



Positioning Sea Grant

**An Integrated National Communications Plan
2003-06**

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Positioning Sea Grant: An Integrated National Communications Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents a strategic plan for enhancing communications “inside the beltway” to attain greater federal support for the National Sea Grant College Program. Increased national support is essential for the program to effectively satisfy its federal mandate and be a significant leader in helping coastal states and the nation enhance the conservation and responsible use of ocean, Great Lakes and coastal resources for a sustainable environment and economy.

This plan is based on a communications needs assessment conducted during June-August 2002 by Wisconsin Sea Grant communicator Stephen Wittman and the results of a September 2002 communications planning retreat involving representatives of the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO), Sea Grant Association (SGA), Sea Grant National Review Panel (NRP), Sea Grant National Media Relations Office (NMRO), Sea Grant communicators, National Association of State Universities & Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), and the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Oceanic & Atmospheric Research Office of Public Affairs, plus two private sector marketing experts.

A draft endorsed by the majority of the retreat participants was distributed in November 2002 to NSGO staff, national review panel members, and all state Sea Grant program directors, extension leaders and communicators for review and comment. As a result of that review, this document is being distributed to the appropriate elements of the Sea Grant program network for implementation. It is envisioned that the NSGO in particular can use this document to guide its future activities and shape the work plans of its communications staff. This plan also provides a suitable framework for jointly planning and coordinating national-level communications by SGA External Affairs, NMRO, NSGO and the Sea Grant Communicators National Steering Committee. The SGA, regional networks and individual state programs can likewise use the strategies and tactics identified herein for developing their own work plans for state and regional federal communications. The network now needs to jointly develop a process for monitoring and regularly reporting on implementation of the plan by the various program elements and to periodically update and modify the plan.

It should be noted that—while this plan identifies needed resources, tactics, messengers and audiences—it does *not* identify the specific message(s) the program needs to convey to those audiences. Therefore, the required next step is for the network to develop “the Sea Grant story” and identify the best branding message for effectively positioning the program and marketing the benefits of Sea Grant research, outreach and education to a national audience.

The success of this effort depends largely on the strength of commitment and continual support given to it by the entire Sea Grant community. It will require all components of the program to give high priority to presenting our branding message and “the Sea Grant story” as part of a consistent and persistent campaign over the next four years to position and market at the national level. This is essential if we are to increase national support for the program by its next reauthorization and reverse a 20-year decline, in real dollars, of its federal funding base. This decline has begun to diminish the program’s capability for addressing critical

ocean, Great Lakes and coastal issues. Clearly, Sea Grant's continued viability depends on generating greater national support for the program.

To accomplish that, the network must first enhance internal communications among all program elements (researchers, communicators, extension staff and educators) as well as among all program entities (SGA, NSGO, NMRO and NRP) with the objective of improving their interactions, collaborations, efficiency and effectiveness.

The following plan presents one overarching goal and five objectives for reaching that goal:

THE GOAL: To effectively demonstrate the need for and value of the National Sea Grant College Program to Congress, NOAA, the Department of Commerce (DOC), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the White House, national non-governmental organizations, national news media, and other relevant partners and audiences.

OBJECTIVE 1—Excel in Communications Capability

Enhance Sea Grant's internal/external national communications capability to ensure coordination among NSGO, NOAA, SGA, NMRO and Sea Grant network communications efforts, and provide timely, consistent messages to targeted audiences on a sustained basis.

OBJECTIVE 2—Build NOAA Partnerships

Increase Sea Grant's value to NOAA by demonstrating that (1) Sea Grant is a partnership that facilitates NOAA access to university research, outreach and education expertise, and (2) the Sea Grant partnership is crucial to the success of NOAA's mission.

OBJECTIVE 3—Strengthen NGO Alliances

Develop mutually beneficial partnerships with, and engage the support of, national non-governmental organizations to communicate effective common messages and priority needs to Congress, NOAA, the Administration and other national audiences.

OBJECTIVE 4—Maintain Congressional Support

Ensure that the Congress appreciates the need to reauthorize the National Sea Grant College Program on a continuing basis and support appropriations at the authorized level because it recognizes that (1) Sea Grant supports programs of interest and value to many constituencies; (2) it is uniquely capable of providing a certain set of services and products and leveraging resources to address important national, regional and state marine, Great Lakes and coastal needs; (3) Sea Grant university partners are vital to the NOAA mission; and (4) Sea Grant is a national research, outreach and education program with relevance to all Americans.

