

# **Communicating for Success**

*A Review of the National Sea Grant  
Communications Activities*



**Sea Grant Communications Review Task Force  
December 2004**



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December 15, 2004

Dr. Jerry R. Schubel, Chair  
National Sea Grant Review Panel  
Aquarium of the Pacific  
100 Aquarium Way  
Long Beach, CA 90802

Dear Jerry:

On behalf of the Sea Grant Communications Review Task Force, I am very pleased to submit our report: "Communicating for Success."

We are presenting significant findings in all three areas that we were asked to examine: National Sea Grant Library, the **Sea Grant Abstracts**, and the National Media Relations Program. In addition to the extensive discovery process and deliberations of the Task Force, the report has received a Network-wide review in its draft forms. This has added valuable perspective. We hope that the National Sea Grant Panel and the whole Sea Grant Network will now examine this report closely and take action on the final recommendations.

This document is informed by two technical reports on three national communications activities funded by Sea Grant: the National Sea Grant Library, the **Sea Grant Abstracts** and the National Media Relations Program. The Task Force report is thus both a strategic and technical review of these three key national communications activities.

As part of its process, the Task Force convened two technical panels. One reviewed the National Sea Grant Library and the **Sea Grant Abstracts** on site in October 2003 and the other reviewed the National Media Relations Program in Washington, DC in March 2004. The Task Force planned the reviews, attended the site visits and the interviews and participated in the technical panel discussions although not in their final conclusions or in the writing of the reports.

The Task Force is recommending additional institutional and financial support for the National Sea Grant Library within a structure of accountability. It is recommending termination of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**. It is recommending restarting the National Media Relations Program as soon as possible with specific advice for organizing and funding the program for success. The Task Force has identified several key institutional changes within the Sea Grant Network necessary for success of the national communications program, including designation of one person within the National Sea Grant Office responsible for effective national communications.

This report builds on a wealth of earlier communications planning for Sea Grant. The Task Force is confident that you will find this report useful in clarifying those actions that must be taken in order for Sea Grant to achieve effective and cost-effective national communications.

We thank the members of the two technical panels who each gave the better part of a week to assist us. Very special thanks go to Kerry Bolognese who chaired both technical panels, oversaw the production of both final technical reports and graciously hosted the technical panel on the National Media Relations Program at the offices of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) in Washington, DC. Finally, we thank Ron Baird for providing us the resources necessary to this review and Amy Painter and Jamie Krauk of the National Sea Grant Office who gave us invaluable and comprehensive staff support in a review that included two separate site visits, five days of interviews and three reports.

Sea Grant has much of value to communicate. On behalf of the entire Sea Grant Communications Review Task Force I submit this report with the confidence that implementation of the report's recommendations will position Sea Grant to communicate for success.

Sincerely,

Robin Alden, Chair  
Sea Grant Communications Review Task Force



# **Communicating for Success**

## ***A Review of the National Sea Grant Communications Activities***

**Prepared by  
Sea Grant Communications Review Task Force  
Robin Alden, Chair  
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**December 2004**



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## Acronyms Used in the Report

ASFA	Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts
CORE	Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education
DOC	Department of Commerce
IPA	Intergovernmental Personnel Act
NASULGC	National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges
NMRP	National Media Relations Program
NMRD	National Media Relations Director
NMRAC	National Media Relations Advisory Committee
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NSGO	National Sea Grant Office
NSGL	National Sea Grant Library
NSGCP	National Sea Grant College Program
NSGRP	National Sea Grant Review Panel
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PAT	Program Assessment Team
SGA	Sea Grant Association



## Executive Summary

There is almost nothing that is more powerful than information provided in an effective, coordinated way and presented objectively and truthfully.

Can Sea Grant capture the opportunity available from well-run national scale communications? Yes, but Sea Grant must be attentive to coordinating, organizing and administering the diverse array of communications activities that define Sea Grant communications at a national level.

Sea Grant's strength lies in producing information in pursuit of its mission: information that promotes the sustainable use of coastal resources through a variety of means: research, education and outreach. The strength of Sea Grant also lies in the program's unique, cooperative structure, operating through 30 separate programs so that they are close to the local research questions and the users of the information produced. This organizational structure, however, makes it a challenge for Sea Grant to produce coordinated communications at the national scale.

This report reviews three major national communications efforts of Sea Grant: The National Sea Grant Library (NSGL), the **Sea Grant Abstracts** and the National Media Relations Program (NMRP). It presents a set of recommendations for each of the projects, all designed to further Sea Grant's national communications program. The report presents a framework that should enable Sea Grant to capture the opportunity that a professional communications program at the national scale offers. Success in national communications will result in further growth and success for Sea Grant as a whole.

Over the last ten years, Sea Grant has produced many impressive documents that demonstrate that there are many people within the Sea Grant Network who understand coordinated national communications. The reviews show that more attention to integration and coordination of national communications is needed. This will enable Sea Grant to release the power of its scientific information and its education and extension activities to further its mission and the program's growth.

In April 2003 the Sea Grant Communications Review Task Force (Task Force) was appointed by the Chair of the National Sea Grant Review Panel and the President of the Sea Grant Association. The Task Force was charged by Dr. Ronald C. Baird, Director of the National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP), to conduct a strategic review of three national communications activities of the NSGCP: the NMRP, the NSGL and the **Sea Grant Abstracts**. The Task Force was asked to examine the relevance of each of the programs in fulfilling Sea Grant's mission in law: "The prompt dissemination of knowledge as defined in Sec. 1211(b) and Sec. 1123(c)(4)C of the Sea Grant Act of 2002." Dr. Baird requested that the Task Force review:

- Ways to improve the cost-effectiveness and delivery of each of these products and services;
- how to better integrate the projects with network operations including place in the organization, funding, grant responsibility, management and accountability;
- whether additional technical reviews (TATs) of specific operations would be helpful; and
- make any other recommendations about the projects and their value added to Sea Grant.

The review fulfilled one of the three recommendations of the 2002 National Communications



Plan, "Positioning Sea Grant: An Integrated National Communications Plan 2003-2006" (Witman Plan), which called for a comprehensive review and evaluation of the cost effectiveness of Sea Grant's present national communications efforts and project expenditures. The review was initiated at a time when both the NSGO Communications Program Leader and the National Media Relations Director (NMRD) positions were vacant.

After scoping the review the Task Force determined that a technical review of the projects was essential to a thorough strategic review. The Task Force convened two technical panels: one for the NSGL and the **Sea Grant Abstracts** and the other for the NMRP. The NSGL and **Sea Grant Abstracts** Technical Panel convened in Providence, RI October 20-23, 2003. During that time it conducted one-day site visits at the NSGL in Narragansett, RI and at the **Sea Grant Abstracts** in Falmouth, MA. The NMRP Technical Panel convened in Washington, DC March 15-17, 2004 at the National Association of State and University Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) office. During those three days the panel interviewed 31 people in person and by telephone.

The Task Force participated in the site visits and has used the technical panel reports in developing its review. The Task Force report describes and comments on the technical panel recommendations. The technical panel reports are attached in full as appendices to the Task Force report.

The Task Force identified three overriding themes that affected all three programs it reviewed:

- Governance issues among the members of the Sea Grant Network impede effective management of national scale communications.
- Adequate organization and management of the wider national communications effort in the Network is essential for the success of these projects.
- The Network is underutilizing the strategic communications expertise that is resident within the Network.

### **Task Force Recommendations**

It is impossible to examine the three projects without looking at them in the broader context of other national communications activities within the Sea Grant Network. As a result, the report provides both technical and strategic reviews of the NSGL, the **Sea Grant Abstracts** and the NMRP and recommendations for the coordination and integration of all Sea Grant's national communications activities.

The Task Force made the following recommendations:

#### **General**

1. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Network institutionalize a process for periodic updating and modification of the 2002 National Communications Plan "Positioning Sea Grant: An Integrated National Communications Plan 2003-2006."
2. The Task Force recommends that the National Sea Grant Office designate one person to be responsible for effective national communications.
3. The Task Force recommends that continued priority be given to using the one percent money in the Sea Grant budget to fund the National Sea Grant Library and the National Media Relations Program.



4. The Task Force recommends regular outside review of both the National Sea Grant Library and the National Media Relations Program.
5. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Association's national communications activities be closely coordinated with the Network's national communications program.

### ***Sea Grant Abstracts and National Sea Grant Library***

6. The Task Force recommends cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**.
7. The Task Force recommends that the Communications Steering Committee, aided by the National Sea Grant Office national communications leader, develop and implement a transition plan for publicizing the Sea Grant Network's products after the cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**.
8. The Task Force recommends that the National Sea Grant Office national communications leader and the Chair of the Communications Steering Committee lead a reexamination of the Network's projected long-term needs for national communications products.
9. The Task Force finds that the National Sea Grant Library provides an invaluable service to Sea Grant and to the users of Sea Grant information.
10. The Task Force recommends that National Sea Grant Office national communications leader provide the National Sea Grant Library with a point of contact, advocacy and integration into the overall activities of the national communications program.
11. The Task Force recommends that attention be given to the management structure and positioning of the National Sea Grant Library within the University of Rhode Island library system.
12. The Task Force recommends that a National Sea Grant Library Advisory Committee be formed.
13. The Task Force recommends that the membership of the Communications Steering Committee should be expanded to include the National Sea Grant Library Manager.
14. The Task Force recommends that National Sea Grant Library staffing be increased both for fulltime employees and for contracted services as needed to meet the additional responsibilities that result from cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**.
15. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Network put a high priority on complete and timely submissions to the National Sea Grant Library so that its collection reflects the comprehensive products of the National Sea Grant College Program.
16. The Task Force recommends that an upgrade of the National Sea Grant Library website be given a high priority.
17. The Task Force recommends that a technology audit be undertaken of all National Sea Grant Library computers, peripheral equipment and software and that a high priority be given to implementing necessary technology upgrades.

### ***National Media Relations Program***

18. The Task Force concurs with the Technical Panel's recommendation that a media relations function for the National Sea Grant College Program is important.
19. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Program to serve the National Sea Grant College Program be reestablished at the earliest possible moment.
20. The Task Force recommends that the National Media Relations Program be located in the

office of a non-governmental organization in the metropolitan Washington, DC area.

21. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Advisory Committee be re-established.
22. The Task Force recommends that responsibility for the National Media Relations Program be shared by the National Media Relations Director, the National Sea Grant Office, the host non-governmental organization and the National Media Relations Advisory Committee.
23. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Director and an Administrative Assistant be hired for the National Media Relations Program.

If the recommendations made here are implemented, the Sea Grant story in all its dimensions will be able to be told – and to be heard. The Sea Grant story will be put forward in many ways: through good online access to scientific results, through organizing and participating in media events and through factual and professional stories in a myriad of media for the general public. The organizational and management changes that will enable this to happen are, in fact, relatively modest for such a tremendous gain.



# Communicating for Success

## Background

Over the last ten years, Sea Grant has produced an impressive set of documents about national communications. The Task Force has benefited greatly from the thinking represented in these documents, and intends its report to build on and extend the previous work. These documents, found in Appendices F through H, are incorporated here by reference.

As the historical documents reflect, there is good understanding of coordinated national communications within the Sea Grant Network. What is needed is additional focus and organization to enable the expertise and understanding of professional communications to be effective in furthering the goals of Sea Grant on a national scale. The recommendations in this report provide the organizational and conceptual framework for success.

In 1993, the National Communicators Steering Committee submitted a report entitled “A Strategic National Communications Plan” (Appendix F) after a meeting in Topsail, NC. Among other conclusions were the following:

- *Sea Grant should use the expertise within the Network.*
- *It is difficult to use Network expertise without a “clear infrastructure, funding mechanism and point person to focus, plan and direct these efforts on a continuing basis.”*  
(p. 3)

The same 1993 report listed five obstacles to effective national communication:

1. The Network suffers from a national identity crisis.
2. The Network organization tends to be self-defeating and bureaucratic.
3. There is a lack of support and funding for focused, continuing national communications efforts.
4. The Network lacks unity, cooperation and leadership.
5. There is a lack of understanding of and appreciation for professional communications by program leadership.

Furthermore, while the 1993 document is well-known throughout the Network as the document that outlined the idea for the National Media Relations Program (NMRP), it is less widely remembered for the following suggestions:

- Place the **Sea Grant Abstracts** into an online database;
- make the National Sea Grant Library (NSGL) available online;
- compile an experts guide; and
- conduct annual National Communications strategic planning meetings.

In 2001 the National Communicators Network developed a Strategic Plan 2001-2005 (Appendix G). At that point the communicators restated priorities from the 1993 plan that still needed attention. Among these were:

- “Clear infrastructure, funding, or point person to focus, plan and direct strategic efforts — including internal communications, national Web presence and potential national marketing efforts, — on a continuing basis.” (p. 4)

This plan has been effectively superseded by what is now called the Wittman Plan, "Positioning Sea Grant: An Integrated National Communications Plan 2003-2006" (Appendix H). This plan is the result of a 2002 Communications Retreat and subsequent work done by Stephen Wittman, Communicator for Wisconsin Sea Grant. The plan specifically states its purpose is to be "a strategic plan for enhancing communications 'inside the Beltway' to attain greater federal support for the National Sea Grant Program." Because of the primacy of this national communications mission, the Wittman Plan is viewed by many in the Network as the blueprint for communications for the next few years. It is being used as the work plan for the newly hired Communications Program Leader in the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO).

Four of the plan's five objectives target different, specific, national audiences. These include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), national non-governmental organizations, Congress and the Executive Branch including Department of Commerce, Office of Management and Budget and the White House. The fifth objective of the plan concerns having the disparate elements of the Sea Grant Network effectively coordinate their efforts and their messages.



## Charge

In April 2003 the Sea Grant Communications Review Task Force (Task Force) members were appointed by the Chair of the National Sea Grant Review Panel (NSGRP) and the President of the Sea Grant Association (SGA). The Task Force was tasked by Dr. Ronald C. Baird, Director of the National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP), to conduct a strategic review of three national communications activities of the NSGCP: the NMRP, the NSGL and **Sea Grant Abstracts**. The Task Force was asked to examine the relevance of each of the programs in fulfilling Sea Grant's mission in law: "The prompt dissemination of knowledge as defined in Sec. 1211(b) and Sec. 1123(c)(4)C of the Sea Grant Act of 2002." Dr. Baird requested that the Task Force review:

- Ways to improve the cost-effectiveness and delivery of each of these products and services;
- how to better integrate the projects with network operations including place in the organization, funding, grant responsibility, management and accountability;
- whether additional technical reviews (TATs) of specific operations would be helpful; and
- make any other recommendations about the projects and their value added to Sea Grant.

The review fulfilled one of the three recommendations of the Wittman Plan, which called for a comprehensive review and evaluation of the cost effectiveness of Sea Grant's present national communications efforts and project expenditures: the NSGL, the **Sea Grant Abstracts** and the NMRP. The review was initiated at a time when both the NSGO Communications Program Leader and the National Media Relations Director (NMRD) positions were vacant.

