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## **Governor Lemanu Applauds Success of Completed Segment of NOAA RICHARD Cruise in American Samoa**

*“I extend our deepest gratitude to the dedicated scientists for their unwavering commitment in providing us with reports of their invaluable operations conducted within our territory. Their continued efforts contribute immensely to our understanding and preservation of our enriched marine environment.”*

The NOAA Ship Rainier concluded Leg 6 of the RICHARD (Rainier Integrates Charting, Hydrography, And Reef Demographics) cruise, which witnessed remarkable achievements in advancing scientific missions amidst challenging weather conditions and engineering obstacles. On July 10, 2023, NOAA Research Ecologist Thomas A. Oliver, on behalf of the science group aboard Rainier, sent a summary report to the Governor's Office regarding the completion of this specific segment. This leg of the cruise focused on the National Coral Reef Monitoring Program (NCRMP) survey and the Office of Coast Survey (OCS) mapping efforts, encompassing a dedicated ten-day operation around Tutuila, American Samoa.

Dr. Oliver mentioned that the Oceans and Climate Change (OCC) team and Fish survey team, in collaboration with esteemed partners from the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa conducted the NCRMP survey and surpassed expectations. He further reports that the teams effectively completed the turnover of NCRMP-OCC cardinal transects on Tutuila and made significant progress in the fish survey efforts.

Governor Lemanu commends the group of scientists and crew members of the NOAA Ship Rainier for their commitment and resilience during the RICHARD expeditions. “On behalf of Lieutenant Governor Talauega, I extend our deepest gratitude to the dedicated scientists for their unwavering commitment in providing us with reports of their invaluable operations conducted within our territory. Their continued efforts contribute immensely to our understanding and preservation of our enriched marine environment. We greatly appreciate their ongoing collaboration and look forward to further fruitful partnerships in the future,” stated Governor Lemanu.

The summary of the scientists' work during a ten-day cruise indicated that the team conducted one hundred and fifty six dives to collect and deploy monitoring equipment and recorders, sample collections, fish and photo-quadrat surveys, Structure-from-Motion(SfM) transects, and more. In his closing remarks, Dr. Oliver expressed his appreciation to their team leads and scientists, and to the American Samoa Government.

Below are some photos from Dr. Oliver taken during their surveys.

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