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

Samoa’s rich cultural heritage and future prosperity depend 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 Samoa 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 biodiverse-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 habitats in Samoa are in very good condition, with high forest cover, minimal invasive species, and presence of key mammal (flying fox) and bird species. In comparison, upland hollow 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.

Lowlands - Poor
Native forest cover is limited to steep slopes; most 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.

Rivers and Streams - Good to Poor
Major rivers are generally in good condition with low levels of pollutants, high dissolved oxygen, and high abundance of fish and plants. 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 affected by water supply and infrastructure development, affecting the important habitat.

Nearshore Marine - Good to Poor
High disturbance from trawlers, small and medium vessels has reduced the coral cover in many areas, and fish abundance is low due to overfishing and habitat disturbances. This is balanced by high diversity of fish and coral species, strong observed coral recruitment, healthy sponges and macroalgae and generally good water quality in most areas, due to strong ocean flushing.

Coastal Strand - Very poor
This habitat has the most development including Afa’i, and is expected to have increased impacts from land alteration, water disposal, and invasive species. Shoreline modification is extensive, leaving remaining intact stands of mangroves in good condition, supporting a high diversity of birds, birds, and crabs, and strong ability for regeneration.
Celebrate

Untouched cloud forest
Samoa's cloud forest provides habitat for a wide variety of species that are important to Samoan culture, including manu'au, per's flying fox, and many ferns. Inhabitants of the forest are Samoa's lungs, absorbing carbon dioxide and pollutants from the air and pumping off the oxygen we breathe. This habitat is globally rare and needs our protection.

Watersfalls and crater lakes
Upland watersfalls are an important feature of the Samoan landscape, and are a major source of hydroelectric power for the country. The Samoan islands are home to a variety of unique species, including the蓝faced honeyeater, which is only found on the island of Savai'i.

Use of indigenous species
Samoan culture is deeply tied to the environment, most notably through the use of plants and animals, including medicinal plants such as noses, plants for construction or for making handicrafts such as cloaks, and traditional foods such as taro and yams.

Traditional mixed agriculture
Many Samoans continue to practice mixed agriculture as they have for thousands of years. Our land-based resources need to be protected as they support crops and livestock, as well as production of diverse forests and grasslands.

Rich biodiversity
Did you know there are 64 species of land snails and 50 species of bees and butterflies, over half of which only occur here? Samoa also has 210 native fern species, including the Samoan golden sword fern, which is only found in the montane forest of Upolu.

Protected areas
O Le Pu'e Polu National Park was the first protected area in the South Pacific, while the Polini Reserve is the largest marine reserve in the region. Protected areas are vitally important for forested plant and animal species, which can then repopulate surrounding areas.

Migratory species
Many migratory species such as whales, sea turtles, and seabirds travel through Samoan waters. Turtles such as Pacific ridley sea turtles and loggerhead sea turtles are also found in the waters around Samoa.

Sediment & nutrient inputs
Sediment and nutrients from land use can cause hypoxia in the ocean and lead to sedimentation, affecting local ecosystems. In addition, increased levels of nutrients can cause algal blooms, which can harm local fish populations.

Changing land use
Many of our island's forests are being cleared for agriculture and development. Key forest areas which are particularly rich in species and intact habitats have been identified in Samoa and are being targeted for conservation action.

Keep Samoa clean and beautiful
Where does your garbage go? Most goes to a landfill. But some of it is burned illegally, and tends to end up in our streets, rivers and ocean. Garbage should be put out for collection, and not dumped where it can damage our forests, rivers and reefs.

Our environment. Our heritage.

Mangroves and reefs
Our coastline is home to mangrove forests and coral reefs, which are natural shelters for many species and provide a habitat for many species. Coral reefs also protect our coast from storms and erosion.

Invasives are taking over
Invasive species such as the screwworm fly and Japanese beetle are a major threat to Samoa's native wildlife. Invasives such as the black mangrove, algae, fish, and insects are also threatening our marine and freshwater environments. Careful management is needed to protect forest and coastal resources and provide Samoa's biodiversity.

Where are all the big fish?
Fish are a crucial source of income, and limiting the size and number of fish is not sustainable. Protecting mangroves and developing habitats for young fish will help ensure that local fish remains a part of the Samoan way of life.

Milele is becoming rare
Did you know the (lele tree used to produce 'sea') is now becoming rare as a result of over-harvesting? Seventy-five percent of the remaining forest species are at risk of extinction in Samoa. Conservation of habitat, managing invasive species, and setting limits on our harvest of forestry is key to preserving this culturally important species for future generations.

Protect
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 SIDS, NAPA, ADEA, RAPA IFAA, and NAPA. 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, coastal forest and uplands, lowlands, coastal strand, nearshore marine, offshore marine, and rivers and streams; and 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 continued to be described in the coming 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 current 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.

Acknowledgements

[List of acknowledgments]

[Diagram showing the state of environment framework]

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[Diagram showing the state of environment framework]