



Tonga Ocean Update

Issued: 20 March 2026

Recent observation

TONGA METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE

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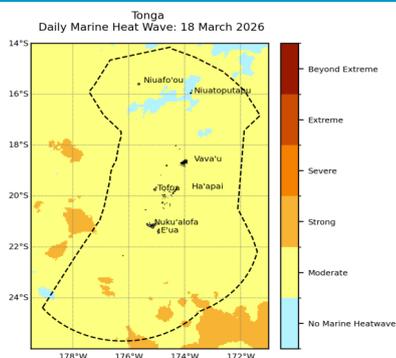
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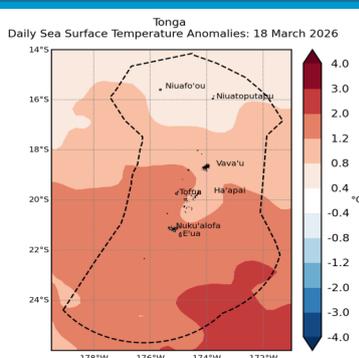
- Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) for February 2026 were generally near-normal to above-normal.
- Significant rise in ocean temperatures around Tonga over the past few weeks.
- Moderate Marine Heat Wave experienced across Tonga waters in the past few days.
- Significant increase in sea surface temperature anomalies observed in the past few days.
- Sea level height has been above average as of the 20th February.
- Coral Bleaching has been at Alert Level 2 in the past few days in most of Tonga.

Marine Heat Wave



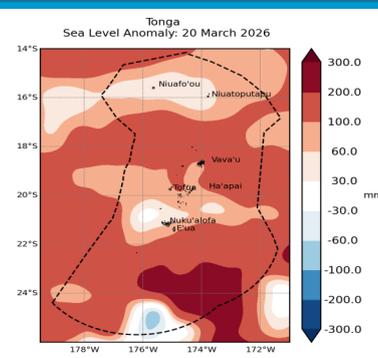
© Pacific Community (SPC) 2025 NOAA Coral Reef Watch (CRW)

Sea Surface Temperature



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Sea-level height



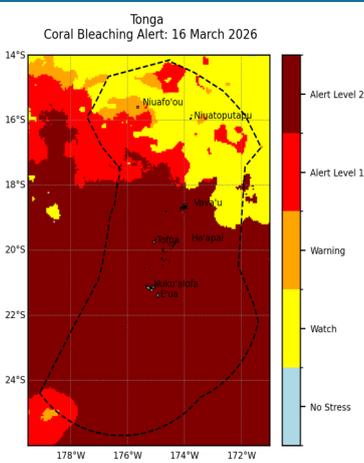
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Daily monitoring shows that Tonga has been experiencing a moderate marine heat wave in the past few days. Marine heat wave combined with increasing temperature on land and sea are contributing to stress to marine ecosystems resulting in coral bleaching and marine .

Significant increase in sea surface temperature has been observed across the country in the past few weeks with up to 0.8 to 2.0°C above average. Presence of warmer than average waters can be related to reports of dead fish found on coastal waters in some places in Tonga which is indication of heat stress on the marine ecosystem.

Sea level forecast shows above average (30-200mm) sea level height across Tonga waters. Stakeholders can use this forecast to make decisions about the protection of communities and infrastructure against coastal inundation, especially when there is extreme high tide.

Coral Bleaching



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Coral bleaching was in warning level for Tonga EEZ as seen here in the map above with alert level 2 in parts of central and southern Tonga. Combination of warmer than average land and sea surface temperature is a huge contribution to coral bleaching. This information is very useful for tourists and related stakeholders.

10 highest tides for 2026

Date	Time	Height (m)
26-Dec	9:21	1.89
27-Dec	10:17	1.88
05-Jan	9:08	1.87
25-Dec	8:25	1.87
04-Jan	8:12	1.86
06-Jan	10:02	1.85
28-Dec	11:14	1.85
03-Jan	7:14	1.84
03-Feb	8:53	1.84
27-Nov	9:38	1.84

10 lowest tides for 2026

Date	Time	Height (m)
18-Jun	4:16	0.21
17-Jun	3:22	0.21
16-Jul	3:06	0.21
17-Jul	3:59	0.21
19-Jun	5:11	0.24
15-Jul	2:13	0.24
16-Jun	2:29	0.24
20-May	4:33	0.25
18-Jul	4:49	0.25
19-May	3:39	0.25

Tidal predictions show the highest & lowest tides of the year for Nuku'alofa. The next highest tide is 22 March with the highest tide of 1.84m at 9:47 am and the next lowest tide was on the same day with the lowest tide at 0.44m at 4:08pm. This information is very useful to everyone who wants to know these events especially to those stakeholders and people who are interested in tide predictions for guidance. Monitoring of highest tides is important as it can have negative impacts if occurred at the same time with high sea swell and wind. Process of watering and soaking of the beach hibiscus fibre (fau) for making waist mats, shallow fishing etc.