OBJECTIVE 5—Engage the Executive Branch

(1) Educate the DOC, OMB and the White House about the national importance of marine, Great Lakes and coastal issues and Sea Grant's value and effectiveness in addressing them, and (2) engage Executive Branch support for addressing these issues via Sea Grant reauthorization and appropriations at fully authorized amounts.

For each of these objectives, the plan identifies key participants/audiences, recommended tactics and priority activities (and who has lead responsibility for implementing them), and performance measures.

SITUATION ANALYSIS (2002)

The justification and need for a program like Sea Grant is arguably even greater today than when the National Sea Grant College and Program Act was first passed in 1966. The litany of needs and opportunities is familiar to the Sea Grant family—declining fisheries and increasing demand for seafood, the promise and problems of aquaculture, destruction of coastal habitat and ecosystems amid rapid coastal population growth and development, the ballooning economic costs of damage caused by hurricanes and other coastal natural hazards, the spread of hazardous algal blooms, and costly invasions of nonindigenous aquatic species, among many others.

Yet—despite the ever-increasing environmental impacts and needs of a rapidly growing coastal population—the level of federal support for Sea Grant over the last two decades has consistently fallen short of full authorization amounts and has not kept pace with inflation. Adjusted for inflation, the program’s FY81 appropriation of \$41.8 million would equal about \$83 million today, yet the program’s total FY02 appropriation—\$62.4 million, including \$9 million in congressionally authorized programs—is only three-fourths of that amount. Under the current reauthorization legislation, even if fully funded, the program’s base annual appropriation will not top \$83 million until 2008.

While Congress has been willing to fund the program above the Administration request, even in years of budget austerity, a lack of Administration support has been a significant factor in Sea Grant’s stagnant federal funding levels during most of the last 25 years. Continued congressional support for the program is essential and thus must remain an ongoing priority for increasing funding for Sea Grant. At the same time, any strategy for growing the program must also focus on building the support of the Administration—first within NOAA and then upward through the DOC and OMB to the White House.

NOAA recently completed a comprehensive internal program review that resulted in 68 recommendations—such as organizing all NOAA research under four themes (i.e., climate, coastal/ocean, living marine resources, and weather)—almost all of which have been accepted for implementation by the NOAA administrator. Obviously, the Sea Grant university research partnership can contribute to all four of these NOAA research themes, and several recommendations present new opportunities for enhancing the Sea Grant program through closer integration with the NOAA mission, such as:

- Starting in FY03, NOAA will devote 50% of new research funds to competitively fund external research (e.g., university research).
- Creating a NOAA Office of Education and Sustainable Development that would, among other things, “seek out opportunities for NOAA to contribute to oceanic and atmospheric science literacy” and “hire professionals to train and provide NOAA with the ‘how-to’ on improving education and outreach effectiveness.”
- Requiring a fixed percentage of NOAA program funds to be dedicated to the development of effective education and outreach strategies.
- Recruiting education, outreach and communications specialists to the NOAA workforce.
- Enhancing the student/summer employee program, and expanding special employment programs.

Clearly, Sea Grant is a natural fit for these new NOAA initiatives. Sea Grant universities offer the resources and know-how NOAA needs to implement these recommendations, particularly in the areas of outreach and education. This could contribute greatly toward elevating the program's status within NOAA and highlight how Sea Grant contributes to the NOAA mission.

OMB support is crucial because its mission is to assist the President in overseeing the preparation of the federal budget and to supervise its administration in Executive Branch agencies. The OMB evaluates the effectiveness of agency programs, policies and procedures; assesses competing funding demands among agencies, and sets funding priorities. OMB support for Sea Grant is a critical need that must be addressed.

Leveraging existing partnerships within the federal government (i.e., NOAA) and among national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with similar or related interests—such as the Coastal States Organization (CSO), the Consortium for Oceanographic Research & Education (CORE) and the National Association of State Universities & Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC)—is also extremely important. NASULGC is perhaps key among these partners, because virtually all Sea Grant institutions are members of the association, and it offers a well-established and extensive federal relations apparatus for leveraging its university network for resources and critical support. NASULGC's Board on Oceans & Atmosphere requires the inclusion of Sea Grant directors. CORE members include other oceanographic institutions in addition to universities. The CSO is focused on advancing the interests of coastal state governments. By fostering these partnerships, Sea Grant could increase its effectiveness within the Beltway in securing funding and outside the Beltway by expanding its capabilities.

