



# NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

**CONTACT:** Vernon Smith, 301-713-7248  
Allen Tom, 808-879-2818

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
March 9, 2011

## **Bronze Medal Awarded to Four National Marine Sanctuary Staff Members for Tsunami Response Efforts**

The U.S. Department of Commerce has awarded Bronze Medals to four Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) staff members for their superior public service in helping support the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) response to the 2009 tsunami in the U.S. Territory of American Samoa.

NOAA has primary responsibility for providing tsunami warnings to the Nation, and a leadership role in tsunami observations and research. On Sept. 29, 2009, a powerful Pacific Ocean earthquake struck near American Samoa and spawned a tsunami that triggered towering waves that swept over the islands and left more than 160 dead.

Kevin Grant, Benjamin LaCour and Kelley Sage, (all from the ONMS Pacific Islands Region), and Lisa Symons (ONMS headquarters), were members of a NOAA team that responded to the devastation in American Samoa, home to the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Kevin Grant is a staff member of the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Benjamin LaCour is a NOAA Corps Officer working for the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. Kelley Sage is a NOAA Corps Officer working for the ONMS Pacific Islands Region.

The Bronze Medal is one of the highest honors that can be granted by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. The award recipients will be honored at a ceremony on Tuesday, March 15, 2011, in the NOAA Auditorium in Silver Spring, MD.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/usnoaagov>.

On the Web:

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: <http://www.noaa.gov>  
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://www.sanctuaries.noaa.gov>  
Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary: <http://www.fagatelebay.noaa.gov/>