The Task Force was named and began work in April 2003. Task Force members included Robin Alden, Chair, and Jeffrey Stephan and Amy Broussard (Appendix A). Staffing was provided by the NSGO, initially by Communications Specialist Amy Painter and subsequently by NSGO Communications Program Leader Jamie Krauk after she was hired in August 2003.

After scoping the review, the Task Force determined that, given the specialized nature of the national communications projects, a technical review of the projects was an essential element of a thorough strategic review. Accordingly, the Task Force convened two technical panels: one for the NSGL and the **Sea Grant Abstracts** and the other for the NMRP.

The NSGL and the **Sea Grant Abstracts** Technical Panel convened in Providence, RI October 20-23, 2003. During that time it conducted one-day site visits at the NSGL in Narragansett, RI and at Woods Hole Data Base, Inc., publishers of the **Sea Grant Abstracts**, in Falmouth, MA. The NMRP Technical Panel convened in Washington, DC, March 15-17, 2004, at the National Association of State and University Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) office. During those three days the panel interviewed 31 people in person and by telephone (Appendix B).

This review did not examine the communications activities of the NSGO communications staff and the Task Force report does not intend to make any comment on the current operations or personnel within NSGO. The Task Force's charge from Dr. Baird included making suggestions for how to better integrate the three national scale projects (the NSGL, the **Sea Grant Abstracts**, and the NMRP) with network operations including place in the organization, funding, grant responsibility, management and accountability. Consistent with this charge, the Task Force report includes recommendations that extend to organization of national communications



activities within the NSGO. These recommendations are to be taken as they are intended: as organizational suggestions to enable Sea Grant to engage in these three national communications activities with excellence and cost-effectiveness.

### **National Communications Context**

It is impossible to examine the three projects without looking at them in the broader context of other national communications activities that take place within the Sea Grant Network. As a result, the Task Force report provides:

- *Recommendations for the integration of all national communications activities; and*
- *technical and strategic review of the NSGL, the Sea Grant Abstracts, and the NMRP*

Three overriding themes emerged from the Task Force's review:

- Governance issues among the members of the Sea Grant Network impede effective management of national scale communications.
- Adequate organization and management of the wider national communications effort in the Network is essential for the success of these projects.
- The Network is underutilizing the strategic communications expertise that is resident within the Network.

The governance and management changes proposed in this document are critical to the success of the technical recommendations. Since prior evaluations have proposed such organizational changes the Task Force is placing emphasis on successful organization and management of Sea Grant national communications activities.

Specifically, a Blue Ribbon Panel was convened in 1997 to study the NSGL. One member of that Panel was also a member of the current Library and Abstracts Technical Panel. While a number of recommendations were made, three of them that were directly related to management and coordination with the NSGO are nearly identical with those made by the current Technical Panel.

Management issues were apparent in the NMRP evaluation as well. As in the case of the Library, there were issues surrounding supervision and the lack of clear accountability for the success of the program.

The Task Force concurs with the Technical Panels that the NSGL and the NMRP should continue. Success, and value to the Sea Grant's national communications effort, however, is closely tied to effective management of the efforts.

### **Strategic Communications**

Communications planning should occur at the highest level of an organization informed by knowledge and perspectives from the breadth of the organization. Communications planning is a multi-faceted function that identifies and targets different audiences important to the organization and develops a strategy for reaching those audiences effectively. The Task Force heard testimony from a variety of interviewees about the loss of opportunity that occurs when an organization is unable to coordinate its messages and thus loses the synergy that may be gained when similar messages are delivered in a variety of ways in a variety of venues.

Communications planning consists of three steps:

- Identify your mission and values;



- identify your audiences; and
- know what your audiences care about.

Any program must reach multiple audiences. The Task Force heard clearly that there are always more audiences than one would expect. For example, the Task Force heard that a media relations effort not only has a given reporter as an audience but also that reporter's editor. Even within one newspaper there may be multiple audiences: the style reporter, the science reporter, the business reporter, and so forth.

Audiences also occur at a variety of scales. Each Sea Grant program has a number of local audiences. In addition, there are a number of broader, national-scale audiences. The activities reviewed by this Task Force are similar: their mission is that of working with the totality of Sea Grant activities.

## **National Communications Program**

- 1. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Network institutionalize a process for periodic updating and modification of the 2002 National Communications Plan "Positioning Sea Grant: An Integrated National Communications Plan 2003-2006."*

Ever since its publication in March 2003, the Wittman Report has provided focus for Sea Grant's "inside the beltway" communications. The recommendations in the Wittman Report are currently serving as the work plan for the NSGO Communications Program Leader.

The Wittman Report identifies a number of activities within the Sea Grant Network that target a national audience. The three activities reviewed by this Task Force are among these. While the Wittman Report was focusing on the urgent need for inside the beltway communications, it recognized the fact that to be effective inside the Beltway, a program must direct an effective communications effort to a variety of national audiences. This Task Force reiterates this point and makes the following suggestions in pursuing this goal.

First, the Network should specifically identify which national communications activities have a national audience. Labeling them in this way will help the Network to coordinate these activities effectively and provide a vehicle for thinking about these activities as related and integrated. Furthermore, this labeling should make it easier to create accountability for effectiveness. Because of Sea Grant's dispersed nature, most national-scale activities are the result of coordinated action by the programs rather than a matter of central control.

The following current elements of Sea Grant's communications effort function at a national scale, although they each have different specific audiences. These should be considered as part of the national communications program.

National Sea Grant Library

National Media Relations Program

Sea Grant national website

National Sea Grant Office Biennial Report

Sea Grant Coastal Experts Guide

Internal communications with Department of Commerce (DOC) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Communications with national Non-governmental Organizations (NGO)

Liaison with the National Information Management System (NIMS) database



Liaison with Sea Grant Association (SGA) outreach efforts

Liaison with the Communications Network

Given the issues that this Task Force uncovered in the oversight of the three activities that we reviewed, it is pertinent to note the recommendations within the Wittman Plan (Appendix H) that, if followed, would contribute to further success of the NSGL and the NMRP and the overall success of Sea Grant's national communications.

### ***National Communications Leadership***

#### ***2. The Task Force recommends that National Sea Grant Office designate one person to be responsible for effective national communications.***

It is beyond the scope of this review to make recommendations about the administration of a national communications program. However, the success of individual components are integrally linked to the success of Sea Grant's broader, national communications program.

Each of the three programs the Task Force reviewed suffered from a notable lack of oversight. Furthermore, where there were management mechanisms in place, those mechanisms were unable to resolve fundamental differences that inevitably occur within a network as diverse as Sea Grant. A number of recommendations in this report address this issue for the NSGL and the NMRP.

The Task Force recognizes that establishing responsibility and accountability for the whole of the national communications effort is essential for long term effectiveness in such a dispersed network. One single person needs to be responsible for viewing the elements of the national communications program as a whole, looking for synergies, identifying and working to eliminate duplication of effort, and enlisting the expertise within the network.

This recommendation echoes the recommendation in the 2001-2005 National Communicators Network Strategic Plan (Appendix G), which restated issues still undone from 1993. This included "a point person to focus, plan and direct strategic efforts — including internal communications, national Web presence and potential national marketing efforts — on a continuing basis." (p. 4)

The Wittman report made two related suggestions that the Task Force views as important:

1. "The NSGO Communicator should provide leadership to the network in implementing and annually updating its strategic national communications plan." (p. 10)
2. "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." (p.10)

Because of the distributed nature of the Sea Grant Network, with work and expertise lying both in the 30 Sea Grant programs and in the NSGO, the leadership from the NSGO should be one of coordination rather than direction. Furthermore, this person should serve essentially as a program officer for any projects, such as the NSGL and the NMRP that are operated as part of the program.

The Task Force discussed the attributes for the NSGO staff person responsible for performing this job in an increasingly sophisticated communications environment. The person should be an experienced communications professional familiar with Sea Grant. S/he should have



management experience, be someone who has directed a communications staff, have a demonstrated knowledge of budgets, scheduling and conflict resolution, and a working familiarity of printing, computer technology and marketing. S/he should be located in Silver Spring and have the ability to travel.

The Task Force holds the current NSGO communications staff in high regard both for its expertise and attitude and for the work it is doing. Implementation of any review such as this is something that occurs in a phased manner as opportunity and funding become available. The Task Force recognizes that rules within the federal personnel system will constrain the nature of the hires and reporting arrangements within a small staff such as that of NSGO. The Task Force would have been remiss if it had constrained itself by specific qualifications of current staff in considering what will best enable the NSGL and the NMRP to operate effectively in the long run.

### **Funding**

- 3. The Task Force recommends that continued priority be given to using the one percent money in the Sea Grant budget to fund the National Sea Grant Library and the National Media Relations Program.*

Funding for the NSGL, the **Sea Grant Abstracts** and the NMRP has been provided from the pool of non-matched funds currently available to Sea Grant. This amount is, by statute, made up of one percent of the budget. For FY 2004, this currently amounts to a total pool of \$620,000. The 2004 budget for the NSGL is \$209,587. NMRP, when it was discontinued in 2003, had an annual budget of \$195,014.

Leadership and coordination for effective national-scale communications has been identified for years by the Sea Grant Communications Network as an appropriate role for staff in the NSGO. The NSGO is severely constrained, however, by a cap on its funding at five percent of the total Sea Grant budget and must arrange to meet this need with its personnel and within its funding caps.

As Sea Grant matures, there are ever-increasing demands for both the five percent and the one percent monies. Increasingly there is recognition of Sea Grant as an enterprise, one where the strengths of the parts need to be presented as a coherent whole. The NSGL and the NMRP are foundation elements for such a coherent national communications program and as such should have priority access to the one percent funds. In addition to this, leadership both in the NSGO and within each project should actively solicit outside funds as appropriate to supplement the base funding.

Both the NSGL and the NMRP should continue to be operated as grant projects, with the grants managed out of the NSGO by the national communications leader. Funding for both projects should be contingent on good proposals with clear and measurable objectives, followed up by outside evaluation. The Task Force views the functions that both play as essential. However, funding for these efforts should be contingent on performance and cost effectiveness.

- 4. The Task Force recommends regular outside review of both the National Sea Grant Library and the National Media Relations Program.*

Both the NSGL and **Sea Grant Abstracts** have suffered from a lack of regular review over the years. The NMRP is ten years old, and is having a timely review now.



Every four years, both the NSGL and the NMRP should be evaluated in reviews that combine pertinent elements of the structure and objectives of a Performance Assessment Team (PAT) and a Technical Assessment Team (TAT.) This review should be initiated by the NSGCP Director and the Chair of the NSGRP, and should include outside experts in the respective fields. The broad objectives that are normally examined in a PAT/TAT, including management and achieving appropriate results, should be included in this review. Both projects should be evaluated in the context of Sea Grant's national communications plan.

Evaluation criteria should be established in consultation with both the National Sea Grant Library Advisory Committee and the National Media Relations Advisory Committee. This should be done early in the next grant cycle so that the grant officers, the NSGL Manager and the NMRP Director understand the expectations for the programs for which they are responsible.

### **Coordination with Sea Grant Association**

#### ***5. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Association's national communications activities be closely coordinated with the national communications program.***

The SGA is an independent organization that is, nonetheless, part of the Sea Grant Network. Most important in any discussion of communications strategy is the fact that the SGA is viewed by the public as part of Sea Grant. In fact, in this context it cannot be anything other than part of Sea Grant.

The Task Force heard powerful testimony from communications professionals and agency and NGO executives that there is nothing more important to advancing an organization than high quality, consistent information that furthers its interests, delivered in a tailored fashion to many audiences. The Task Force also heard that an organization that lacks coordinated communication faces a profound loss of opportunity and will not be able to grow.

During the course of the review, the Task Force heard conflicting testimony about the relationship between the SGA and Sea Grant. On one hand, the Task Force heard that the SGA and Sea Grant have different interests so that the products of a Sea Grant national communications program would not be of use to the SGA. On the other hand, the group also heard testimony that the SGA and Sea Grant do not have different interests but address different audiences.

The Task Force believes this issue is a critical one that must be addressed within the Network. In the view of the Task Force, the truth lies in the important fact that those activities of the SGA that overlap with national communications address a specific audience that no one else in Sea Grant addresses directly: The SGA's executive director's primary audience is Congress. This is a different audience from any of the other audiences associated with other parts of the national communications program. Some of those other audiences include the national media, personnel in NOAA and DOC, the scientific community that uses abstracts, the education community that uses libraries, and so forth.

For this reason, the Advisory Committee structure must be used to enable the entire Sea Grant community to speak in a coordinated, collaborative fashion so that the various messages that are addressed to national-scale audiences reinforce one another. The SGA's efforts with Congress should be greatly enhanced by Sea Grant's broader national communications program. Likewise, failure to coordinate will negate the value of the investment Sea Grant makes in national communications. This is a governance matter of highest priority for Sea Grant.



## **Technical Panel Reports**

The complete reports of both Technical Panels are included in Appendices D and E. The following sections include encapsulated versions of the recommendations from these reports as well as the Task Force concurrence or non-concurrence and subsequent recommendations.

### **Review of National Sea Grant Library and Sea Grant Abstracts**

Acknowledging that a meaningful review could only be realized on site, the Task Force and Technical Panel met in Providence, RI, in October 2003 prior to visiting the National Sea Grant Library (NSGL) at Narragansett Bay, RI, and Woods Hole Data Base, Inc., in Falmouth, MA. The Technical Panel received background information on each prior to the visit. The Manager at the NSGL and the Chief Executive Officer at Woods Hole Data Base, Inc., were given a summary of points that would be covered in the review.

#### **National Sea Grant Library**

Before beginning an evaluation of the NSGL, the Technical Panel had to consider the question of whether there is a need for such a library at all. As envisioned, the NSGL is a centralized archive and lending library of Sea Grant publications. Its emergence into a digital library has expanded the NSGL's reach far beyond its original intent, a process the Panel termed "worthy of continuing support."

The Panel considered other models for a national library, including a distributed national library and a digital-only national library. While the centralized model (such as the current NSGL) has the advantage of providing print copies for circulation to requestors, a distributed national library would require individual programs to maintain these copies as well as their own database that could be queried by a centralized search system. Given the number of Sea Grant programs, it would take considerable effort for a programmer to coordinate and build such a search system.

A digital-only library is a mixed model, relying on electronic versions of Sea Grant-produced publications being archived by programs, alongside other print publications for which Sea Grant does not hold the copyright. It is searchable from a central system. Applied to Sea Grant, the national library would maintain the digital files but it would be the individual program's responsibility to fill requests for paper copies.

The centralized library model represented by the NSGL ensures an institutional record of all Sea Grant publications and preserves data over time without relying on individual programs.

The Technical Panel's primary questions of the NSGL included perceived usefulness to the national network, usage by the public, status of technology, staffing and budget. The National Sea Grant Library has been located in the Pell Library at the Narragansett Bay campus of the University of Rhode Island since its inception in 1970. As of September 2003 the collection includes 30,326 titles and a total of 90,618 documents of Sea Grant-funded work.