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Ocean Outlook for April 2026

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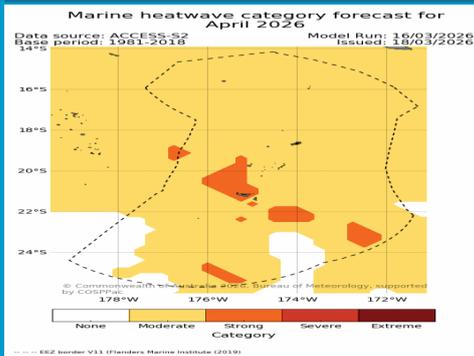
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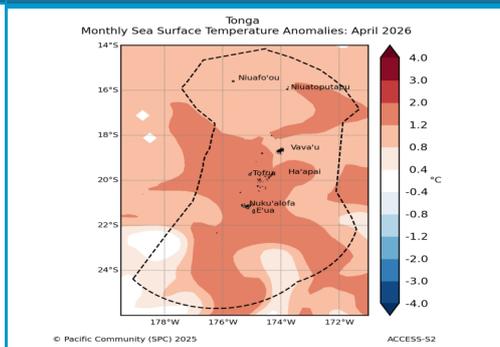
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- Significant rise in ocean temperatures around Tonga over the past few days.
- Increase in sea surface temperature anomalies is likely to continue in the coming months.
- Heat Wave is likely to continue in the coming weeks.
- Sea level height is forecast to be above average.
- Coral Bleaching is at Alert level 2 for Vava'u to Tongatapu and 'Eua waters in the coming months with an Alert Level 1 for the Niuaus.

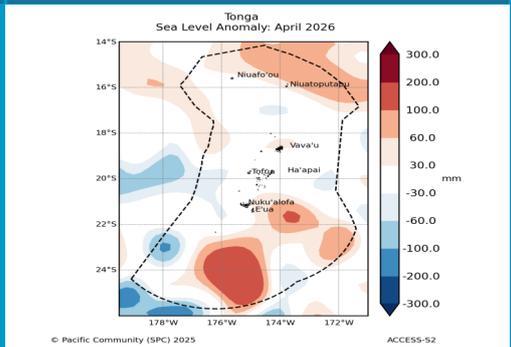
Marine Heat Wave Forecast



Sea Surface Temperature Forecast



Sea-level height

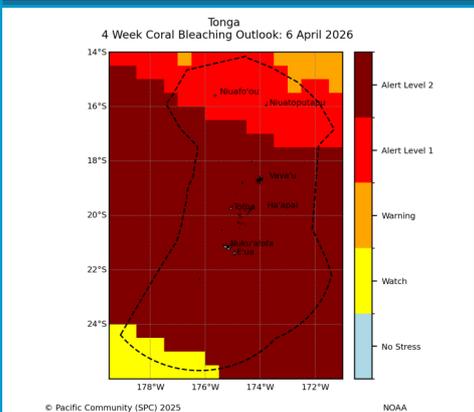


A moderate to severe marine heat wave condition is forecast to persist in Tonga waters for April 2026. Close monitoring is advised as during the forecast period as weekly variations can lead to higher than expected impacts.

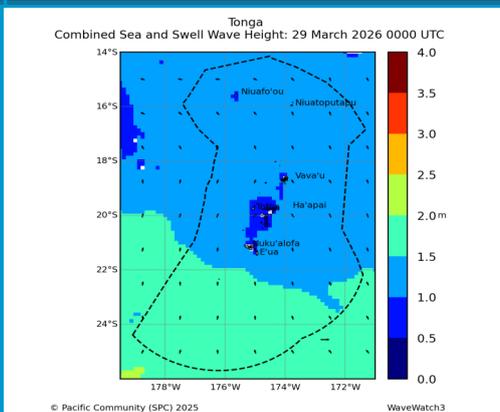
Above average sea surface temperature anomalies is predicted for the coming months. Presence of warmer than average waters intensifies stress of marine ecosystems and risks to fish and coral reefs. This information is important for communities awareness and close monitoring is therefore advised as daily and weekly variations may occur.

Sea level forecast shows average sea level across Tonga in the coming months. Stakeholders can use this forecast to make decisions about the protection of communities and infrastructure against coastal inundation, especially when there is extreme high tide.

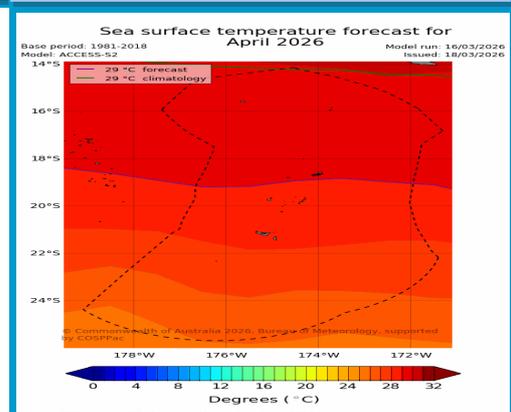
Coral Bleaching Outlook



Combined Sea and Swell Wave Height



Fisheries convergence zone



Coral bleaching shows Alert level 2 for central and southern Tonga while alert level 1 is forecast for the Niuaus. Coral bleaching is a common signal of stress in coral reefs and marine ecosystems caused by warmer sea temperatures. Close monitoring is advised especially to Fisheries and related stakeholders.

Tonga combined sea and swell wave height for March shows majority of the waves will come from the south and south east. The average wave height in March will be 0.5 to 1.5m over most of Tongatapu waters and reaching a maximum height of 1.5m over waters to the south of Tongatapu.

The boundary between warm and cold ocean water is rich in nutrients and attracts Tuna. This convergence zone is normally located to the north but in April 2026, it is forecast to be displaced to the south and between Vava'u waters. This information can be used by stakeholders to know where tuna can be found during this time period.