

American Samoa Soil and Water Conservation District



Project Title:	Pigs in Paradise: Retaining a Samoan Cultural Tradition
Award Amount:	\$230,822
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2007 – Dec. 2009
Grantee Type:	Public Agency

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 1 job created
- 1 Native American consultant hired
- 22 elders involved
- \$290,926 in resources leveraged
- 97 individuals trained
- 9 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

American Samoa is located in Oceania in the South Pacific, with a population of just over 65,000. Pork has been a traditional source of protein and cultural significance for Samoans for over 2,500 years. Prior to this project, there were approximately 1,000 piggeries in American Samoa, with many located near the islands' fresh water rivers and drinking sources. This was both an environmental and public health concern, especially in light of recent deaths from *leptospirosis*, a bacterium carried by pig waste.

To reduce public health and drinking water concerns, the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA) began enforcing stricter piggery regulations, including 50-foot minimum setback

requirements, proper waste management, land use permits, and piggery designs. Piggery owners found in noncompliance face steep fines and potential closure.

The American Samoan Soil and Water Conservation District (ASSWCD) works with other American Samoan governmental agencies to conserve, develop, and use soil and water resources in a sustainable manner. Knowing ASEPA's enforcement efforts would lead to the closure of at least 300 of the 1,000 pig farms, ASSWCD began assisting American Samoa's pig farmers to comply while improving piggery management on the islands.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to assist American Samoan pig farmers retain their piggeries while protecting water quality and human health.

The project's first objective was to revitalize partnerships among American Samoa public agencies in order to coordinate services to piggery owners. A technical services manager from ASEPA coordinated the creation of the Interagency Piggery Management Group (IPMG), which met regularly with piggery owners to facilitate

use of the islands' available services. IPMG members included the USDA-National Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), ASEPA, American Samoa Department of Commerce, American Samoa Public Health Department, the American Samoa Community Land Grant College (ASSCLG), and two farmer representatives. IPMG partners collaborated to identify noncompliant piggeries and began work with their owners to establish plans for compliance or closure if necessary. IPMG worked with 150 farmers in this manner.

The next objective was to provide piggery owners design assistance and options for new piggeries that met ASEPA compliance standards. ASSWCD hired a certified engineer who developed templates for a portable pig pen system, dry litter system, and wash down system with costs ranging from \$500 - \$13,000. The engineer then worked with individual farmers to tailor plans for their specific sites. In addition, the IPMG and ASSCLG collaborated to construct models of each standardized piggery plan to use as an in-person marketing and educational tool.

To defray construction costs, IPMG members worked with piggery owners to apply for NRCS funding, which covers up to 90% of the estimated costs. Targeted piggeries also obtained free soil and nutrient analyses and assistance pursuing land use permits, required to meet compliance regulations. By the end of the project, 87 piggery designs had been approved, 14 owners had established contracts to complete piggery renovations, and 1 piggery owner had completed renovations on their piggery.

The final objective was to provide necessary mulch materials to piggery owners adopting dry litter and modified wash-down piggery designs, as wood chip mulch is a key component of such designs. The IPMG

partnered with a local energy contractor to produce cheap mulch materials. The original project design overestimated the amount needed annually by roughly 6,000 cubic yards, calling for 7,500 cubic yards of mulch when 1,500 were sufficient. Rather than oversupply the islands, IPMG reduced projections and provided mulch as needed to piggery owners.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

For American Samoa's pig farmers, this project established a proactive program to address piggery compliance issues, thereby improving health conditions while assisting piggery owners renovate, alter, or construct new piggeries. While only one pig farmer constructed a new pen, several altered existing facilities and 150 farmers began the process of complying with the new regulations. The project also encouraged the use of pig fertilizer, helping farmers enhance crop growth while using pig waste, thereby helping business-focused piggery operations with profits in the long term.

The project raised community awareness of *leptospirosis* and the importance of clean water and riparian environments. Staff also reported that many island communities and environmental scientists have taken an interest in the project's piggery improvement operations, looking to learn from the effort and possibly conduct similar projects.

Finally, the project helped create a synergy between IPMG partners that had not previously existed. Matt Vojik, the technical services manager for ASEP, shared, "It has pulled the agencies closer together and helped build partner capacity to implement other such projects in the future."