The Library experienced a 21 percent increase in holdings in 2001-2002, which is attributed to better compliance by the individual Sea Grant programs. It also concentrated on increasing its digital collection. Approximately 12,000 electronic documents were available for download from the NSGL website by the end of 2002. Funding for an in-house digitization project was provided by the URI Coastal Data and Information Center initially and later by NSGL program funds.

Questions from the Technical Panel revealed that in the preceding year (2001-2002) 15 percent of those requesting NSGL services were from government agencies (local, state or federal); 12 percent were from private industry; 30 percent from academic institutions; 9 percent from the general public; and 25 percent from other Sea Grant Programs.

The Library's Manager told the Panel that there were 84,103 hits on the NSGL database in the same two-year period and 210,587 documents were downloaded. The more than five-fold increase over the 1999-2000 period is an indication of the NSGL's entrance into the digital world.

Detailed questions relating to the level of technology now being used by the NSGL revealed inadequacies in scanning equipment and software. The Technical Panel also noted problems in the Library's ability to collect publications (including videos or CDs) from the individual programs as well as technological flaws in the work flow between the NSGL and the **Sea Grant Abstracts** staff.

The Library is staffed by a full-time manager, a loan librarian funded at 30 hours/week, a half-time outreach coordinator who also supervises the digitizing effort, and an URI computer specialist who is budgeted for 30 hours per year. In practice, the NSGL actually receives more hours of computer support each year. The University of Rhode Island's policy is that computer support of less than one hour per occurrence not be billed.

At the University level, the NSGL Manager currently has no direct supervisor. The manager should report to the Pell Librarian, but that position has been vacant for more than three years and the URI Library has no immediate plans to fill it.

### **Sea Grant Abstracts**

**Sea Grant Abstracts** was first published in 1986 to promote the research and technical literature produced by the collective Sea Grant Programs. There had been a national publication since 1970, first called **Sea Grant 70s** and later **Sea Grant Today**, that included both feature articles and a list of publications. Interest in the general magazine waned in the mid-1980s, but there was interest in continuing to promote network publications. A communications advisory committee outlined the concept for the new publication and interviewed possible contractors to undertake the project.

Woods Hole Data Base, Inc., was selected in 1986 from among potential applicants. The firm has retained this contract under a sole-source arrangement since then.

From its inception, the quarterly, **Sea Grant Abstracts**, has listed publications from the Sea Grant Colleges, indicated the availability from either a program or the National Sea Grant Library and compiled annual author and subject indexes. Initially, the subscriber's database came from the older **Sea Grant Today** mailing list, from individual Sea Grant Programs and from lists already used by Woods Hole Data Base.

The Technical Panel had a number of questions for the publishers. Many revolved around the



degree of coordination between **Sea Grant Abstracts** and the NSGL while others concentrated on technological issues.

The 31 Sea Grant Programs are mandated to send the Library both physical copies and also an abstract for each publication produced by that program. As the Technical Panel learned, the Library mails one copy of the publication and the abstract to Woods Hole Data Base for use in the **Sea Grant Abstracts**.

The publishing style followed by the editorial staff calls for each submitted scientific abstract to be re-written into layman's terms. This is done either by the publishers or by a contract employee. Once re-written (the Panel was shown samples in longhand), the abstracts are returned to the NSGL for keyboarding. Computer disks are subsequently mailed back to Woods Hole for periodical production.

**Sea Grant Abstracts** is produced by a combination typeset/pasteup method so there is no opportunity to capture the final document for subsequent placement on a website in a searchable format.

In addition to querying the production process, Panel members asked about the process for updating or expanding the mailing list. They learned that printed copies of relevant lists are sent periodically to the 30 programs for additions, deletions or corrections. The Panel was told discussions had been held as recently as April 2003 on various ways to computerize this process but nothing had been done to date.

When asked to describe how the value to Sea Grant is assessed, the publisher responded that at one time the written orders received by the NSGL were hand counted but the company now relies on random surveys of readers in addition to asking programs to count those orders that can be directly attributed to the **Sea Grant Abstracts**.

### **Summary of Technical Panel Recommendations**

While the NSGL and **Sea Grant Abstracts** are separate segments of the national communications effort, they are so closely aligned that the same Technical Panel was used for evaluation. The final recommendations were interrelated and, for the purposes of this report, are discussed in tandem.

There is one overriding recommendation for each segment. For the Library that recommendation is:

- *The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the National Sea Grant Library (NSGL) provides an invaluable service to Sea Grant and to the users of Sea Grant information, and should be strengthened with the tools and resources to realize its potential.*

And, for the **Sea Grant Abstracts** the Panel's recommendation is:

- *The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that there isn't a continuing need for the **Sea Grant Abstracts** in our contemporary information environment.*

The Panel made additional recommendations for the Library, relating to its management, administrative oversight, technological status and budget. While acknowledging that the mailing list may have only marginal marketing value because of the way it has been maintained, the Panel did make recommendations on how this database and any relevant files should be moved to the NSGL and how relevant **Sea Grant Abstract** functions can be absorbed by the NSGL and the Network.



Specific management recommendations include:

- *There is a need for an advisory panel to review, advise, comment and advocate for the NSGL.*
- *The Panel urges better integration of the NSGL into the University of Rhode Island structure, beginning with the quick appointment of the Pell Librarian.*
- *The Panel urges a strong advocate for the NSGL at the NSGO to provide guidance and oversight in addition to financial support.*

Recommendations relating to collection acquisition are:

- *The Panel recommends that Programs, the NSGO and related entities be encouraged to provide the Library with copies of all publications in a timely and technologically compliant manner. Toward this end, the Panel also recommended that an online submission system be established.*
- *The Panel believes all programs should be encouraged to improve their tracking and collection of publications derived from Sea Grant-funded research. Again, toward that end, the NSGL is urged to provide each program with yearly reports to induce programs into greater compliance.*

The Library and Abstracts Technical Panel felt the NSGL outreach efforts, particularly in education at all levels, should be encouraged to the extent that travel budgets can be increased. The Panel also felt it was vital that the NSGL staff participate in professional development and continuing education and in all relevant National Sea Grant or Sea Grant Communications Network meetings. Again, the Panel recommended that these recommendations be reflected in the budget.

With cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**, the Library and Abstracts Technical Panel recommended the following:

- *That additional funding be provided to the NSGL for programmer needs to improve the NSGL database and site.*
- *That current abstracts in the database be replaced with original [Ed. note: scientific] abstracts obtained from the ASFA database or from publishers' web sites that often display abstracts at no cost.*
- *That future submissions to the database use either original scientific abstracts where available or program-written abstracts for all non-scientific publications.*

The Panel recommended that the Library reassess its ability to market Sea Grant success stories and develop a variety of strategies, in consultation with the advisory board, to advance knowledge and information about Sea Grant work. In addition,

- *The Panel strongly recommended that graphics design expertise be used to develop a visually enhanced, user-friendly and informative website with a clear and distinct Sea Grant identity.*

### **Alternate Recommendation**

Should the decision be made to continue the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**, the Panel concluded that a number of definitive changes must be made.

- *The process must be brought into the electronic age, both for electronic exchange of material and for creating or updating the database.*
- *Desktop publishing software should be used for each edition, from which PDF files can be created easily.*
- *Bid out the printing of the **Sea Grant Abstracts** to a number of print houses that use current desktop publishing and digital technology.*
- *Develop an online system for mailing lists and subscriptions. Use this for e-mail notification of subscribers about the availability of a new edition on the web or in the mail.*
- *Incorporate the indexing terms, now used only in the print version, into the National Sea Grant Library website.*



## Task Force Assessment of National Sea Grant Library and Sea Grant Abstracts

### **National Sea Grant Library**

As the Task Force reviewed the history of the NSGL, an earlier technical panel evaluation was found. As noted in the previous section, this Blue Ribbon Panel made its study in 1997. It should be noted that one member of that Panel was current panelist Peter Brueggeman of Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library/University of California-San Diego.

Conclusions from the 1997 report can be summarized as follows:

- *The National Sea Grant Library lacked the "clout" to collect all Sea Grant publications. The Panel concluded that mechanisms for mandating compliance should be explored.*
- *The National Sea Grant Library Director (manager) and the National Sea Grant Office Program Officer should communicate more regularly.*
- *Electronic access to the National Sea Grant Library was found to be problematic.*
- *The Library Director (manager) should report to the Pell Librarian (a professional librarian), which would bring the NSGL into the Pell Library sphere and help promote a collegial relationship among the staff.*

The most telling conclusion of the 1997 evaluation was:

- *If National Sea Grant Library marketing efforts increase and use of the website increases, the need for the **Sea Grant Abstracts** as a print product may change.*

The 1997 report was sent both to the NSGO and the University of Rhode Island (URI). Seven years later, this Technical Panel, including one of the same evaluators, reached similar conclusions about the Library.

This finding does not mean that no progress has been made. The NSGL has made considerable progress in digitizing the collection and in making the best use of limited facilities and equipment. The NSGL has continued to upgrade its hardware and software, even since the Library and Abstracts Technical Review Panel made its site visit. Funding for the NSGL has gone from \$140,000 in 1996 to \$208,000 in 2004, a 27 percent increase in constant dollars. At the same time, however, integration of the NSGL into the Network and the NSGO national communications planning could be improved, and the NSGL Manager still lacks an immediate supervisor within the University library system. The current staff would clearly benefit from a closer working relationship both with the NSGO and with the URI library system.

There has been considerable improvement in the NSGL's physical facilities. The Library is now located on the lower floor of the Pell Library, where attention has been given to the environmental conditions necessary to maintain the collection. Furthermore, the NSGL is participating in the design for the renovation of the Pell Library Building, which will serve as the new campus center. The NSGL is slated to have 2,000 square feet of highly visible space there, with adequate climate controls for its collection.

The NSGL Manager expressed a desire for an advisory committee even before the Technical Panel recommended one. The Task Force concurs with this recommendation. A more complete description of a possible committee is given in a later section of this report.



## **Sea Grant Abstracts**

Apart from any budget or usefulness considerations, the production process for the **Sea Grant Abstracts** does not use today's technology. Both during Sea Grant Week 2003 and during the on-site visit in October 2003, Woods Hole Data Base (WHDB) questioned the benefits of the world wide web and of electronic processes in general. During the site visit, the somewhat laborious process used to rewrite the abstract copy was outlined, and, to a degree, demonstrated.

The rewriting of scientific abstracts is a point of concern, both for the Technical Panel and the Task Force. The debate involves two issues that illustrate the tension that exists within the concept of the **Sea Grant Abstracts** publication. First, for scientific audiences, it is undeniable that the original scientific abstract is the most useful and that should reside in a searchable and indexed database, regardless of how it is published in print. Despite the fact that recent issues of the **Sea Grant Abstracts** are available online as pdf files, they are neither searchable nor indexed. Second, the NSGCP needs some way to make its products and activities accessible to the general public. The key issue, however, is whether the **Sea Grant Abstracts** publication actually provides this lay access in an effective and cost-effective manner.

WHDB expressed a need to keep the **Sea Grant Abstracts** "reader-friendly," with "annotations" (as opposed to abstracts) that are descriptive thumbnails that let users immediately decide if they are interested in the article or publication. "Wherever possible," these annotations are worded in language compatible with the level and purpose of the original document as long as the resulting citation is "intentionally pithy."

WHDB views its mission as being that of communicating with the general lay audience, rather than the scientific readers. In citing a self-conducted micro poll in 2003, WHDB noted that only 25 percent of its readers were scientists and offered this as validation for re-writing submitted material for the remaining 75 percent. Other notable categories included educators (23 percent), librarians or information managers (18 percent) and administrators or executives (14 percent). The primary interests (more than one answer was accepted) of these respondents were environmental issues or waste management (61 percent), fisheries, seafood or aquaculture (59 percent), biological sciences (50 percent), physical, chemical or earth sciences (43 percent), education (39 percent) and recreation, tourism, boating and marinas (23 percent).

Actual numbers from that poll indicate 35 percent scientific respondents. There were no questions on the preference for original scientific abstracts. Instead, questions related to usefulness, readability, whether the **Sea Grant Abstracts** was shared with others, and whether a print version is important.

If the micro poll is an accurate indicator of readership, the Task Force is concerned that the percentage of scientists may be a reflection of the revised abstracts. There have been a number of directives emanating from the National Sea Grant Network in past years that stressed the need for Sea Grant to become the "go-to" source for information on the marine and coastal environment. Scientists searching either for recent citations or for general information on Sea Grant's research could be misled by the watered-down abstracts into thinking that there is no real science being conducted.

The abstracts versus annotations concern extends to the NSGL since it is WHDB's rewritten abstracts that are included on the NSGL website. According to the Technical Panel's abstracting and scientific librarian experts, the NSGL website needs the original scientific abstracts if Sea Grant is to increase its value to the scientific community.



WHDB does not maintain its own website. The **Sea Grant Abstracts** is listed on the NSGL site. The NSGL has scanned the publication for 2001 through 2003. These are pdf files only that are not searchable or indexed. There also is an e-mail link to WHDB for subscriptions. It is interesting to note that the link states "**Sea Grant Abstracts** is sent at no charge to qualifying institutions, associations and businesses." There is no provision for the lay audience that prompted the rewritten abstracts.

The **Sea Grant Abstracts** has occasionally not met a quarterly schedule in recent years, although it must be noted that issues have been produced in a timely fashion since this evaluation began. There has been no conversion to digital printing, which could lessen production time while producing a superior product and ensuring immediate posting of both a pdf and an html file on the website. Listening to explanations of why it was preferable to hand-paste clip art onto a sheet of paper rather than use high-resolution digital images was similar to visiting an historic printing museum.

Apparently, the **Sea Grant Abstracts** contract has not been rebid since its inception in 1986. Woods Hole Data Base, Inc., is a private company. There are other companies producing similar products for other companies and programs. Rebidding the contract periodically could have been beneficial both economically and in quality.

The current publisher sees little wrong with the operation. This is a reflection of the lack of supervision that has been given to this project. Members of the Panel and the Task Force questioned if any Sea Grant person had ever conducted an on-site visit of the **Sea Grant Abstracts** office (located in the publishers' home) before the 2003 evaluation. Was anyone aware, for example, that the **Sea Grant Abstracts** staff relies on the NSGL staff to do all keyboarding for their copy? Also, was anyone aware that 80 percent of the program- or scientist-submitted abstracts are rewritten by contract employees and another 10 percent are written from scratch?



## Task Force Recommendations

The Task Force concurs with the Library and Abstracts Technical Panel in all primary recommendations.

### **Sea Grant Abstracts**

#### ***6. The Task Force recommends cessation of the publication Sea Grant Abstracts.***

This recommendation is consistent with the Technical Panel's finding that there is not a continuing need for the **Sea Grant Abstracts** in our contemporary information environment. Space constraints have led to rewriting scientific abstracts into shorter, more general summaries. Electronic listings have no space constraints. Academic researchers are more likely to disregard the rewritten summaries, yet this community is one Sea Grant has tried to serve since its inception. University students deem journal article abstracts critically important in their use of library databases, but the generalized abstracts now available do not benefit these students and may mislead a general reader about the reading level of specific articles. The NSGL, and Sea Grant as a whole, will be providing a service by reverting to the scientific abstracts and converting the current publication into an online catalog.