A comprehensive federal/national strategy for conveying the Sea Grant story is long overdue. Fortunately, two national commissions—the presidential U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission—are scheduled to present their findings in the first half of 2003. Notably, these are the first such national ocean commissions since the 1968-69 Stratton Commission, the recommendations of which led directly to the creation of NOAA and passage of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972. This presents Sea Grant, NOAA and closely related NGOs with a once-in-decades opportunity to move ocean, Great Lakes and coastal issues higher up on the national agenda. By clearly articulating the Sea Grant story and conveying a unified vision, Sea Grant has the opportunity to greatly increase its stock with a variety of national audiences.

In sum, Sea Grant must strive to demonstrate and communicate its relevance and effectiveness in addressing critical ocean, Great Lakes and coastal issues and opportunities, and how this benefits the rest of the nation. This will require a cohesive, consistent, timely and sustained national-level program marketing effort involving contributions from all elements of the Sea Grant network. This involves three interrelated considerations of national communications capability:

- ***Sea Grant needs to establish a national-level capability to collect, synthesize and deliver program and issue-oriented information.*** Individual Sea Grant programs produce an abundance of information on program activities and accomplishments that is generally very effectively communicated within their respective states or region, yet this information often fails to get assimilated and communicated at the national level. Moreover, much of this information has already been compiled and summarized in the

briefing books prepared for Program Assessment Teams (PATs) over the past four years, yet this goldmine of information has yet to be tapped.

- ***Sea Grant needs a centralized online program information database capable of searching and compiling information from multiple programs and summarizing it by topic.*** Today's congressional staffers, federal agency and Administration officials, national news media, NGOs, and interested constituents are increasingly likely to turn first to the Web for information on any organization or topic. All state Sea Grant programs, the SGA, National Sea Grant Library and the NMRO have Web sites, and currently the NSGO is developing its own Web site (formerly hosted by Maryland Sea Grant). Recently, the NSGO inaugurated a long-needed search capability that provides access to more than 25,000 Web pages of Sea Grant information network-wide; however, the somewhat random resulting list of information is likely to be of limited usefulness to national-level audiences.
- ***The NSGO needs to initiate a comprehensive review and evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of its present national communications efforts and project expenditures, and implement necessary changes.*** Over the years, Sea Grant has attempted—with varying degrees of success—to establish national vehicles for effectively communicating the program's activities, products and accomplishments both internally and externally. Currently, these include the National Sea Grant Library and the associated quarterly publication, *Sea Grant Abstracts*; the Sea Grant National Media Relations Office (NMRO), and Theme Team communications. Together, these efforts consume more than \$860,000 of the roughly \$900,000 available to the NSGO for funding national communications efforts; however, none of these projects has undergone comprehensive review in recent years.

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— Integrated Communications Plan —

THE GOAL

To effectively demonstrate the need for and value of the National Sea Grant College Program to Congress, NOAA, the Department of Commerce, Office of Management and Budget, the White House, national non-governmental organizations, national news media, and other relevant partners and audiences.

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OBJECTIVE 1 — Excel in Communications Capability

Enhance Sea Grant's internal/external national communications capability to ensure coordination among NSGO, NOAA, SGA, NMRO and Sea Grant network communications efforts, and provide timely, consistent messages to targeted audiences on a sustained basis.

Key Participants

- SGA External Affairs (director, chair, committee)
- NSGO (director, outreach unit manager, communicator)
- Sea Grant National Media Relations Office
- Sea Grant state program directors
- Sea Grant network communicators
- OAR-NOAA Public Affairs
- OAR External Affairs-NOAA Legislative & Constituent Affairs

Recommended Tactics & Priority Activities

- The NSGO, in partnership with the Sea Grant network, should provide leadership and support for the development of a well-planned, network-wide relational database and information system for collecting, cataloging and tracking technical information, accomplishments, economic impacts and general information about Sea Grant investments in research, outreach and education for national-level audiences. This distributed Web-based system should be maintained by the network through regular input from and updating by the individual state programs to ensure the accuracy and quality of the information.
 - The NSGO should create a Web-based intranet for the use by state Sea Grant programs for improving internal communications with and among the state Sea Grant programs.