Native American Samoan Advisory Council



Project Title:	Native American Samoan Ceremonial Siapo Restoration Project
Award Amount:	\$464,690
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2007 – Sept. 2009
Grantee Type:	Native Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 3 jobs created
- 9 Native American consultants hired
- 212 elders involved
- 824 youth involved
- \$49,227 in resources leveraged
- 187 individuals trained
- 17 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

In the early 1900s, the U.S. acquired five small islands in the South Pacific Ocean. The inhabitants of these beautiful islands, now known collectively as American Samoa, share a common language, governmental structure, and value system. As generations pass, the American Samoan people are working to define the fragile relationship between their traditional lifestyle and their role as American citizens. The key to developing this relationship is finding a balance that will honor and preserve the Samoan cultural identity.

The Native American Samoan Advisory Council (NASAC) was incorporated in 1993

to preserve and protect Samoan cultural values by empowering citizens to find solutions to the challenges threatening to unravel their culture. One key but increasingly diminishing cultural activity on the islands is the making of *siapo*, a fabric made of mulberry wood that is considered important in ceremonies and fine art.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to revitalize *siapo* use and understanding in American Samoan communities while cultivating healthy relationships between elders and youth.

The project's first objective was to develop curricula for a youth and adult-focused *siapo* restoration workshop. Staff developed an 11-part youth and adult curricula focused on teaching the meaning behind the *siapo*-making technique. The original proposal called for the creation of two teaching positions per workshop, a *siapo*-making specialist and cultural instructor. Staff quickly realized, however, the act of *siapo*-making naturally created opportunities for effective cultural lessons best taught by the

siapo-makers, thereby negating the need for the cultural instructor position.

The second objective was to pilot-test the curricula in four villages with over 250 workshop participants. Staff exceeded expectations, delivering the workshop to 7 villages and 251 youth and elders, and instructed components of the workshop to an additional 4 villages within the project timeframe. Participants created 40 *siapo* for *lavalava*, skirt-like outfits used in traditional dance and ceremony, as well as several large ceremonial *siapo* cloths. This objective also included the creation of a *siapo* circle for women in participating villages.

The project's next objective was to prepare community members to participate in the 10th Annual Pacific Arts Festival, which was held in American Samoa in 2008. Over 820 youth and 210 elders participated in preparations, culminating in a large cultural dance presentation to close the event. The dance style and *siapo* worn by dancers highlighted the revitalization of traditional American Samoan customs and received positive reviews from attendees.

Objective four was to design and implement an internship program with five community youth to work with elders, consultants, and NASAC staff to create marketing materials for the development of a future Native American Samoan Center for Cultural Arts. Though delayed, NASAC staff held a web design competition to select five youth interns September 11th, 2009. The interns began training with an esteemed women's elder committee on *siapo* designs for the website, but were unable to complete the objective by the end of the project.

The project's final objective was to organize and conduct a cultural arts competition for participating village members. NASAC delayed preparations to ensure that all participating communities received the full workshop training prior to holding the

ceremony, with the intention of holding a large combined event on September 29, 2009. Unfortunately, a large tsunami struck American Samoa on the day of the event, devastating the islands, destroying property, killing over 100 individuals, and delaying the completion of this event until circumstances permitted.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Elder and youth interaction increased through *siapo*-making workshops and preparations for ceremonial events promoted by this project. This interaction helped stem the decline in *siapo*-making and served to reinforce the elders' position as holders of knowledge and authority in the community.

NASAC staff also reported the project revived cultural interest amongst participating youth. Project director Tilani Ilaoa noted that prior to the project, youth knew what *siapo* was but did not know how to make it or its significance, adding, "It was like they had grown up on the mainland." The *siapo*-makers gave the children exposure to their culture in a much more tangible format than previous opportunities on the islands allowed. Some youth even began restoring their family *siapo* and earning money restoring the *siapo* of other families. The workshops also strengthened ties between parents and children. One parent used the knowledge she gained to make a *lavalava* for her son to use at the school's culture day and now grows mulberry plants in her yard.

"This project provided the youth with a sense of belonging and appreciation for their culture."

Aufa'I Areta,
Extension Community Coordinator