The Task Force concurs with the Technical Panel that consideration be given to using at least a portion of the monies now earmarked for the **Sea Grant Abstracts** for improvements at the NSGL.

The cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts** must be coordinated through the national communications leader. There should be 18 years of files relating to circulation and production in addition to the extensive database of subscribers. These resources must be transferred expeditiously by Feb. 28, 2005 (the end of the current funding period), preferably to the NSGL, as part of the closeout process. The Sea Grant Communications Steering Committee should determine the best use of the database. Its format is unknown at present and its marketing value is problematic due to the manner in which it has been maintained, but even a printed record should be considered for its potential future use.

#### ***7. The Task Force recommends that the Communications Steering Committee, aided by the National Sea Grant Office national communications leader, develop and implement a transition plan for publicizing the Sea Grant Network's products after the cessation of the publication Sea Grant Abstracts.***

Cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts** will require careful transitional planning to devise a strategy for keeping Sea Grant's many publics informed in the era after this change. The Communications Steering Committee, in concert with the NSGO national communications leader, should develop this transitional plan. It will also involve consultation with both the NSGL Advisory Committee and the National Media Relations Advisory Committee (NMRAC). The Network will need to re-examine what physical and web products Sea Grant requires to meet the needs of its priority audiences.

This planning process may involve many elements including surveying the **Sea Grant Abstracts** readers, increasing distribution of the NSGL bookmark through the Sea Grant programs, creating methods for achieving timely submissions of abstracts and publications to the NSGL, developing a better way to get journal articles submitted to the NSGL, initiating a technology



audit of the NSGL and training individual program communications staffs in the preferred style for abstract submissions.

**8. *The Task Force recommends that the National Sea Grant Office national communications leader and the Chair of the Communications Steering Committee lead a reexamination of the Network's projected long-term needs for national communications products.***

During its history, Sea Grant has used at least three vehicles to reach a national, lay audience: **Sea Grant '70s**, **Sea Grant Today** and **Sea Grant Abstracts**. With the cessation of the **Sea Grant Abstracts**, the program is at another crossroads. The Task Force finds that Abstracts is a publication that is outdated and poorly designed and positioned in this digital age. Sea Grant will lose little and save money by ceasing its publication. However, it is essential for Sea Grant to examine the functions served by the **Sea Grant Abstracts** and make deliberate decisions about which functions need to be continued and improved upon, and how best to do so.

It is the Task Force's view that the cataloguing functions the **Sea Grant Abstracts** fulfilled are best served via the world wide web and email alerts, possibly with some small, inexpensively printed bookmarks or handouts that summarize recent acquisitions. Abstracting can and should be done at the program level and submitted online to minimize keyboarding. Both of these functions can be provided through close coordination and cooperation between the programs and the NSGL. Beyond these, however, the Task Force recognizes a critically important promotional function that the **Sea Grant Abstracts** was fulfilling poorly due to its format and lack of timeliness. In this time of information overload, readers expect photos, color, and dynamic layouts – something that could not be provided by the **Sea Grant Abstract's** black and white, pasted-up, quarterly format.

The Task Force recognizes that the leadership of the NSGCP needs to have products that showcase Sea Grant activities for distribution inside the Beltway. What other audiences need to know the totality of Sea Grant activities? What are the best vehicles and what are the best formats for accomplishing this? What parts of the Sea Grant Network are best suited to perform the identified functions? Answering these questions will emerge from the planning process initiated through this recommendation.

The planning process should be headed by the NSGO national communications leader and the Chair of the Communications Steering Committee. The process will include both a needs assessment and design of the appropriate communications tools to meet those needs. During the needs assessment those doing the work should consult with those people in the Network who need and use promotional material about Sea Grant as a national program, including the leadership of NSGCP and SGA. Outside professional advice may be of use in designing the communications products, although there is significant expertise within the Network. The NSGL should collaborate with and be a part of the process in all stages.

***Alternate Recommendation***

The Task Force is not in favor of the Technical Panel's alternate recommendation (page 24). Should this idea prevail, however, the Task Force would add the following recommendation to those enumerated by the Panel.



- *The Task Force recommends that the entire editorial production of the Sea Grant Abstracts be opened for new bids by companies with expertise in this field. The number of such bidders to be entertained should be in accordance with federal guidelines. The Request For Proposals should reflect a clear description of the mission, audience and format of the desired publication.*

## **National Sea Grant Library**

The Task Force concurs with the Technical Panel that the NSGL should be continued and strengthened.

9. *The Task Force finds that the National Sea Grant Library provides an invaluable service to Sea Grant and to the users of Sea Grant information.*

The Task Force was persuaded by the considerable testimony and discussion it heard about the reasons why Sea Grant should fund its own centralized library. The expert consultants on the Technical Panel were very clear that Sea Grant should not depend on NOAA or on the programs to archive Sea Grant publications — print and electronic. Sea Grant produces both scientific literature and grey literature, and both should be archived and managed by the program. As noted by the Technical Panel, without a central library staffed by professional librarians, there would be no way to ensure that the value that Sea Grant produces is captured and available for the public in perpetuity.

At the same time, the Technical Panel helped the Task Force understand the new role for such a library in the digital age. As more and more documents produced by the programs are “born digital,” it will become possible for the NSGL to become a closed print archive, and become, increasingly, a centralized electronic archive. As an electronic archive, the role of the library is to assume responsibility for supervising the gathering of the documents and archiving those documents in a consistent, stable fashion, ensuring proper cataloguing and metadata creation so that the subject headings make the collection readily usable.

At the same time, Sea Grant has a major archive of print documents and some that continue to be “born print.” For born-print Sea Grant documents, a physical archive will continue to be needed until there is a truly digital archive created from those print documents. An option for the NSGL would be to create XML encoded documents for each born-print Sea Grant document. Currently, the NSGL is using a scanned-page pdf process that is not ideal for fulfilling an archival role. The pdfs’ lower scan quality is limited by decisions made at the time they were created, and file size was a primary consideration. The resulting pdfs are larger in size, are not in color and are not word searchable.

However, despite the fact that this conversion can be done, it is unlikely to be financially feasible in the near future. Thus, for the time being, NSGL will need to continue to maintain its physical archive, and can, perhaps, enlist the programs in deciding which selected historical publications should be converted to digital. The digital collection may also be enhanced if the NSGL can make a renewed request to the programs for digital versions of past publications that the NSGL does not currently hold in that form.

Finally, the NSGL will continue to need to work with the copyright and archiving issues for scientific journal articles, which are a separate case from purely Sea Grant-generated publications.



The NSGL has made considerable progress in improving its service both to the Sea Grant Network and to its larger clientele in the past few years. It is well run, particularly considering its limited guidance and/or advocacy both from its host institution and from the National Sea Grant Program. Those areas still needing improvement require the support and cooperation of the Network and of the host institution.

***10. The Task Force recommends that the National Sea Grant Office national communications leader provide the National Sea Grant Library with a point of contact, advocacy and integration into the overall activities of the national communications program.***

The NSGO national communications leader should provide those support roles normally associated with NSGO program officers. In addition, s/he should provide the coordination that will ensure that the NSGL is integrated into all national level communications activities as appropriate, including the NIMS database system and any outreach activities necessary for activities within the Network. The person would help ensure that adequate resources are made available to the NSGL.

***11. The Task Force recommends that attention be given to the management structure and positioning of the National Sea Grant Library within the University of Rhode Island library system.***

The NSGL is well located within the Pell Marine Science Library at the University of Rhode Island (URI). The Pell Library's mission and subject matter make it an appropriate venue for NSGL. A library is not something that is easily moved, nor is it sensible to try to do so. For this reason, rather than periodic competitive bidding to achieve quality control for the NSGL, the NSGCP must achieve quality through effective management and oversight. This requires good lines of communication with Pell Library management and periodic reexamination of the terms of the relationship.

The Task Force considered the status of the relationship between NSGL and the NSGCP and the Pell Library management and saw both positives and negatives. Currently the NSGL Manager is meant to report to the Pell Librarian within the URI Library system. Unfortunately, however, that position has been vacant for more than three years, a serious situation for NSGL. If URI decides not to re-fill this position, an alternative reporting structure should be designated.

On the positive side, a March 2004 plan for renovation of the Pell Library into an Oceanographic Information and Technology Center indicated "Expansion and renovation of the facility has therefore been identified as the highest priority capital improvement project for the Narragansett Bay Campus." The plan calls for a 20,000 square foot expansion of the Pell Library and its incorporation into a new campus center. The plan will provide NSGL with additional space and a fully updated electronic workplace and indicate a commitment by URI to both Pell Library and NSGL.

The NSGL Manager needs an advocate within the URI libraries and URI as well as the management oversight, review and advice, and advocacy that comes with a good reporting hierarchy. The Pell Librarian, or an alternate supervisor, would be able to seek grant funding opportunities for upgrading the digitizing of files, reducing file sizes, and allowing cross-collection searching of Sea Grant publication content. The NSGL needs to be integrated into the URI standing library committees such as public services, instruction outreach, and particularly



committees on digital library initiatives due to the opportunities the rich content of the NSGL collection provides for grant funding.

***12. The Task Force recommends that a National Sea Grant Library Advisory Committee be formed.***

This recommendation reinforces the Technical Panel's recommendation that an advisory committee be established to advise, provide guidance to and advocate for the NSGL. As seen by the Task Force, this committee would consist of the following:

- Chair, Communications Steering Committee (or designee)
- One additional Sea Grant Program Information Technology person who understands library functions and/or electronic cataloging (appointed for a three-year term)
- SGA Program Mission Committee liaison to the Communications Steering Committee
- National Sea Grant Office national communications leader
- Two unaffiliated practitioners with expertise in abstracting, library science or electronic cataloging with terms arranged to provide continuity of oversight for the project

The NSGCP Director, Communications Liaison for the NSGRP and the SGA President would be non-voting, ex-officio members. This committee should meet at least once each year as a whole at a meeting specifically convened for that purpose.

The NSGL Manager has a list of interested, potential candidates who could be approached for this committee. The Library advisory committee should not have direct management responsibility for the Library, but instead would be beneficial in helping the NSGL identify and accomplish long-term goals to serve the Network. The advisory committee could give the NSGL professional advice on such matters as library science, web design and outreach methods. Importantly, this committee will be the vehicle that will enable Library activities to be coordinated with the national communications program.

***13. The Task Force recommends that the membership of the Communications Steering Committee should be expanded to include the National Sea Grant Library Manager.***

The NSGL is a key service organization for the entire Network and, as such, should be involved in Network communications policy and planning.

***14. The Task Force recommends that National Sea Grant Library staffing be increased both for fulltime employees and for contracted services as needed to meet the additional responsibilities that result from cessation of the publication Sea Grant Abstracts.***

The Technical Panel made no recommendations relating to staffing. The Task Force observed that the current level of funding is, in one area in particular, inadequate to the current NSGL responsibilities. Furthermore, the NSGL will assume additional tasks when the **Sea Grant Abstracts** ceases. These additional responsibilities will require additional staff time.

Currently, the most obvious NSGL staffing shortage is in computer support. The most recent grant available to the Task Force listed funds for 30 hours per year (**total**) of computer support to refine the database search engine and provide general maintenance for the Library's website. Despite the excellent service provided by the university computer support office, this amount



appears inadequate for these functions. It provides no allowance for website re-design or ensuring the site is handicap accessible (508 compliant). Among other requirements, a 508-compliant site must convert pdf files into html files that can be read by software for the visually impaired. Given the importance of the digital interface to a modern library, adequate ongoing support for this aspect of NSGL is essential.

The NSGL budget provides no support for development of the necessary procedures for on-line abstract and publication form submittal. In the current procedure, the publication transmittal form is downloaded from the NSGL website, filled out and mailed to the NSGL with the three copies of a publication. There is no on-line submittal form. Electronic files, when available from a program, are either sent on disk or CD or, if available on the program's website, the appropriate url is noted on the transmittal form. Creating a vehicle for online submittal is an essential upgrade that will benefit the entire Network.

The last item on the transmittal form calls for an abstract. This is either staff-written, in the case of a Sea Grant-produced publication, or the scientific abstract, in the case of a journal article reprint. Conversion to an on-line submittal process will eliminate the need for the NSGL staff to keyboard these abstracts.

While it is true that the Sea Grant Communications Network could provide some computer support, there is a need for technical expertise on a continuing basis, something unlikely to be available from any one program in the long term.

The Task Force expects that the additional responsibilities that will be absorbed by the NSGL after the **Sea Grant Abstracts** is discontinued will necessitate increasing the Manager and the loan librarian positions to full time. After the Network decides on an approach to fulfilling the national promotional needs, it is anticipated that the NSGL may take on additional responsibilities, which will need to be funded. One Technical Panel recommendation called for more marketing to increase Library usage and educator awareness. Outreach functions are currently handled by a staff member funded only half time. Outreach funding should reflect outreach priority.

***15. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Network put a high priority on complete and timely submissions to the National Sea Grant Library so that its collection reflects the comprehensive products of the National Sea Grant College Program.***

The Task Force particularly concurs with the Technical Panel's identification of the importance of all parts of the Sea Grant Network complying with the publication submittal directives. This has been a requirement since publication of the original Green Book (described by some as the "Bible" for Network activities) but the Task Force (and the Technical Panel) learned that all programs do not routinely send new publications to the NSGL. While this is particularly true for research and extension publications, abstracts of theses and dissertations, and partially funded or commercially produced products, there also are instances where no publications are submitted without prompting. While each program should be encouraged to develop its own collection and referral system, ultimately accountability should be required by the highest levels of the Sea Grant Network.

Resolving this issue should be a priority matter for the NSGL Advisory Committee. If the NSGL is to fulfill its purpose as a depository (physical and digital) for the products of Sea Grant activity, it is essential that its collection be comprehensive. Improvements in the submittal process, including online submission which is not currently available, will be part of the solution,



as will the priority given to this by program officers, directors, and communications directors. In addition, the Advisory Committee may want to consider use of the PAT process for ensuring timely and complete submissions by the programs. In its briefing book each program generally includes lists of all accomplishments, including publications for the preceding four years. These lists could be checked against Library submittals prior to or as part of the PAT review.

***16. The Task Force recommends that an upgrade of the National Sea Grant Library website be given a high priority.***

The NSGL website should reflect its status as a key part of the national presence of Sea Grant. The Communications Steering Committee and the NSGO national communications leader should evaluate the current website and oversee whatever upgrades are deemed necessary to reflect the NSGL position in Sea Grant's overall communications strategy. This process should involve consultation with the NSGL Advisory Committee and any outside library consultants that are necessary.

