

PACIFIC ISLANDS

American Samoa Community College Division of Agriculture, Community & Natural Resources

This year, the American Samoa Community College Division of Agriculture, Community & Natural Resources (ASCC-ACNR) completed its first USDA Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) project to improve community watersheds. Partnering with local and federal environmental agencies as well as village leadership and youth groups, ASCC-ACNR held a trash cleanup of high priority areas within the American Samoa urban forests. Once trash was removed, a variety of native plants were planted along stream banks and corridors to prevent soil erosion. These cleanups were complemented with student intern-led community outreach presentations emphasizing the importance of biodiversity and environmental protection.

American Samoa is located in the Pacific Ocean about 2,500 miles south of Hawai'i and 1,600 miles northeast of New Zealand. Rainfall varies from 120 to 200 inches annually and the temperature averages around 80°F. As a result, much of the area is clad in dense tropical rainforests with pockets of urban populations.

The villages of Leone and Nu'uuli, as well as the capital city of Pago Pago, are heavily impacted by the clash between clay and concrete. During heavy rainfall, excessive flooding erodes riparian zones and causes landslides in streams, increasing sedimentation and nutrient runoff. Along with the depletion of native trees, land use changes, and general human disturbance, the damage to the environment not only directly affects the community livability but also the resilience of the urban forests and surrounding marine habitats.

Through the LSR grant, the ASCC-ACNR collaborated with local and federal agencies, along with village communities, to develop a four prong approach to improving watershed health and management:

1. Assess the conservation efforts needed to restore these high priority watersheds, riparian zones, and urban forests.
2. Organize stream cleanup within all three urban areas.
3. Implement a soil stabilization initiative through the planting of trees along stream banks and corridors.
4. Educate the populace on watershed stewardship through outreach presentations conducted by ASCC-ACNR student interns.

This project resulted in the gathering of 267 youth group volunteers to clear 2.43 tons of debris and planting of 33 native plants. Consequently, the attention to this project has sparked interest in other communities to start their own LSR programs and establish forest conservation plans. The ASCC-ACNR hopes to leverage the partnerships from these model projects to all communities on the island.



Conducting tree planting activities. Photo Credit: Denis "DJ" Sene Jr.



Volunteers participating in debris removal and stream restoration. Photo Credit: Denis "DJ" Sene Jr.



Community members in attendance of ASCC-ACNR outreach presentation led by student interns. Photo Credit: Denis "DJ" Sene Jr.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

American Samoa Community College
Division of Agriculture, Community & Natural Resources
<http://www.amsamoa.edu/institution/cnr.html>