- The NSGO Website should be attractive, easily navigable, readily accessible and highly informative about the national Sea Grant program, including up-to-date listings of program accomplishments, results, benefits and impacts; currently funded research projects, outreach activities and program events, and a section specifically for news media.
- Because it is buried within the NOAA website, the NSGO Website should be linked with and promoted on the NMRO and/or SGA Website(s) to ensure ready access to it by interested national audiences.
- For maximum impact and effectiveness, Sea Grant program leadership should select just two or three of the most critical and timely issues of *national* interest that the program is uniquely suited to address, and focus all of its national-level communications efforts (NSGO, NOAA, SGA, NMRO, *Sea Grant Abstracts* and key state programs) on consistently and repeatedly messaging those issues. To that end, the SGA and NSGO need to establish a system (process/procedure) for identifying, selecting and prioritizing issues for such strategic national initiatives. They then need to identify and recruit a select group of champions dedicated to promoting these issues and delivering the Sea Grant message at the national level. The involvement of Sea Grant researchers, extension staff, educators and communicators throughout this process is crucial.
- The NSGO communicator should provide leadership to the network in implementing and annually updating its strategic national communications plan(s)—s/he should know what is happening in each program; collaborate with network communicators to collect, synthesize and package program results and impacts; and work with the SGA, NMRO and NOAA-OAR offices of Public Affairs and External Affairs to disseminate information to appropriate national audiences.
- The biennial Sea Grant Week conferences should include workshops on the network's current national communications strategy and on how to effectively communicate with news media, Congress and the Executive Branch.
- The SGA and NSGO should establish a system (process/procedure) for routine contact with targeted national-level audiences, and systematically conduct regular "Sea Grant 101" briefings for those audiences.
- Success stories and economic impacts should be systematically mined from the PAT briefing books and catalogued and synthesized for use on the NSGO Website and for preparing fact sheets, news releases and other information materials for national audiences. This should serve as a national communications center that can provide the information products Sea Grant needs for responding rapidly to requests for information. (NSGO, SGA, NMRO)
- The SGA External Affairs director, NSGO communicator, NMRO director and the chair (or past chair) of the Sea Grant Communicators National Steering Committee should meet regularly and frequently to coordinate their activities and strategies for delivering national-level priority messages. These meetings should include, on a regular basis, the NASULGC's federal relations officer.
- The NMRO should sponsor regular national news media briefings on targeted topics in Washington (~three per year) and work with network communicators to arrange

occasional roundtables with science and environmental journalists on potential marine, Great Lakes and coastal issues of interest.

- The NSGO should establish a personnel loan program for inviting university Sea Grant communications professionals to work in Silver Spring to assist it with short-term, specific communications projects (Web projects, marketing, reports, etc.).

Performance Measures

- A process for identifying and selecting national initiative priorities is established within six months by the SGA and NSGO, and three of the most critical and/or timely issues on which to focus a coordinated national communications effort are thus selected. Within the following six months, Sea Grant's message and a national marketing strategy is developed for each issue.
- A Web-based, network-wide data and information system for collecting, cataloging and tracking Sea Grant program and project information is established within one year, and all state programs regularly contribute to it.
- Success stories and economic impacts from the PAT briefing books are summarized and publicized via the Web and printed materials within one year, and fully catalogued and synthesized within two years.
- Champions representing each Sea Grant state, coastal region and key national constituencies (NGOs) are identified, recruited and briefed on the three national priority issues, and the Sea Grant message and target audiences for each of them within one year.
- All Sea Grant program directors and staff participate in at least one workshop at the local, regional or national level to receive training for communicating effectively with Congress and/or the news media, and a representative of each state program makes a Washington visit at least once annually.
- At least three national news media/congressional briefings are held in Washington each year.

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OBJECTIVE 2 — Build NOAA Partnerships

Increase Sea Grant's value to NOAA by demonstrating that (1) Sea Grant is a partnership that facilitates NOAA access to university research, outreach and education expertise, and (2) the Sea Grant partnership is crucial to the success of NOAA's mission.

