

DRAFT V0.9 - FOR REVIEW

American Samoa and deep-sea mining on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf

A working position paper of the Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative - draft for community and Task Force review

Summary

The U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is evaluating an ~18+ million acre area of the federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) northeast of Rose Atoll and the Manu'a Islands for polymetallic-nodule mining. American Samoa's territorial waters (0-3 nautical miles) are under a local moratorium; the OCS beyond is federal. This draft sets out the Initiative's working position for review.

This document is a DRAFT prepared for the Task Force and community consultation. It is not a final or adopted position of the American Samoa Government.

Position in brief

- Precaution first. No commercial leasing should proceed until baseline science for the specific area is adequate and the consequences for fisheries and the food web are understood.
- Free, prior and informed consultation. American Samoa must be a consulting party at every NEPA and leasing step, not a recipient of decisions made elsewhere.
- Protect fisheries and food security. The tuna fishery, the cannery economy, and subsistence catch are central and must be assessed before, not after, any activity.
- Fair revenue terms. Under OCSLA, royalties flow primarily to the federal government; new legislation would be required for meaningful revenue sharing with the Territory.

Why this matters here

The proposed area is far from shore - over 200 nautical miles from Pago Pago harbor - but sediment plumes, noise, and food-web effects can cross jurisdictional boundaries. Recovery of deep-sea habitat can take decades to millions of years, and baseline data for this specific area is limited.

What we are asking for

- A buffer-zone analysis around fishing grounds and the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument.
- Independent baseline surveys and public release of the data.
- A consultation record that captures matai and community testimony alongside the science.

Sources & further reading

Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA, 1953); National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); Executive Order 14285 (2025); International Seabed Authority (isa.org.jm); NOAA Ocean Exploration

(oceanexplorer.noaa.gov); Pacific Community / SPC (spc.int).