***17. The Task Force recommends that a technology audit be undertaken of all National Sea Grant Library computers, peripheral equipment and software and that a high priority be given to implementing necessary technology upgrades.***

A technology audit is needed of all NSGL computer equipment and software. At minimum, there is an immediate need for a better document scanner that will make both pdf and html files. A usable scanner could range from a desktop flatbed model to a more comprehensive combination copier/scanner.

The Library Manager is encouraged to consult with University administrators to determine what options might be available on campus. Should there be no immediate alternative to the current equipment, the Library Manager should investigate the suite of available options in concert with the Advisory Committee and the NSGO national communications leader.

Although the NSGL Manager has already initiated some technology upgrades, this does not negate the need for an audit of the Library's needs. For example, the scanner upgrade is not superfluous. One complaint from Library users is the quality of pdf documents on the website. This quality is directly attributable to the outmoded scanner now in use and could be the most easily resolved problem with a relatively modest investment.

After the initial audit and upgrades, every grant cycle should include a reassessment of hardware and software needs. It should be the responsibility of the NSGL Manager and the NSGO national communications leader to access funds to maintain technical excellence at the NSGL.





## Review of Sea Grant National Media Relations

The Task Force convened a National Media Relations Technical Panel that included four external reviewers with extensive and proven knowledge, experience and understanding of media relations, public affairs and communications. During a three-day period in March 2004, the Technical Panel and Task Force jointly interviewed 31 individuals with diverse perspectives, relevant expertise and knowledge. These interviews resulted in a significant measure of informed comment that addressed if, how, where and to what extent a media relations effort could provide benefits and add value to the investment of public funds in the NSGCP.

The NMRP most recently operated under a grant to the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium ("Project Summary"; Project Number: E/C-1, OMB Control No. 0648-0362; Revision Date: October 1, 2001; pp 723 – 748). The operation, management, goals, objectives, methodology, rationale and evaluation as outlined in the Project Summary described a reasonable and well-thought-through media relations program for Sea Grant. The program was put on hold in March 2003 when the director (NMRD) resigned and has remained on hold pending the outcome of this review.

As stated in that proposal, the NMRP was to "support the legislative charge of Sea Grant 'to increase the understanding, assessment, development, utilization and conservation of the nation's ocean and coastal resources.'"

The NSGCP is responsible for communicating its common goals to the public, including the importance and results of marine science, education and outreach. In this context, it is also important to note that the public is the customer whose understanding, and financial and political support is necessary for the NSGCP to exist. A media relations effort is an important tool in carrying out this responsibility.

The NSGCP enjoys a significant investment of public funds and support. An effective NSGCP media relations program can reassure policymakers about the benefits and accomplishments derived from their decision to invest public funds and help ensure their continued support. Moreover, a NSGCP media relations effort serves to increase public awareness and utilization of the valuable scientific information that flows from the public investment in the NSGCP.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly all interviewees were in favor of restarting the media relations effort. Moreover, many of those individuals expressed genuine respect for the accomplishments and successes of the previous NMRP. They affirmed that the NMRP provided highly credible, unbiased information and that the former director was careful to not confuse true media relations efforts with advocacy or lobbying. Nevertheless, the comments addressed the need to improve the management,

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<sup>1</sup>It is important to note that the NSGCP appropriation for FY 2003 was approximately \$60.4 million, with an additional \$35.6M in non-federal matching funds contributed by the Sea Grant programs. Another \$11.0M in pass-through funds was managed by Sea Grant to enable other federal agencies to engage Sea Grant's research and outreach capabilities in their missions. Therefore in total, the direct investment in activities of the NSGCP approximates \$107M. Equally impressive is that the NSGCP comprises a national network of 30-plus university-based Sea Grant programs, involving the participation of more than 200 colleges and universities, and businesses and agencies, operating in all coastal and Great Lakes states, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. territories of the Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Guam. An important consideration is that the NSGCP is part of NOAA and the U.S. Department of Commerce. The complex and distributed dimensions of the NSGCP mean that the program must use local, regional and national media outlets to communicate the story of this Network to the public and to those governmental entities that provide support to this valuable program. This is especially true given the inevitably competitive funding environment.



operation and oversight of the NMRP, and to minimize external influences that impeded both the former effort and the former NMRP Advisory Committee (NMRAC). As noted in the full Technical Report (Appendix E), creative freedom and objectivity are critical to the success of any media relations program. The Technical Panel made a number of recommendations designed to improve the oversight, management, operation and objectivity of a revitalized and energized NMRP.

The interviewees could be categorized into two distinct groups that, in turn, provided generally distinct perspectives for the Technical Panel. One group had a direct work- and/or profession-related understanding of media relations or the NMRP, or both. This group represented the information customers, users, producers and practitioners (e.g., reporters, advocates, media professionals, Sea Grant program communications professionals, etc.). Overall, these communications and media-savvy professionals rigorously supported continuation of a Sea Grant media relations effort.

The second group had knowledge of or association with the NMRP from a policy perspective. These interviewees generally did not have working experience in the field of media relations or communications; their comments, nonetheless, were based in the experience and perspective of the Sea Grant network (SGA, Sea Grant Directors, scientists, academicians, etc.). These interviewees voiced many of the policy considerations and concerns that assisted the Technical Panel and Task Force in forming recommendations that address governance, management and accountability. This group also was supportive of the past accomplishments of the NMRP and were cognizant of the benefits that can result from a well-designed media relations effort.

Both groups emphasized that media relations is, and should continue to be, a function that is distinctly different from advocacy, and that Sea Grant media relations should be vigilant about maintaining this separation, not only in function but also in perception and staffing.

### **Summary of Technical Panel Recommendations**

Before making any recommendations, the Technical Panel had to answer an overriding question: Should the NMRP continue? Their answer was in the affirmative.

- *The National Media Relations Program should continue.*

Once the concept was affirmed, the Technical Panel made 11 other recommendations. Some were clearly related to management, supervision and working relationships.

- *Some structural changes should be made to the NMRP.*
- *The guidelines governing the NMRP should be revised with the establishment of a much smaller advisory panel and a designated representative for supervision and oversight of the media relations workforce.*
- *The relationship between advocacy (SGA staff) and the media relations incumbent needs to be clarified and understood by all involved.*
- *The relationship between the media relations office and the NSGO needs to be clarified and understood by all involved.*
- *The grant/contract should be tied to the Sea Grant PAT cycle (i.e., four years), after which a comprehensive program performance review would be conducted.*



A second major question for the Technical Panel related to the physical location of the NMRP. The consensus was that the NMRP should continue to be located in Washington, DC. The Panel went further by stating:

- *The Sea Grant National Media Relations Office should be located in Washington, DC, to capitalize on the many national media outlets based there as well as the wealth of communications opportunities and supporting resources available in the nation's capital.*
- *The program should be established through a grant or contract to a neutral organization, one philosophically aligned to Sea Grant and incorporating an academic or scientific mission. The Technical Review Panel specifically identified the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) or the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education (CORE) as possibilities.*

The Panel's final recommendations related to the need and qualifications for two professionals, a NMRD and a Media Relations Specialist, to staff the office. The panel also made recommendations for a Search Committee, and suggested that the positions be advertised in the *Washington Post*, the Public Relations Society of America Job Center (web), the National Association of Science Writers (web and print), the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Publisher's Weekly* and *Editor and Publisher*.



## Task Force Recommendations

### General Recommendations

***18. The Task Force concurs with the Technical Panel's recommendation that a media relations function for the National Sea Grant College Program is important.***

Media Relations is one specialized element of any comprehensive strategic communications plan. While it is only a part, it is a critical component. A media relations function is designed to leverage mass media vehicles such as newspapers, radio, TV outlets and websites in order to reach key audiences within the general public. Those stories, then, can become a vehicle for reaching other audiences that are targeted by other elements of the communications plan.

For success, media relations must be an unbiased, objective and credible purveyor of news to the media. While media relations can support and be part of a broader public affairs agenda, its function is distinct from public relations.

It is particularly important that Sea Grant invest in the media relations element of national communications. In the focus on the good science that Sea Grant delivers, it is too easy to forget that most people learn from and communicate best through stories. Sea Grant has wonderful stories to tell. The NMRP is the vehicle through which these stories can find voice and gain audiences. Media relations is a critical component in getting the message out about Sea Grant issues and value.

Specific recommendations for implementing, and extending, the Technical Panel recommendations are addressed in the following sections.

***19. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Program to serve the National Sea Grant College Program be reestablished at the earliest possible moment.***

The Task Force concurs with the Technical Panel that the NMRP as previously described in plans and proposals should be reestablished at the earliest possible time. The Task Force endorses the following goals and objectives for the NMRP as outlined by the Technical Panel.

**Goals:**

- The NMRP will make a significant contribution to improving the understanding of scientific issues by the news media.
- The NMRP will improve the Sea Grant's network's outreach to the general public through the news media at national levels.
- The NMRP will leverage national media to assist in increasing the visibility of the Sea Grant networks' programs, issues and experts.
- The NMRP will provide support services and advice designed to improve the network's overall news media relations skills and effectiveness.

**Objectives:**

- Increase public awareness of scientific issues in the Sea Grant agenda by working with print, radio, TV, and web based media outlets.
- Improve visibility of Sea Grant by working with news media to encourage access to Sea Grant scientists and experts.



- Improve understanding within the network of media relations and communication.
- Monitor opportunities and make recommendations opportunistically.

In addition, the project summary from the last NMRP proposal (Appendix I) can be used as guidance for developing an updated work plan for the revitalized NMRP.

Two activities that might be overlooked in planning are worthy of specific note. First, the NMRD should make every effort to collaborate with the NOAA Public Affairs office, including participating in the regular staff meetings of this office. Second, the NMRD has an important role in providing technical knowledge of the methods and means for interacting with the media for people throughout the NSGCP. The Task Force recommends that an early priority of the reestablished NMRP should be the provision of continuing education in media relations for all segments of the Network. This preparation could be provided at many venues and settings; for example, during a specifically designated time slot that might occur during each of several SGA meetings.

### **Location and Setting**

***20. The Task Force recommends that the National Media Relations Program be located in the office of a non-governmental organization in the metropolitan Washington, DC area.***

Again, concurring with the Technical Panel, the Task Force recommends locating the NMRP in the metropolitan Washington, DC, area where the program can capitalize on the many national media outlets based there. Such a location would also allow the NMRD to participate in NSGO and NOAA Public Affairs staff meetings and SGA events.

The institutional setting for the NMRP is important to making the program effective. The program should be located in a non-government office setting that provides support, benefits and a collegial environment. While the offer of space within NOAA Public Affairs is greatly appreciated by the Task Force, the prevailing opinion is that the NMRP must be located in a non-governmental office to be most effective with the media. Issues of security-related ease-of-access for the public are important when considering an opportunity to locate the NMRP office in a government building. A host should be identified that can provide a reasonable benefits package that is competitive with other similar employment opportunities. The host location would ideally provide some opportunity for the NMRD and the Administrative Assistant to utilize office technology (computers, duplication services, etc.), office common space, and to participate in professional collegial interactions and contact with people who are involved in areas of interest that are related to Sea Grant issues. This community setting is important for morale and productivity.

The final inventory of the former NMRP office lists furniture, electronic equipment and files. The NSGCP should make every effort to use these assets in reestablishing the NMRP office, including digital and other files, artwork, contact/distribution lists, the Sea Grant exhibit, office equipment including such things as a fax machine and copy machine, office furniture, and computers and related hardware, much of which was purchased just prior to the departure of the most recent NMRD.

### **Organization of the NMRP**

Given the critical importance of the structure, operation and administration of the NMRP



that emerged from testimony from interviewees, and comments from the Technical Panel, the Task Force recommends the following modifications to specific components of the NMRP operation and structure. The Task Force emphasizes that without appropriate organization and administration, the value of an NMRP will not be realized by Sea Grant.

***21. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Advisory Committee be reestablished.***

For a media relations effort to be successfully undertaken on behalf of the NSGCP, it is essential that an advisory structure be established to support and advise this important and significant investment. As previously indicated, the Task Force heard persistent advice in its interviews that the NMRP should be vigilant in maintaining itself as an unbiased, objective and credible purveyor of news to the media. Furthermore, it was clear from our interviews that because of the unique nature of media relations generally, and with specific recognition of the need for media relations to serve the NSGCP, it is essential that the NMRP and its staff be informed through the provision of sound, cogent and relevant advice and guidance. Interviews indicated that it is fundamentally important for the National Media Relations Advisory Committee (NMRAC) to incorporate individuals who have specific knowledge of and are practiced in the field of communications. Nevertheless, because of the distributed nature of the NSGCP, the advisory structure should also include individuals who are knowledgeable and experienced with respect to the distinctive policy, management and collaborative characteristics of the NSGCP.

The NMRAC is advisory to the program and should provide guidance to the NMRP. It is the vehicle through which the Sea Grant Communications Network can provide the program with their expertise and advice. The NMRAC is the mechanism to identify potential media relations opportunities from throughout the Sea Grant Network and should routinely seek advice from all elements of the Sea Grant Network as needed. It is also the vehicle for the coordination with national communications initiatives and the broader Sea Grant Network. It is a means for engaging media relations expertise from outside the Sea Grant Network for advice and guidance.

The Technical Panel recommended establishing an advisory committee that was smaller than the previous one yet big enough to represent the relevant parts of the Sea Grant Network. While the Technical Panel suggested a five- or six-member panel, the Task Force suggests a ten-person NMRAC membership that is appointed by the Director of the NSGCP and that ensures representation from throughout the Sea Grant Network plus the necessary professional advice:

***Voting NMRAC Members:***

- Chair, Communications Steering Committee (or appointed designee)
- One additional Sea Grant Program Communicator with experience in and understanding of media relations (recommended by the Chair of the Communications Steering Committee, to serve a three-year term)
- Chair, Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Leaders (or appointed designee)
- SGA Program Mission Committee liaison to the Communications Steering Committee
- The NSGO national communications leader
- Two non-Sea Grant media relations/media/journalism/communications professionals (each to serve a two-year term).



### **Standing Ex-officio NMRAC Members:**

- Director, NSGCP
- Communications Liaison, NSGRP
- President, SGA

The NMRAC should elect a chair from among the voting NMRAC members and may establish its own operating procedures and internal structures as needed, including establishing an executive committee. In recognition of the dynamic nature of events and issues that are sure to have bearing on a Sea Grant media relations effort, the NMRAC should have at least quarterly meetings by teleconference. The NMRAC Chair should call at least one in-person meeting of NMRAC each year.

The NMRAC should keep formal notes or minutes of all NMRAC meetings.

One of the first responsibilities for the NMRAC will be to oversee the hiring process for the NMRD. The NMRP Technical Panel has outlined suggested qualifications and hiring protocol for this position that the Task Force affirms. While technically the NMRD will be hired by the host institution, the hiring process should involve approval by the NMRAC.

Simultaneous to developing the hiring protocol, the NMRAC should develop the criteria for evaluation of the NMRD and the NMRP itself and should participate in all regularly scheduled evaluations in concert with the host institution.

