

Preface: Study Issues

The Ethnographic Assessment and Overview of the National Park of American Samoa was commissioned to document the ethnohistorical background and cultural context of Park localities, as well as modern resource use within the Park, as a guide to policy making. The investigation has focused on the historical and cultural significance of Park areas and on how Samoans today utilize lands, forests, reefs, and offshore fisheries lying within the Park boundary. A detailed discussion of our research methodology is presented in Chapter III. After discussing the environmental, archaeological, and ethnohistorical contexts of the National Park of American Samoa, the report addresses agriculture, marine resource use, medicinal plants, and culturally significant sites. Quantitative analyses of systematic interview data on these topics are presented in Chapter VIII. The report concludes with a summary of findings, a discussion of how local residents perceive the Park, and with suggestions for future research.

In order to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of our informants, we do not name particular individuals in this report. However, we wish to thank collectively all of the residents of the villages participating in the Park for their hospitality, kindness, and cooperation during our study. We particularly thank the Park Service staff in Pago Pago-- Superintendent Christopher Stein and Chief Park Ranger Leota Vaea Ainu'u--for their unflagging assistance and support.

Field work for this report was conducted in the early 1990s and the draft report completed in 1995.