Target Audiences

- NOAA Line Offices— OAR (new AA and Deputy AA), NOS, NMFS, NWS, NESDIS, new crosscutting Assistant Administrator
- NOAA Administrator (RAdm. Conrad Lautenbacher)
- NOAA Science Advisory Board
- NOAA Office of Legislative Affairs
- NOAA External & Constituent Affairs
- NOAA Office of Education & Sustainable Development
- Knauss Fellows, alumni in NOAA
- NOAA Budget Office

Messengers

- NSGO director and program officers
- OAR assistant administrator
- SGA officials, state program directors
- Sea Grant National Review Panel
- OAR and NOAA Offices of Public Affairs

Recommended Tactics & Priority Activities

- To more closely identify itself with NOAA, the National Sea Grant Office should officially refer to itself as “NOAA Sea Grant” in all communications inside the Beltway.
- The NSGO should rename its outreach program as “Sea Grant Outreach & Education” to anticipate and become identified with NOAA's new outreach and education initiative.
- The NSGO and SGA should become involved in and contribute to the development of the new NOAA strategic plan presently in progress. Sea Grant's national themes should reflect the four research themes identified by NOAA (i.e., climate, coastal/ocean, living marine resources and weather), and the priorities identified in Sea Grant's national themes should be reflected in the NOAA strategic plan.
- The NSGO should strongly encourage NOAA to consider employing Sea Grant communicators, extension specialists and educators for advancing its outreach and

education initiatives (i.e., training workshops, summer/temporary employment, interagency personnel agreements, etc.)

- To increase understanding and awareness of Sea Grant in other parts of NOAA, the NSGO should continue and consider expanding the employment of staff from NOS, NMFS, OAR and other units of NOAA to fill staff vacancies.
- Sea Grant Theme Team chairs should invite an appropriate NOAA program officer to serve on each team.
- Sea Grant should routinely consider involving NOAA or appropriate NOAA line offices as sponsors, publicists or participants in national Sea Grant events and, as warranted, in regional and local events as well.
- To generate greater awareness of its activities among NOAA and DOC officials, Sea Grant programs and/or regional network chairs should provide “heads-up” advance notice of notable upcoming activities and events of possible interest to the OAR Public Affairs Office (Jana Goldman).
- The NSGO Website page design should incorporate the planned uniform NOAA Website design and highlight successful Sea Grant-NOAA partnerships.

Second Tier Tactics & Activities

- Brief Knauss Fellows placed in NOAA offices on the activities of their state Sea Grant program and the national program *before* they begin their fellowship.
- Distribute news media tip sheets and/or one-pagers on relevant issues to NOAA line offices and Knauss Fellows in NOAA. (NMRO, NSGO, SGA)
- Highlight Knauss Fellows employment and activities in NOAA in the NSGO newsletter. (NSGO)
- Conduct a series of Sea Grant briefings or seminars (e.g., NOAA Central Library brown bags) and/or make personal visits to NOAA line offices in Silver Spring. (NSGO, SGA, Sea Grant programs)
- Develop interactions and liaison positions with NOAA line offices. (NSGO specialists, SGA)
- Collaborate with NOAA to develop and procure funding for joint programs and/or complementary national strategic initiatives. (NSGO, SGA)
- Participate in meetings and conference calls of the NOAA offices of Public Affairs and Constituent Affairs. (NSGO communicator, NMRO)
- Educate other NOAA units about the resources available via the National Sea Grant Library and *Sea Grant Abstracts*. (NSGO, NSGL)
- Enlist the assistance and support of NOAA’s Office of Public Affairs in publicizing notable Sea Grant outreach events, research results and interesting science; provide advance notice to the NSGO and, as appropriate, OAR Public Affairs of upcoming events and news releases. (Sea Grant communicators)

- Ensure close collaboration and consultation with the NOAA Science Advisory Board, especially in cross-cutting research areas. (NSGO)
- Help develop and participate in constituent outreach projects (e.g., NOAA-sponsored field trips for congressional staff to see Sea Grant-sponsored research and outreach projects firsthand). Make use of NOAA Legislative & Constituent Affairs in preparing site visits for federal and NGO officials. (NSGO, NMRO, SGA External Affairs)

Performance Measures

- The NSGO is recognized inside the Beltway as “NOAA Sea Grant.”
- NOAA significantly increases its partnerships with Sea Grant programs for conducting research, outreach and education.
- NOAA recommends Sea Grant reauthorization and supports full funding at the authorized level.
- The NSGO home page on the Web is accessible directly from NOAA’s home page.
- Sea Grant has representation on NOAA’s new Research Committee.