#### ***22. Responsibility for the NMRP will be shared by the NMRP Director, the NSGO, the host non-governmental organization, and the NMRAC.***

The NMRP can be administered by a contract, grant or cooperative agreement between the NSGO and the NGP that is housing the program. The choice of instrument should be guided by the preference of the host institution and the overall objectives adopted by the NMRAC in consultation with the NSGCP Director and SGA leadership.

The NSGO national communications leader will provide daily oversight of the NMRD, acting essentially as a program officer for the contract, grant or cooperative agreement. The NGO host institution will be responsible for administrative details and will provide regular reports to the NSGO national communications leader.

Should a national communications leader not be added to the NSGO staff, the Task Force recommends that the NSGCP Director serve as program officer for the NMRD.

The NMRP needs to draw upon the assets of and serve the needs of the Sea Grant Network. This will best be accomplished through regular communication with the NMRAC, which, in turn, will be responsible for maintaining contact with the Network as a whole.

This not only establishes a format for guidance and accountability for the professional NMRD and the NMRP itself, but it also provides an opportunity for the NMRAC and the NSGO to troubleshoot, consult and make decisions on issues of policy, to support and advocate for the NMRP Director and the program within the Sea Grant Network, and to oversee evaluation of the employees. It is expected that constructive and collaborative consultation between the NMRD, the NMRAC Chair and the NSGO communications program leader will exist with respect to the operation and administration of the NMRP.

While it may otherwise be evident, the interviewee comments compel the Task Force to restate that special attention be given to establishing regular and frequent communication among



and between the NMRD, the NMRAC, the national communications leader and the Sea Grant Network.

The NMRD should be highly qualified in media relations, and should be hired to take responsibility for success of the program. This means having the professional capabilities to work independently and professionally to manage a media relations program as is envisioned for the NMRP. This person will be responsible for delivering an effective, collaborative program, coordinated with the Network and working in close coordination with NOAA, NSGO, SGA, NMRAC and other Sea Grant partners. An effective media relations program for Sea Grant requires inclusion of the breadth of the Network and the NMRD will be expected to use the NMRAC effectively for thematic guidance and as an entre into the expertise that is resident in the Network. A major element of the performance evaluation of the NMRD will be the effectiveness of his/her use of and relationship with the NMRAC.

### ***General Staffing Considerations***

While the Task Force agrees that two full-time positions are needed to adequately staff the National Media Relations Program, it does not concur with the Technical Panel on the level of expertise for the second person.

#### ***23. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Director and an Administrative Assistant be hired for the National Media Relations Program.***

The NMRP must be headed by a qualified communications professional who has the personal skills to be a team player who will be able to maximize the value resident within the Sea Grant Network. This person must be able to work independently and professionally in close collaboration with the NMRAC and the NSGO. The Task Force concurs with the qualifications outlined by the Technical Panel and expects the NMRAC to use these as a guide. The minimum qualifications would be:

- Bachelor's degree in journalism, English, communications or public relations
- Excellent written/verbal skills
- 8 to 10 years of experience in media relations and/or communications with a track record for placing national news stories
- Demonstrated knowledge and ability to use current technologies to support the collection, dissemination and evaluation of media relations activities/information
- Management/supervisory experience

The qualifications for the Administrative Assistant should be developed in concert with the NMRD, who should be involved in the interviewing and hiring process.

While direct compensation of these positions will reflect their relative qualifications and positions, it is also important that reasonable and competitive health care, retirement and other customary benefits be included in the overall compensation package. The Task Force concurs with the Technical Panel's recommendations for the make up of the Search Committee and outlets to advertise the position.



# Summary Recommendations

## *Sea Grant National Communications Task Force*

### **General**

1. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Network institutionalize a process for periodic updating and modification of the 2002 National Communications Plan "Positioning Sea Grant: An Integrated National Communications Plan 2003-2006."
2. The Task Force recommends that the National Sea Grant Office designate one person to be responsible for effective national communications.
3. The Task Force recommends that continued priority be given to using the one percent money in the Sea Grant budget to fund the National Sea Grant Library and the National Media Relations Program.
4. The Task Force recommends regular outside review of both the National Sea Grant Library and the National Media Relations Program.
5. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Association's national communications activities be closely coordinated with the Network's national communications program.

### **Sea Grant Abstracts and National Sea Grant Library**

6. The Task Force recommends cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**.
7. The Task Force recommends that the Communications Steering Committee, aided by the National Sea Grant Office national communications leader, develop and implement a transition plan for publicizing the Sea Grant Network's products after the cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**.
8. The Task Force recommends that the National Sea Grant Office national communications leader and the Chair of the Communications Steering Committee lead a re-examination of the Network's projected long-term needs for national communications products.
9. The Task Force finds that the National Sea Grant Library provides an invaluable service to Sea Grant and to the users of Sea Grant information.
10. The Task Force recommends that National Sea Grant Office national communications leader provide the National Sea Grant Library with a point of contact, advocacy and integration into the overall activities of the national communications program.
11. The Task Force recommends that attention be given to the management structure and positioning of the National Sea Grant Library within the University of Rhode Island library system.
12. The Task Force recommends that a National Sea Grant Library Advisory Committee be formed.
13. The Task Force recommends that the membership of the Communications Steering Committee should be expanded to include the National Sea Grant Library Manager.
14. The Task Force recommends that National Sea Grant Library staffing be increased both for



fulltime employees and for contracted services as needed to meet the additional responsibilities that result from cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**.

15. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Network put a high priority on complete and timely submissions to the National Sea Grant Library so that its collection reflects the comprehensive products of the National Sea Grant College Program.
16. The Task Force recommends that an upgrade of the National Sea Grant Library website be given a high priority.
17. The Task Force recommends that a technology audit be undertaken of all National Sea Grant Library computers, peripheral equipment and software and that a high priority be given to implementing necessary technology upgrades.

### ***National Media Relations Program***

18. The Task Force concurs with the Technical Panel's recommendation that a media relations function for the National Sea Grant College Program is important.
19. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Program to serve the National Sea Grant College Program be re-established at the earliest possible moment.
20. The Task Force recommends that the National Media Relations Program be located in the office of a non-governmental organization in the metropolitan Washington, DC area.
21. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Advisory Committee be re-established.
22. The Task Force recommends that responsibility for the National Media Relations Program be shared by the National Media Relations Director, the National Sea Grant Office and the host non-governmental organization with advice and guidance from the National Media Relations Advisory Committee.
23. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Director and an Administrative Assistant be hired for the National Media Relations Program.

### ***Conclusion***

If the recommendations made in this report are implemented, the Sea Grant story in all its dimensions will be able to be told – and to be heard. The Sea Grant story will be put forward in many ways: through good online access to scientific results, through organizing and participating in media events and through factual and professional stories in a myriad of media for the general public. The organizational and management changes that will enable this to happen are,



## Appendix A

# Brief Biographies of the Sea Grant Communications Review Task Force

**Robin Alden** is Director of a community marine resource center, Penobscot East Resource Center, based in Stonington, ME that supports community-based resource management and stewardship in the eastern Gulf of Maine. She was Maine Commissioner of Marine Resources for three years, 1995-1997, the agency responsible for marine and anadromous fishery management and enforcement and for all aquaculture for the state. Prior to that, Ms. Alden was publisher and editor of **Commercial Fisheries News**, a regional fishing trade newspaper that she founded in 1973, and later of the company's new publication, **Fish Farming News**. She was instrumental in starting the annual Maine Fishermen's Forum in the mid-1970s. Ms. Alden was a public member of the New England Fishery Management Council 1979-1982 and a member of the council again during her tenure as Commissioner. Ms. Alden has been a member of the National Sea Grant Review Panel since 2000. She was a fisheries agent for the University of Maine Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program from 1976-1979. Ms. Alden has a B.A. in Economics from the University of Maine.

**Jeffrey Stephan** is Manager of the United Fishermen's Marketing Association, Inc., in Kodiak, AK. He is a member of the National Sea Grant Review Panel, having served as Review Panel Chair, and as a member of the Panel committee that authored "Building Sea Grant: the Role of the National Sea Grant Office." Mr. Stephan is currently President of the Kodiak Island Borough Board of Education and past President of the Kodiak College Council. He is a past Voting Member of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and a current member of its Advisory Panel. He served as Chair of the Steering Committee of the Department of Commerce Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, advisor to the Department of State International North Pacific Fisheries Commission, Vice-Chair of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, and member of the Department of Interior Outer Continental Shelf Advisory Board. Mr. Stephan has a B.A. in Economics from the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.

**Amy Broussard** is Associate Director and Communications Coordinator of the Texas Sea Grant College Program. She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri. She began her career as a newspaper reporter and later was a ghostwriter/publications coordinator in Houston. Ms. Broussard has been with Texas Sea Grant for 25 years, first as an education writer and later as communications coordinator. She was named associate director in 1987. While with Texas Sea Grant, she and her staff have been recognized with innumerable awards, particularly for the quarterly magazine **Texas Shores**. She was selected to oversee the layout and publication of three Sea Grant Association Theme Team booklets and all the one-pagers and accomplishments fact sheets. Ms. Broussard is a member of the Society of Environmental Journalists and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education.

**Jamie M. Krauk** is communications program leader for NOAA Sea Grant's National Office in Silver Spring, MD. She holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Bucknell University and a master's degree in environmental microbiology from the University of Maryland, with a focus on open-ocean nutrient cycling. Before coming to Sea Grant, Ms. Krauk served as Research Program Specialist for the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere/NOAA Administrator. She was the liaison between NOAA headquarters and NOAA Research to address



programmatic and management issues for a broad array of technical topics. Prior to joining Vice Admiral Lautenbacher's staff, Ms. Krauk served in NOAA Research headquarters providing representation of NOAA Research laboratories to NOAA Research Senior Management and NOAA Senior Management. She is a member of the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography (ASLO) and the American Geophysical Union (AGU).

**Amy Painter** is communications coordinator for NOAA Sea Grant's National Office in Silver Spring, MD. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Richmond and a master's degree in public communications from the American University. Before coming to Sea Grant, Ms. Painter served as Senior Director for Communications/Public Relations for the City of Seattle's Arts Commission, where she directed the creation of a new website, developed strategic communications plans and worked closely with the Mayor's Office and other City departments. Before moving to Seattle, Ms. Painter served as Director of Communication for the Accokeek Foundation in Accokeek, MD, an educational/environmental non-profit. Prior to moving into the non-profit sector, she served as an Assistant Managing Editor at Phillips Publishing, Inc., a large publishing firm in Potomac, MD, where she edited three monthly health newsletters.



## Appendix B

# Acknowledgments

The National Communications Task Force is grateful for the able assistance of two panels of experts in the evaluation of the three programs. The Library and Abstracts Technical Panel included:

<b>Names</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Kerry Bolognese (Chair)	Director, Federal Relations- Environmental Affairs	National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges
Peter Brueggeman	Director	Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, University of California, San Diego
Craig W. Emerson	Vice President-Editorial	Cambridge Scientific Abstracts
Dan Jacobs	Information Specialist/ Statistical Ecologist	Maryland Sea Grant College Program

In selecting those for the Technical Panels, the Task Force decided that one chair should be selected as a liaison for the two panels. Kerry Bolognese served in this position; his contribution of time and effort merit particular attention. The National Media Relations Technical Panel included:

<b>Names</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Kerry Bolognese (Chair)	Director, Federal Relations- Environmental Affairs	National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges
Lori Arguelles	Executive Director	National Marine Sanctuaries Foundation
Lynne Friedmann	Science Communications Consultant	Friedmann Communications
Ryck Lydecker	Assistant Vice President, Government Affairs; Associate Editor, BoatU.S. Magazine	BoatU.S.

### **Interviewees**

The individuals below were interviewed either in person or by telephone by one of the Technical Panels.

### **Library and Abstracts**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Cynthia Murray	Coordinator	National Sea Grant Library
Joyce E. Winn	Loan Librarian	National Sea Grant Library
Dianne McGannon	Senior Word Processing Typist	National Sea Grant Library
Dr. Paul Gandel	Vice Provost, Information Services	University of Rhode Island Library
Frank Shephard	CEO	Woods Hole Data Base, Inc.
Susan L. Shephard	President	Woods Hole Data Base, Inc.
Judith McDowell	Director	Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution Sea Grant Program
Eleanor Uhlinger	Assistant Director	Woods Hole Library



## ***National Media Relations Program***

<b>Name (in order of appearance)</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Amy Painter	Communications Specialist	National Sea Grant Office
Ronald Baird	Director	National Sea Grant College Program
Jack Greer	Assistant Director for Communications	Maryland Sea Grant College Program
Ben Sherman	Former Coordinator	NOAA Public Affairs National Media Relations Program
Erika Helmrich	Former Staff Member	National Journal National Media Relations Program
Judith McDowell	Director tion Sea Grant Program	Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute
Kathy Hart	Associate Director Former Communications Director	North Carolina State Alumni Association North Carolina Sea Grant College Program
M. Richard DeVoe	Executive Director	South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium
Elaine Knight	Assistant Director	South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium
Marsha Gear	Communications Chair	California Sea Grant College Program
Pauli Hayes	Communications Chair-elect	Virginia Sea Grant College Program
Stephen Wittman	Program Information Specialist	University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute
Mark Schleifstein	Environment Reporter	The Times-Picayune, New Orleans, LA
Randy Schmid	Reporter	Associated Press International Headquarters
Jennifer Greenamoyer	Executive Director	Sea Grant Association
Christophe Tulou	President Former Executive Director	The Center for Sea Change Sea Grant Association
Carl Richards	Director	Minnesota Sea Grant College Program
Russell Moll	Director	California Sea Grant College Program
Mary Hope Katsouros	Partner	Merrell Katsouros, LLP
Lowell Randel	Washington Representative	Texas A&M Research Foundation/ Meyers & Associates
Randy Showstack	Reporter	EOS, American Geophysical Union
Madelyn Appelbaum		NOAA Public Affairs
Peter Dykstra	Executive Producer	CNN
Adam Frederick	Chair, Sea Grant Educators Network	Maryland Sea Grant College Program
Jordan St. John	Public Affairs Director	NOAA Public Affairs
Terry Garcia	Senior Vice President of Mission Program	National Geographic
Jeff Fleming	Public Affairs Director	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jana Goldman		NOAA Public Affairs
Vicki Meade	Free-lance Writer	Meade Communications
Carol Rogers	Lecturer and Professor	Philip Merrill College of Journalism University of Maryland
James Falk	Chair, Assembly of Sea Grant Extension	Delaware Sea Grant College Program



## Appendix C

# Charge to Task Force

April 4, 2003

Dr. Robert Stickney, President  
Sea Grant Association  
Texas A&M University  
2700 Earl Rudder Freeway South  
Suite 1800  
College Station, Texas 77845

Dr. Peter M. Bell (Chair)  
Sea Grant Review Panel  
4828 Church Lane  
Galesville, Maryland 20765

Dear Bob and Peter:

This is to provide additional information on the goals and objectives of the review of the Media Center, Depository and Abstracts Projects that was requested by prior correspondence. My purpose is to provide more specific guidance that might be helpful to you in appointing a Task Group and conducting the review.

