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For Immediate Release
April 1, 2011

COMMUNITY SERVICE PAYMENT AWARDED TO NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY FOUNDATION FOR FAGATELE BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Silver Spring, MD – On March 31, 2011, the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) received a payment of \$125,000 for use in the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary (FBNMS) in Pago Pago, American Samoa. The money was awarded as part of a plea agreement made by Koo's Shipping Company for the unlawful disposal of waste in the ocean. The payment will be accepted by Jason Patlis, President and CEO of the Foundation.

Koo's Shipping Company was charged a criminal penalty of \$1,000,000 for knowingly discharging oil in Pago Pago harbor from the Motor Vessel (M/V) *Syota Maru*. In addition, the company failed to maintain accurate oil record books and willfully submitted fraudulent reports within the jurisdiction of the United States Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security. Of that penalty, \$125,000 was awarded to NMSF and will be applied toward FBNMS, and an additional \$125,000 was awarded to the Fish and Wildlife Foundation to fund projects for the preservation and restoration of coral reefs in or near American Samoa.

According to the terms of the plea agreement, the community service payment awarded to the NMSF will be used to "support the protection and preservation of natural resources located in and adjacent to FBNMS, including the abatement, cleanup, and remediation of pollution in the FBNMS restoration of injured resources, particularly including coral reefs."

"Where criminal activity does damage to natural resources, it is a matter of good public policy that penalties are returned to those resources to mitigate the damage caused and to further protect them," Patlis said.

Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary has maintained a strong relationship with the United States Coast Guard (USCG). Currently the USCG holds a voting seat on the Sanctuary Advisory Council, a board composed of government and non-governmental representatives that provide advice and recommendations on managing and protecting the sanctuary. FBNMS will continue to work with USCG to protect the waters of American Samoa.

"Healthy coral reefs provide vital ecosystem services, support subsistence and commercial fishing and tourism for the economic and social well being of American Samoa," Governor Togiola T.A. Tulafono wrote in a recent letter of support for the sanctuary's Management Plan Review and site expansion efforts. These efforts, he said, "will serve to highlight the strong partnership between NOAA and American Samoa and demonstrate leadership in marine conservation efforts throughout the Pacific."

About Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary:

Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary protects and preserves a fringing coral reef ecosystem nestled within an eroded volcanic crater on the southern coast of Tutuila,

American Samoa. It is the smallest and most remote of all the national marine sanctuaries and is the only true tropical reef in the program. The site is uniquely rich in both natural resources and cultural heritage. Fagatele Bay provides a home to a wide variety of animals and plants that thrive in the protected waters of the bay.

About the National Marine Sanctuary System and NMSF:

The National Marine Sanctuary System represents America's underwater treasures: a network of 14 federally protected areas, encompassing over 150,000 square miles in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Great Lakes. The Foundation was created to help foster conservation-based research, education, and outreach programs designed to connect the American public with these unique marine environments.

On the Web:

Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary: <http://fagatelebay.noaa.gov>

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

National Marine Sanctuary Foundation: <http://nmsfocean.org>

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