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OBJECTIVE 3 — Strengthen NGO Alliances

Develop mutually beneficial partnerships with, and engage the support of, national non-governmental organizations to communicate effective common messages and priority needs to Congress, NOAA, the Administration and other national audiences.

1st Tier NGOs (strategic allies)

- National Association of State Universities & Land Grant Colleges
- Consortium for Oceanographic Research & Education
- Coastal States Organization

2nd Tier NGOs (tactical allies)

- American Fisheries Society
- American Zoo & Aquarium Association
- BoatUS Association
- Marine Fish Conservation Network
- National Association of County Commissioners
- National Association of Marine Laboratories
- National Fisheries Institute
- National Governors Association
- Northeast-Midwest Institute
- H. John Heinz III Center for Science, Economics & the Environment
- American Society of Limnology & Oceanography
- American Institute of Biological Sciences
- Estuarine Research Federation
- National Marine Educators Association

Messengers

- NSGO director, communicator, outreach program leader and program officers
- SGA officials, state program directors
- Sea Grant National Review Panel members
- Sea Grant National Media Relations Office

Recommended Tactics & Priority Activities

- To ensure consistency and follow-through in its relationships with NGOs, the NSGO needs to develop a policy for interacting with NGOs that addresses what the NSGO will offer NGOs, what Sea Grant hopes to accomplish from these interactions, and the criteria for determining the level of interaction. It should then make this policy clear to NGOs.

- The SGA and NSGO should create a strategy and process (policy/procedure) for identifying, prioritizing and selecting NGOs for prospective national-level partnerships, including:
 - Inviting NGOs to cosponsor and/or participate in educational briefings for congressional staffers, media and special interest groups.
 - Inviting NGO representatives to Sea Grant Week and the Capitol Hill Oceans Week and Knauss Fellows receptions.
 - Involving NGOs in national theme team efforts or activities (e.g., each theme team should identify and contact at least one NGO for this purpose).
 - Facilitating a Sea Grant presence/participation in at least two NGO conferences and meetings annually.
 - Issuing joint position papers or comments on issues of common interest and/or lending its (non-advocate) support to NGO position papers.
 - Incorporating the identity of NGO partners in Sea Grant communications.
- While the SGA is the primary vehicle for communications with member universities, both the SGA and NSGO should engage NASULGC for mobilizing the support of universities regarding federal matters affecting the program. The SGA should make maximum use of NASULGC's federal relations apparatus by closely coordinating its congressional and Administration relations program with that association.
- The NSGO and NMRO should participate in the CSO's Campaign for the Coast.
- The SGA External Affairs director should regularly monitor and participate, when appropriate, in interest group activities, such as those hosted by the Northeast-Midwest Institute and the ocean and coastal caucuses.
- The NSGO should maintain an up-to-date database for contacting former Knauss fellows working in NGOs and keeping them informed of Sea Grant activities.
- The NMRO, National Sea Grant Library and *Sea Grant Abstracts* should ensure that all first- and second-tier NGOs are on their distribution lists.
- The NSGO and SGA should encourage greater one-to-one contact between Sea Grant and NGOs; Sea Grant directors visiting Washington should also visit relevant NGOs.

Performance Measures

- A strategy and process for selecting and prioritizing NGOs for national-level partnerships is established and implemented within six months.
- The NSGO establishes a policy for interacting with NGOs within one year and communicates this policy to all interested NGOs.
- At least one NGO is a participating member on each of the national theme teams within 18 months.
- An NGO jointly hosts or cosponsors at least one Sea Grant media or congressional briefing annually.

OBJECTIVE 4 — Maintain Congressional Support

Ensure that the Congress appreciates the need to reauthorize the National Sea Grant College Program on a continuing basis and supports appropriations at the authorized level because it recognizes that (1) Sea Grant supports programs of interest and value to many constituencies; (2) it is uniquely capable of providing a certain set of services and products and leveraging resources to address important national, regional and state marine, Great Lakes and coastal needs; (3) Sea Grant university partners are vital to the NOAA mission; and (4) Sea Grant is a national program with relevance to all Americans.