The primary goal of such a review derives from Sea Grant's mission in law, that is the prompt dissemination of knowledge as defined in Sec. 1121(b) and Sec. 1123(c)(4)C of the Sea Grant Act of 2002. Effective dissemination requires cost effective mechanisms that efficiently transmit information to the most appropriate audiences in such a manner it will be readily understood, assimilated and found useful. Likewise, prudent management requires that the effectiveness of such communications mechanisms be reviewed periodically to judge relevance, and both evaluate and improve performance.

The three programs collectively represent about one percent of Sea Grant's total budget and have been important vehicles for information dissemination in the Sea Grant network. As such, they are intended to serve the network as a whole and are currently funded primarily without "match" from the host institution. All have been in existence for more than seven years. Consequently, the primary goal of this review is strategic in nature. That is to provide recommendations to the Director concerning the relevance of these three operations to Sea Grant's long term ability to effectively disseminate information to critical audiences in accordance with its mission, i.e., is there sufficient value added. The secondary objectives follow from the primary goal, namely if continued:

- 1) What changes might be made to improve cost effectiveness and delivery of products or services.
- 2) How might these programs be better integrated with network operations including place in the organization, funding, grant responsibility, management and accountability.
- 3) Would additional technical reviews of specific operations (i.e., TAT's) be helpful.
- 4) Any other recommendations the Task Group may have concerning these programs and potential value added to the Sea Grant enterprise.

Finally, this exercise is not envisioned as an in-depth technical review but more an evaluation of the strategic importance of and potential organizational improvements in these programs to enhance their value to the overall Sea Grant mission.

With best regards,

Ronald C. Baird  
Director



# National Sea Grant Library and Sea Grant Abstracts Review

## Technical Review Panel Report

November 2003

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## I. Executive Summary

The Library and Abstracts Panel met October 20-23 in Providence to review the National Sea Grant Library and the **Sea Grant Abstracts**. The Panel members included:

- Mr. Kerry D. Bolognese, Chair, Library and Abstracts Panel, Director, Federal Relations-Environmental Affairs, NASULGC
- Mr. Peter Brueggeman, Director, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, University of California, San Diego
- Dr. Craig W. Emerson, VP Editorial, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts
- Dr. Dañ Jacobs, Information Systems Specialist/Statistical Ecologist, Maryland Sea Grant College program, University of Maryland

The Panel was very ably assisted by National Sea Grant Office staff:

- Ms. Jamie Krauk, Program Director for Communications, National Sea Grant College Program

The Panel team was complemented by the Communications Working Group, which included:

- Ms. Robin P. Alden, Chair, Communications Working Group, Fisheries Consultant
- Mr. Jeffrey R. Stephan, Manager, United Fishermen's Marketing Association, Inc.
- Ms. Amy Broussard, Associate Director and Communicator, Sea Grant College Program, Texas A&M University

The Panel conducted site visits to the National Sea Grant Library at the University of Rhode Island and to the **Sea Grant Abstracts** office in Falmouth, Massachusetts. The Panel engaged in intensive discussions and considered a wide range of issues in developing its recommendations. The Panel's recommendations fall into three main areas. First, the NSGL should be retained, augmented, more tightly integrated into the National Office and Program offices, and better networked within the URI Library system. Second, an advisory board should be created to provide guidance to the NSGL and serve as an interlocutor between the NSGL and the other parts of Sea Grant. Third, the **Sea Grant Abstracts** should be discontinued in favor of a more efficient, streamlined online system of search and retrieval for abstracts and corresponding publications.

The Panel's specific recommendations are as follows:

- The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the NSGL provides an invaluable service to Sea Grant and to the users of Sea Grant information, and should be strengthened with the tools and resources to realize its potential.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel suggests the establishment of an NSGL Advisory Panel, to review, advise, comment, and advocate the NSGL.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel urges better integration of the NSGL into the University of Rhode Island structure, and the quick appointment of the Pell Librarian.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel urges a strong advocate for the NSGL at the National Office.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel encourages the Sea Grant Programs, NOAA Sea Grant Office and other Sea Grant related entities to provide the NSGL the copies of all of their publications in a timely and technologically compliant manner as possible.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel suggests that an NSGL online submission system for the Programs be established.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the programs should be encouraged to improve their tracking and obtaining copies of publications derived from Sea Grant funded research.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel urges the NSGL to provide each program with yearly reports to help induce the programs into greater compliance.



- The Library and Abstracts Panel urges expansion of full-text content for the National Sea Grant Database.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel strongly encourages NSGL staff to continue their outreach efforts and to work to develop new and innovative ways to promote a culture of engagement.
- The NSGL staff should devote more resources to attending and participating in relevant conferences and meetings, including those important for professional development and continuing education.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel urges NSGL to be vigilant in maintaining a balance of outreach among the full educational spectrum, including formal and informal education, K-12, undergraduate, graduate, and post graduate.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel urges that future NSGL budgets include sufficient allocations for standard technology upgrades.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel encourages NSGL staff to allocate more resources for travel.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel encourages NSGL staff to factor professional development and continuing education activities into its budget.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that there isn't a continuing need for **Sea Grant Abstracts** in our contemporary information environment.
- With the discontinuation of the publication of **Sea Grant Abstracts**, the Library and Abstracts Panel recommends that funding be allocated to the NSGL for programmer needs to improve the NSGL database and site.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel suggests a series of straightforward modifications of NSGL database and web site design.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that many of the current summaries in the backfile can be replaced with original abstracts obtained from the ASFA database, or from publishers' Web sites which often display abstracts at no cost (e.g. Elsevier Science publications via <http://www.sciencedirect.com>).
- The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the NSGL needs to reassess its capability to market the Sea Grant success stories and develop a variety of strategies, in consultation with the advisory board (discussed above), for advancing knowledge and information about the work of the Programs.
- The Technical Panel strongly recommends that graphics design expertise be used to develop a visually enhanced, user-friendly, and informative website with clear and distinct SG identity, and that the Sea Grant regional web layout and design be used for common look continuity.
- The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that if it is decided to continue print versions of **Sea Grant Abstracts** several fundamental changes should occur, especially in improved workflow and efficiency.

The Panel believes that the report makes an important contribution to the National College Sea Grant Program as it strives to serve an even larger portfolio of national needs and maintain its outstanding reputation for learning, discover and engagement, in the Land-Grant tradition.

## II. **Introduction**

The Library and Abstracts Panel met October 20-23, at the Providence, Rhode Island, Airport Radisson Hotel to review the National Sea Grant Library and the **Sea Grant Abstracts**. A site visit to the National Sea Grant Library in the Pell Library Building at the University of Rhode Island Bay Campus, Narragansett, RI, was made on October 21, where the Panel received a PowerPoint presentation by the NSGL staff, and a tour and demonstration of the facilities. The Panel had lunch with Dr. Paul Gandel,



the Vice Provost of Information Services, who articulated his vision on linking NSGL with the larger URI library network. On October 22, the Library and Abstracts Panel made a site visit to Falmouth, Massachusetts to hear presentations by the Woods Hole Data Base, Inc., executive team and staff on the **Sea Grant Abstracts**.

Both site visits proved very valuable and provided the information necessary for the Panel to make informed judgments and reach consensus on all points regarding the NSGL and the **Abstracts**. The Panel did, however, engage in extended and intensive discussions and looked at all relevant scenarios and alternatives in developing its recommendations. The Panel was meticulously diligent in ensuring its recommendations were justified by the facts. The Panel remains confident that this report presents the best options considering the available evidence. It should be noted that no Panel member held pre-conceived notions on what to expect or what the outcomes should be prior to convening.

The Panel's recommendations fall into three main areas. First, the NSGL should be retained, augmented, more tightly integrated into the National Office and Program offices, and better networked within the URI Library system. Second, an advisory board should be created to provide guidance to the NSGL and serve as an interlocutor between the NSGL and the other parts of Sea Grant. Third, the **Sea Grant Abstracts** should be discontinued in favor of a more efficient, streamlined online system of search and retrieval for abstracts and corresponding publications.

Each of the three major recommendations is fully explained and supported. Several additional suggestions are made within the context of these recommendations and relate to budget issues, outreach mechanisms, communications systems, and Web site and library technologies. The report is fairly detailed and technical, which is necessitated by the nature of the subject matter reviewed. The Panel believes that the report makes an important contribution to the National College Sea Grant Program as it strives to serve an even larger portfolio of national needs and maintain its outstanding reputation for learning, discover and engagement, in the Land-Grant tradition.

### **III. National Sea Grant Library (NSGL)**

#### **A. Need for NSGL**

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the NSGL provides an invaluable service to Sea Grant and to the users of Sea Grant information, and should be strengthened with the tools and resources to realize its potential.*

The Library and Abstracts Panel considered whether there is a need for a National Sea Grant Library at all. The NSGL offers a centralized archive and lending library of Sea Grant publications, as well as an emerging digital library of Sea Grant publications. Making Sea Grant publications digitally available has expanded the reach of the NSGL far beyond its original intent. We note the meteoric rise in PDF downloads from the NSGL site as evidence of the NSGL re-inventing itself for contemporary needs. We believe that their efforts are worthy of continuing support.

We discussed other models for a national library of Sea Grant publications, including a distributed national library and a digital-only national library. A centralized national library has a decided advantage in providing print copies for circulation to requesters, which the NSGL does across the nation as well as outside the US.

In addition to an inability to circulate publications to requestors, other national library models seem problematic, particularly for archiving. A distributed national library would require programs to archive their own print publications in addition to maintaining a database of their publications that could be queried by a centralized search system to deliver Sea Grant-wide search results to the user. Given the number of Sea Grant programs, it would take considerable effort for a programmer to coordinate and build such a search system, with a centralized search interface accessing each program's database and then compiling results centrally for the user. The Library and Abstracts Panel expects that programs may not be able to provide and maintain programming support and in some cases accommodate system conversion on their in-house databases to work within a distributed framework, even if they have an in-house database tracking all their publications. A centralized database of Sea Grant publications ensures



an institutional record of all Sea Grant publications is maintained and data preserved without relying on programs to maintain their records over time. If print archiving were left to the programs, the Library and Abstracts Panel can imagine a scenario where print publications would not be archived properly at all the programs, meaning keeping an entire print collection in proper environmental conditions. The usual space pressures at some programs plus personnel turnover with time might well result in the partial loss of a print archive at a program. There would be disparity in experience and effort among the programs in archiving print, compared to what can be found in a library setting with its emphasis on archiving print.

A digital-only national library would be a mixed model, relying upon electronic versions of publications created by Sea Grant being archived by the programs, alongside their other print publications for which Sea Grant does not hold the copyright. Records of all Sea Grant publications would be searched from a central searchable system as above. This digital-only national library could encompass a retrospective conversion project to digital library archival standards of Sea Grant print publications for which Sea Grant holds the copyright. NSGL's past scanning effort was directed towards online reading and not towards digital library archiving, being scanned at a resolution sufficient to ensure readability and limit file sizes, since many users will be accessing these documents via telephone modem. An alternative would be to leave the archiving responsibility for these at the program level in print, and just focus on digital archiving for future publications created by Sea Grant. NSGL is currently scanning many Sea Grant publications from print when those publications were born-digital at the programs, and where no electronic version is being served to the public at the programs. NSGL should obtain electronic versions of these born-digital publications directly from the programs and archive them, offline if need be to satisfy program concerns, in addition to collecting the corresponding print versions.

## **B. Reporting and Advisory Structure**

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel suggests the establishment of an NSGL Advisory Panel, to review, advise, comment, and advocate the NSGL.*

The Library and Abstracts Panel observed that the NSGL would benefit from a better-defined management process, involving goal-setting (like strategic planning), performance measures, and evaluation, in accordance with Sea Grant's goals and objectives. The NSGL is rather isolated within the Sea Grant organization, and the NSGL Director would benefit from the guidance received through this management process. Such an Advisory Panel could be composed of an extension specialist, an educator, a representative from the Sea Grant Assn., a librarian, a Sea Grant IT specialist, someone from the National Sea Grant Office, and others as appropriate, all serving as a sounding board for the NSGL.

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel urges better integration of the NSGL into the University of Rhode Island structure, and the quick appointment of the Pell Librarian.*

The Pell Librarian serves as an advocate for NSGL within URI Libraries and URI, provides management oversight and review of NSGL goals and objectives, and keeps apprised of issues and opportunities within URI Libraries and the library community for the NSGL. The Pell Librarian can seek funding opportunities for more advanced digitizing of NSGL content, particularly creation of encoded text documents which would provide smaller file sizes and allow cross-collection searching of Sea Grant publication content, perhaps in subject specific areas of the collection of particular interest to digital library funding agencies. The Dean of URI Libraries should consider integrating the NSGL into facets of the URI library structure like appropriate standing library committees, e.g., public services or instruction/outreach, and particularly for committees on digital library initiatives due to the rich content of the NSGL collection, and the opportunities it presents for grants. The NSGL content for which copyright is held by Sea Grant represents a rich resource for digital library initiatives, wherein encoded text versions in SGML/XML can be created, to allow for cross-document searching, and better presentation of structured text.

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel urges a strong advocate for the NSGL at the National Office.*

The reporting relationship between the NSGL and the National Sea Grant Office needs clarification



and consistency.

Since the National Office funds the NSGL, an advocate for the Library in the National Office would help ensure that sufficient resources are considered for current and future activities, including those that stem from this report.

### C. Improve Sea Grant Program Compliance

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel encourages the Sea Grant Programs, NOAA Sea Grant Office and other Sea Grant related entities to provide the NSGL the copies of all of their publications in as timely and technologically compliant a manner as possible.*

Currently, only Sea Grant programs are required to submit a printed publication transmittal form along with either three copies of each publication or two copies along with a PDF file that are produced using fully or partially with Sea Grant funds (excluding proposals). The publication transmittal form includes basic information about the item and includes:

- publication title,
- publication number,
- price,
- if copies are available from the Program or publisher,
- approval to digitize the publication if a PDF is not provided or an alternate electronic version is not available (e.g., URL to an on-line version), and
- an abstract or other suitable description of the publication (e.g., one-page description used by the Program to promote the publication).

One copy of the publication is archived and the other may be loaned on request. The information from the publication transmittal form is used to create an entry in the NSGL database for the publication. This information, along with the PDF, is displayed as search results on the NSGL website.

If the PDF is not provided, NSGL must digitize the publication to create the PDF, and an inferior PDF version is created as a result. NSGL creates PDFs from scanned page images, whereas the Programs produce them using desktop publishing word processing or other software. As a result, a NSGL scanned PDF is much larger in file size than a program's PDF produced from text. The Programs should be able to create PDF versions using Adobe Acrobat (or other suitable software) or at least provide NSGL with an electronic version that can be used to create the PDF (e.g., RTF rich text format or Microsoft Word DOC format of the publication). As a result, PDFs of much smaller file sizes would be offered to the public via NSGL. Technical assistance in the creation of PDFs should be available to the program locally as well as within the Sea Grant Network.

