protection.

As part of the MSP process, the Samoan Government has identified Samoa's special and/or unique marine areas. They were described and scored according to four criteria: geographic explicitness, justification, information sources and legal obligations associated with each area.

11 INSHORE SUMAs SAVAI'I

15 INSHORE SUMAs UPOLU

6 OFFSHORE SUMAs SAMOA

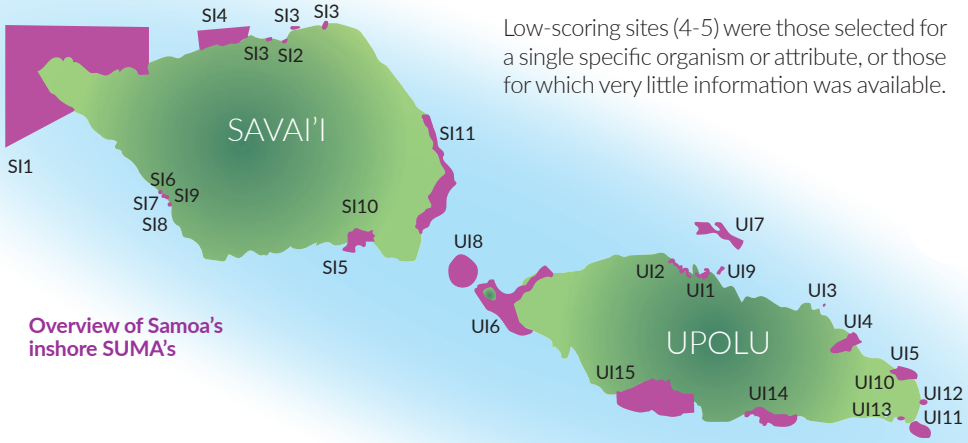
The sites that were geographically clearly defined, held distinctly special attributes and included availability of high-quality relevant information received higher score.

Most of the high-scoring sites included a range of different habitats in close proximity that had already been selected for protection due to their recognised ecological value.

Low-scoring sites (4-5) were those selected for a single specific organism or attribute, or those for which very little information was available.

There is a general lack of information available for Samoa's offshore marine environments. The highest-scoring offshore site (Seamounts, ridges, guyots & escarpments) was described in greater detail in the available literature than most of the other sites. The lowest scoring site (Whale Migration Route) had a general lack of evidence to support its justification. Clear site boundaries and robust background information are important for spatial planning.

Both high and low scores are useful for management; high-scoring sites could be prioritised for protection with greater confidence, while lower-scoring sites could be targeted for research.



Overview of Samoa's inshore SUMA's

Offshore sites

- O1 Southern trench
- O2 Seamounts, ridges, guyots & escarpments
- O3 Geomorphological cluster 2
- O4 Geomorphological cluster 3
- O5 Eastern seamounts
- O6 Whale migration route

Upolu inshore sites

- UI1 Vaiusu Bay mangroves
- UI2 Toamua-Fale'ula mangrove area
- UI3 Lufilufi / Faleapuna Fish Reserve
- UI4 Falgaloa Bay
- UI5 Tiavea deeper area
- UI6 Manono Reef Flats
- UI7 Five Mile Reef
- UI8 Apolima
- UI9 Palolo Deep
- UI10 Tiavea mangrove area
- UI11 Nu'utele & Nu'ulua bird nesting and foraging area
- UI12 Mutiatele mangrove area
- UI13 Tuialamu Palolo site
- UI14 Salani-Poutasi Reefs
- UI15 Safata MPA

Savai'i inshore sites

- SI1 Northwest Savai'i
- SI2 Faletagaloa mangroves
- SI3 Safotu, Sasina and Safune Palolo harvesting area
- SI4 High shark area
- SI5 Satupa'itea to Fa'a'ala
- SI6 Foailalo Community-Based Fish Reserve
- SI7 Foailuga Community-Based Fish Reserve
- SI8 Sala'ilua CommunityBased Fish Reserve
- SI9 Satuiatua Community-Based Fish Reserve
- SI10 Palauli Community-Based Fish Reserves
- SI11 Multiple Community-Based Fish Reserves

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