Key Audiences

- U.S. House of Representatives—Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife & Oceans; and Committee on Science, Subcommittee on Environment, Technology & Standards (*sequential jurisdiction, reauthorization*)
- U.S. House of Representatives—Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary (*appropriation*)
- U.S. Senate—Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation, Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere and Fisheries (*reauthorization*)
- U.S. Senate—Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary (*appropriation*)
- The chairs and ranking members of the above committees/subcommittees and committee staff members
- Committee members with a Sea Grant program in their state/district
- Individual members of Congress with a Sea Grant program in their state/district
- Other members of Congress, congressional staffers

Messengers

- Program champions (individuals from Sea Grant states, coastal regions and NGOs)
- Sea Grant Association (External Affairs)
- Individual state Sea Grant directors
- National Association of State Universities & Land Grant Colleges
- OAR External Affairs (Caren Madsen)
- NOAA Office of Legislative Affairs (Andrew Larkin)
- Sea Grant National Review Panel
- Ocean Caucus
- Coastal Caucus
- Coastal Hazards Caucus

- Great Lakes Task Force (Northeast-Midwest Caucus)
- Upper Mississippi River Task Force
- National and local news media (indirectly)
- Department of Commerce staffers

Prospective Partners

- Coastal States Organization
- Consortium for Oceanographic Research & Education
- National Fisheries Institute
- National Association of Marine Laboratories
- National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
- Association of National Estuary Programs
- American Zoo and Aquarium Association
- National Governors Association
- National Association of County Commissioners

Recommended Tactics & Priority Activities

- The NSGO should entertain proposals to develop a congressional profile for identifying an appropriate Sea Grant branding message, and to work with creative and marketing teams made up of a cross-section of Sea Grant program representatives to develop, test and deliver it.
- After establishing excellent Web-based online databases—especially at the NSGO, SGA and NMRO—the NSGO and SGA should promote awareness of them among congressional staffers (e.g., in emails, on stationery, bookmarks, etc.). Among other things, these databases should include network-wide syntheses of (1) state-of-the-art scientific findings, (2) economic developments and impacts, and (3) new tools & techniques for resource managers and users.
- Sea Grant communications with Congress need to respond to Administration and congressional concerns regarding the competitive funding issue. One proposed means of documenting the competitiveness of Sea Grant funds is to collect data from all state programs regarding the numbers of pre-proposals versus full proposals versus funded projects network-wide during each competition.
- Sea Grant should sponsor or cosponsor (especially with NASULGC, where appropriate) at least one significant educational seminar or coastal issues briefing on Capitol Hill annually. It should also consider organizing briefings in cooperation with an appropriate House/Senate subcommittee or legislative caucus/congressional coalition.
- Regular contact with individual legislators is critical—unless prohibited by state law or university regulations, Sea Grant directors should personally visit their state’s congressional representatives on a regular basis and continuously keep them informed

of what Sea Grant is doing in their state/district as well as in the state's participating institutions of higher learning.

- To facilitate possible educational and informative visits with members of the news media and/or media interviews during their visits, Sea Grant directors, staff and researchers should inform the NMRO, in advance, whenever they are going to be on Capitol Hill.
- The NSGO should provide input on development of OAR's annual legislative strategy during December and January of each year (i.e., supply Sea Grant's "wish list" for legislative briefings; identify which committees/legislators to target and note important new legislators/staffers, etc.)
- The NSGO and SGA External Affairs should identify and prioritize relevant receptions and other events on Capitol Hill for having a Sea Grant presence.
- The NSGO and SGA should jointly maintain an up-to-date directory of key federal legislators and especially, because of their high turnover rate, congressional staffers, and make this list available to state programs for sending targeted emails and news clips to legislators.

2nd Tier Tactics & Activities

- Establish two-way communications with Congress—find out what Congress wants or needs from Sea Grant. (SGA External Affairs, program directors)
- Drawn on the last Administration transition document to prepare a briefing document for new members of congress elected this fall. (SGA External Affairs)
- Inform university presidents and institutional leaders of programmatic accomplishments
- Arrange for a Sea Grant university president/chancellor or the president of NASULGC to testify on behalf of Sea Grant appropriations (SGA External Affairs, NASULGC Federal Affairs)
- Prepare timely, one-page fact sheets and/or mini-CDs on specific topics or current issues of interest to Congress. (NSGO, SGA and Sea Grant network)
- Fax clips of high-profile "hits" (front-page stories, favorable editorials about Sea Grant) from national news media as well as in state/local media to appropriate legislators or congressional staff. (NMRO, state programs)
- Organize national media days and events. (NMRO, coordination with the SGA and NSGO)
- Maintain a strong Knauss Fellows program and focus especially on placing more fellows in congressional offices. Knauss Fellows placed in congressional offices should be briefed on the activities of their sponsor state program and the national Sea Grant program *before* they arrive in Washington. (NSGO and SGA)
- Promote awareness of the National Sea Grant Library (e.g., bookmarks) among congressional staff and legislators. (NSGO, SGA External Affairs, program directors)

- Establish a process and procedure for mobilizing the Sea Grant network to effectively communicate support for initiatives (NSGO and SGA).

Performance Measures

- Congress reauthorizes the Sea Grant College Program on a continuing basis.
- Congress supports appropriations for the program at the authorized level.
- Individual members of Congress and their staff readily identify Sea Grant as a federal-state-university partnership organization working in their states/districts that also serves regional and national interests.
- Members of Congress and their staff recognize that Sea Grant is a university partnership that provides vital support to the NOAA mission.
- The next Sea Grant reauthorization bill provides substantially larger amounts of funding for the National Sea Grant College Program in each year of FY09-14.
- Increased congressional support and funding for the program generates increased support and funding for Sea Grant programs at the state and university level.

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OBJECTIVE 5 — Engage the Executive Branch

(1) Educate the DOC, OMB and the White House about the national importance of marine, Great Lakes and coastal issues and Sea Grant's value and effectiveness in addressing them, and (2) engage Executive Branch support for addressing these issues via Sea Grant reauthorization and appropriations at fully authorized amounts.

Target Audiences

- Office of Management & Budget
- U.S. Department of Commerce (upward of NOAA Administrator—Sec. Donald Evans)

Executive Branch

- Office of Science & Technology Policy (John Marburger III, director/President's Science Advisor; Richard M. Russell, assoc. dir.-technology; Kathie Olsen, assoc. dir.-science)
 - President's Council of Advisors on Science & Technology (Marburger co-chairs with E. Floyd Kvamme)
- Council on Environmental Quality (James L. Connaughton, chair)

Prospective Messengers

- NOAA Administrator (Conrad Lautenbacher)
- Sea Grant National Review Panel
- The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (report due June 2003)
- Pew Oceans Commission
- SGA External Affairs
- Coastal States Organization
- National Governors Association

Recommended Tactics & Priority Activities

- The NSGO, SGA and NRP should establish a process for identifying key individuals within the Administration for contact and develop an appropriate protocol for contacting them. They should also identify Sea Grant-friendly individuals or organizations (champions) with access to Administration officials.

Dept. of Commerce

- Present the Sea Grant story to DOC administrators. (NOAA Administrator, SGA)
- Invite DOC officials to address or participate in national/notable Sea Grant events (e.g., Sea Grant Week). (NSGO, SGA, NMRO)

- Facilitate site visits by DOC officials to educate them about critical coastal and Great Lakes issues by viewing Sea Grant in action. (NOAA Public Affairs, NOAA Constituent Affairs, NSGO, SGA, NMRO, state Sea Grant programs)
- Facilitate the inclusion of Sea Grant data and success stories in speeches by DOC leaders and other officials. (NOAA Public Affairs, NOAA Constituent Affairs, NMRO)

Administration

- Develop easily understandable material (one-page fact sheets) on critical national coastal and Great Lakes issues for the Administration; present high-impact economic information succinctly. (SGA, NSGO, Theme Teams)
- Arrange for site visits by OMB, OSTP, CEQ and other Administration officials to see Sea Grant in action. (SGA External Affairs, NOAA Public Affairs, NMRO)
- Invite OMB officials to serve (*ex officio*) on Program Assessment Teams. (NRP, NSGO)
- Attend CEQ lunches (SGA External Affairs, NMRO)
- Use national media relations to attract the Administration's attention and interest in critical ocean, Great Lakes and coastal issues and related Sea Grant activities. (NMRO, NOAA Public Affairs)

Performance Measures

- DOC includes Sea Grant in the NOAA budget at the full authorized amount.
- OMB includes full funding for Sea Grant in formulating the President's budget.
- The President's budget provides additional and new funding for critical coastal issues and a budget for Sea Grant at the full authorized level.
- A critical ocean, Great Lakes or coastal issue and Sea Grant are mentioned in one of the President's "State of the Union" addresses.

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