The PDF file is the only digital element that is currently submitted to NSGL, and as a result, NSGL must key in the bibliographic information about the publication on the publication transmittal form. The description of the publication is not always provided from the program, and NSGL is reliant on its relationship with Woods Hole Data Base, Inc., which produces **Sea Grant Abstracts**. This results in delays into getting the information about the product into the NSGL database and for those visiting the NSGL website. The inclusion of a recent acquisitions list on the NSGL website alerts users of the new publications but does not provide an abstract or link to PDF of the publication.

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel suggests that an NSGL online submission system for the Programs be established.*

An online submission system would make it easier for the Programs to provide information about a publication, submit (upload) a PDF version of the publication and ensure that an abstract or other description is provided. It would allow NSGL to capture the bibliographic information directly from the Programs without keyboarding at NSGL. A printed copy of the online form would be included with the two copies of publication to assist NSGL matching up the online entry with the actual publication. Information in the online form could be automatically entered into the temporary (new additions) database to allow for quality control by NSGL staff. After review and revisions by NSGL staff, the information will be entered into the publicly available database.



The abstract or other suitable description of a publication is key to describing the publication and improve its visibility and availability to those searching the NSGL database. Compliance to meeting this requirement will be improved by having the NSGL director sending an email to the head of the program's communicator acknowledging the receipt of the publication transmittal form and requesting the missing abstract (and other items that may have been omitted). After a suitable period and the abstract has not been received, the NSGL director resends the email reminder with it copied to the program's director. If the abstract has not been received after an additional period of time, the email should be resent with it copied to the Program's director and the Program's National Sea Grant Office program officer. An entry in the NSGL database should be made for the publication whether or not an abstract is provided for the publication.

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the programs should be encouraged to improve their tracking and obtaining copies of publications derived from Sea Grant funded research.*

This is not to criticize the programs for not providing NSGL with all reprints but to ask them to be creative in obtaining the reprints from their funded researchers. Any improvement in this area will not only bring the programs closer to compliance with the NSGL requirements, it will ensure that the NSGL holdings include all Sea Grant funded publications.

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel urges the NSGL to provide each program with yearly reports to help induce the programs into greater compliance.*

The reports should summarize the following:

- the number and type of publications submitted to NSGL by the Program,
- how many of the Program's publications were loaned out,
- how many of the Program's PDF documents have been downloaded (along with a breakdown of the top 10 PDF downloads),
- a breakdown of information about who downloads the PDFs (e.g., state, country, organization) that would be obtained from an optional online form that is displayed along with a link to download the file, and
- other statistics or use information that may be helpful to the Sea Grant program or NSGL.

The yearly reports provide metrics that will help each program assess the impact of their publications.

The recommendations above also apply to the NOAA Sea Grant Office, the Sea Grant Media Center and other Sea Grant related entities that produce publications using Sea Grant funds. Their compliance will ensure that the NSGL will archive all Sea Grant publications and be available on the web via the NSGL database.

#### **D. Possible Expansion of Full-text Content for the National Sea Grant Database**

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel urges expansion of full-text content for the National Sea Grant Database.*

Abstracts databases are of little value if they cannot direct users to the full-text literature efficiently. The NSGL goes beyond this core objective by integrating digitized documents or Web links into the National Sea Grant database. Users now have direct access to the majority of Sea Grant publications, but reprints, dissertations, and commercial literature are not always considered for digitization. It is possible, however, that perceived copyright restrictions for these document types may not actually exist, allowing the addition of these important documents to the full-text available in the NSGL database.

- i. **Open-Access Journals:** The handful of academic journals which have been freely available on the Web for some time (e.g. *Fishery Bulletin*; <http://fishbull.noaa.gov/fcontent.htm>), are now joined by hundreds more titles through the Open Access initiative (see <http://www.doaj.org/>). Although the majority of Open Access journals are biomedical in nature (e.g. <http://www.biomedcentral.com>).



com) the subject scopes of OA journals range from music to water pollution. It is likely, therefore, that those Sea Grant reprints from OA journals need not be excluded from digitization for the NSGL database. Simpler yet, a link between the abstract record and the full-text on the OA publishers' Web sites can be included in the database. If a definitive list of Open Access journals can be developed, it can be matched against the NSGL database, and Web links can be then added to individual abstract records. A rudimentary list of such journals is attached (Open Access Journals.xls). Although not yet reviewed, it should provide a reasonable framework upon which to build the definitive list.

- ii. **Partial-Access Journals:** Embargoed journals represent other opportunities for full-text access. Although the primary publishers of these journals retain the copyright, back issues are freely available and links to these full-text documents can be included in the NSGL database. *Journal of Biological Chemistry* (<http://www.jbc.org>) and the journals published by the American Society for Microbiology (<http://journals.ams.org>) are a few examples of journals that become freely accessible after several months.
- iii. **Permissions from Copyright Holders:** Even journals which never become freely available should not be entirely discounted for digitization. Although authors typically transfer copyright to the publisher, it is possible to amend the copyright transfer document to include a paragraph stipulating alternative use. For example, authors request that they be able to display their publications on their own Web sites, or otherwise provide their documents in ways that could contravene the text of the original copyright transfer statement. If the National Sea Grant Office could provide a carefully crafted paragraph that Sea Grant authors could employ, further reprints may become available in the database. Examples of such paragraphs are available from the library community.

## E. NSGL Outreach

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel strongly encourages NSGL staff to continue their outreach efforts and to work to develop new and innovative ways to promote a culture of engagement.*

The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that outreach is a key function of NSGL. The information resources that are available through the NSGL can provide critical information to a wide array of constituencies, including academia, government, media, non-governmental organizations, Federal-State-Local governments, military, and business and industry. The NSGL directly connects the work of Sea Grant to the user and the Library and Abstracts Panel believes that if the NSGL did not exist, something like it would need to be created. As noted earlier, it is infinitely easier for users to use the NSGL than to scan the different programs for Sea Grant information, materials, products and services. Thus, an effective NSGL enhances the ability of Sea Grant to accomplish its outreach mission. However, without the NSGL working in concert with the Programs, and the central office on effective outreach strategies, and without the NSGL continuously renewing its own well-defined and active outreach effort, Sea Grant's value will not be recognized or appreciated and its resources will go under-utilized by the public. The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the NSGL has proven to be of significant utility to the Programs in terms of tracking trends, publication usage and resource use. Outreach to the Programs must continue as the proliferation of information grows and new and non-traditional audiences become regular users of NSGL resources.

During the visit of the Library and Abstracts Panel to the NSGL, it became readily apparent that NSGL staff considers outreach to be essential to its mission and devotes a significant amount of time and effort to it. NSGL described five main outreach activities: 1) conference exhibits; 2) bookmark promotion; 3) recent acquisition listings; 4) e-mail marketing; and, 5) website link requests.

*Recommendation: The NSGL staff should devote more resources to attending and participating in relevant conferences and meetings, including those important for professional development and continuing education.*



The Advisory Panel fully appreciates the budget constraints and limited resources of NSGL and determining priorities under such conditions presents significant challenges. However, the NSGL devotes less than \$2,000 annually to staff travel for representation at important conferences and meetings, and most of those are local and regional. It appears that only a few of the many important meetings relevant to Sea Grant have representation from the NSGL. It is the Panel's view that a physical presence has significant implications for NSGL visibility and outreach. Such visibility enhances understanding of the value of the NSGL and affords the NSGL the opportunity to make important inroads into both primary and secondary constituencies, thereby building a larger potential demand pool for its products and services. Attending meetings of key professional societies such as the National Marine Educators Association, the National Science Teachers Association, the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography, the American Geophysical Union and others would enable the NSGL to demonstrate how the Library could directly serve the interests of these organizations' membership. Similarly, the Library and Abstracts Panel also encourages NSGL staff to attend workshops, conferences and other meetings with relevance to library science management for professional development and continuing education. It appears to the Library and Abstracts Panel that professional development has been overlooked and no provision has been made for it. But, it will prove vital as trends in library science and technology evolve. Ultimately, professional development provides essential tools and knowledge for the NSGL staff to serve its community more effectively. The importance of professional development and continuing education will be discussed in more detail later in this report.

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel urges NSGL to be vigilant in maintaining a balance of outreach among the full educational spectrum, including formal and informal education, K-12, undergraduate, graduate, and post graduate.*

The Land-Grant community has undergone a renewal of its outreach and public service mission and has broadened the scope of activities in this area. The term "engagement" now more correctly characterizes how major public universities relate to their communities. As part of the campus fabric, Sea Grant too has been redefining its relationship to its community of users. Sea Grant has long been involved in serving multiple educational functions and audiences, and the NSGL is now working to reinforce these endeavors. It is clear that graduate schools use the NSGL fairly extensively as a resource already, and significant inroads have been made at the undergraduate level. While K-12 is an important part of the NSGL outreach portfolio, the sheer size of the K-12 market invites a more vibrant program of outreach for this audience. The NSGL is encouraged to develop strategies to build visibility among the K-12 clientele, and to serve a growing need for informal education for a variety of general public audiences. The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the Bookmark Program has proven to be a highly successful way for NSGL to reach a variety of audiences, especially K-12, and should be continued. The Library and Abstracts Panel also believes that the NSGL should increase Search Engine visibility and construct a standard web page with "click here for more information" to make it more user-friendly for the non-scientist. Finally, the Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the NSGL should strive for visibility in magazine articles of professional societies and related organizations. Exposure of NSGL in the newsletters, journals, magazines and other publications of professional societies would facilitate important links to the larger scientific research community not familiar with the NSGL or the value of Sea Grant.

## **F. NSGL Budget: Addition/Modification of Line Items**

### **i. Technology**

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel urges that future NSGL budgets include sufficient allocations for standard technology upgrades.*

The current NSGL budget format is not sufficiently detailed or complete, particularly with respect to funds needed to maintain existing technology. Periodic replacement of desktop computers, scanners, copiers and other hardware essential to NSGL operations must be reflected in the budget. It is not a question



of “if,” but ‘when’ technology needs to be replaced. Standard depreciation estimates must be included (if possible) so that technology can be replaced on a regular schedule without the need for special, *ad hoc* funding requests. Moreover, formal maintenance agreements should be considered particularly for servers because the invaluable – and currently inexpensive – support from URI technology staff may not be as forthcoming in future years. In addition, software upgrades are at least as important as those for hardware and should also be allocated a separate line item in the budget.

## ii. Travel

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel encourages NSGL staff to allocate more resources for travel.*

Communication is critical to the success of the NSGL operation, and travel is essential to communication. The current low level of funding for travel does not allow the NSGL staff to travel much beyond their own region. As representatives of the *National* Sea Grant Library, funding should allow travel to several professional meetings held throughout the US, and a significant increase in funding is therefore appropriate (e.g. digital library meetings, NMEA or NSTA meetings, etc.).

## iii. Professional Development

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel encourages NSGL staff to factor professional development and continuing education activities into its budget.*

The NSGL is a highly technological endeavor, with reliance on Web servers, database development, and a general technical knowledge relevant to digital libraries. Although the NSGL is fortunate – at present – to be in close proximity to URI computer support personnel, it would be extremely useful if the current NSGL staff could develop a level of technical expertise that would facilitate their work, including digital library expertise. A good working knowledge of PDF document structures would be a real asset, and specific knowledge of programs like Acrobat and Dreamweaver would be useful.

## IV. Sea Grant Abstracts Service

### A. No Print Product as Currently Designed

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that there isn't a continuing need for Sea Grant Abstracts in our contemporary information environment.*

SG Abstracts tries to perform two roles, that of pointer to full-text publications and, secondly, as promoter of the Sea Grant program. Neither is done well. A key point is that linking to online documents is best handled in an electronic medium, and online full text is becoming an increasingly important form of publication. A print **Sea Grant Abstracts** is an inefficient pointer to the full text of Sea Grant publications, with the necessity for users to type in long URLs. Ejournal article URLs are not included in **Sea Grant Abstracts**, though many users do have access to ejournals (since a significant number of recipients of **Sea Grant Abstracts** are in the academic environment). These journal article URLs are frequently too long and would be unwieldy to publish in print. Even those without site-licensed access can sometimes purchase access on demand to specific articles at a publisher's ejournal site (if they want them more quickly than obtaining them from a program or the NSGL).

The abstracts in the **Sea Grant Abstracts** are written towards a layman level. This editorial effort saves critical space in a print publication, but information of value to many readers is removed in the process. This reduction in abstract content is particularly unfortunate for the journal article reprints. Academic researchers may pass over the ineffectual summaries, and the general public may be directed to highly technical full text that they would not be able to comprehend. The online medium is not constrained economically like the print medium as to the length of abstracts and is better suited than print for presenting journal article abstracts of Sea Grant sponsored research. Journal article reprints comprise almost half of Sea Grant publications, and their primary readership is expected to be the academic/research community, who comprise many of the readers in the **Sea Grant Abstracts** mailing list. In university settings, students deem the presence of journal article abstracts critically important in their use of library databases, and it is expected that non-university readers would find them useful as well. The Library and



Abstracts Panel believes that a greatly trimmed down journal article abstract isn't helpful to academics and perhaps misleads the general reader about the reading level of such materials if a general reader goes on to obtain them from a program or the NSGL. Complete journal article abstracts are an excellent screening mechanism before going to the effort of getting the article reprints from a program or NSGL. The general reader should be able to digest a complete journal article abstract if they intend to obtain the journal article reprint itself from a program or NSGL. Complete journal article abstracts are frequently all a reader needs in evaluating the research findings published in a journal article, particularly a general reader who perhaps doesn't want to read scientific journal articles in their entirety.

The Library and Abstracts Panel did not feel that utility and value to purported users was demonstrated adequately to the Panel, either through the Exploratory Users Poll or through testimony. The Library and Abstracts Panel finds that the market for **Sea Grant Abstracts** is clearly not the university and academic environment, which the Panel knows from their own experience and from the testimony of two of those interviewed during our site visit. The academic and research environment uses other means to keep up with the literature, and abstracting and indexing print publications like **Sea Grant Abstracts** have vanished almost entirely from academic library reference collections as their users have shifted to using web versions of same. Looking at **Sea Grant Abstracts** Exploratory Users Poll for Spring 2003, the survey indicates a substantially stronger response from the research and academic community than from the non-research/industry/education community, whom the Library and Abstracts Panel considers to be the remaining possible market for **Sea Grant Abstracts**.

The **Sea Grant Abstracts** requires the interested information seeker to mail a request form printed inside **Sea Grant Abstracts** to order publications and we have not been shown evidence that this has been well utilized. Certainly the linking of users directly to the programs for ordering program publications can happen more effectively online.

The Library and Abstracts Panel is not convinced that **Sea Grant Abstracts** is an effective publicity piece given its high cost. It may well alert people to publications from programs outside their geographic area, but we believe that this can be affected through other channels and mechanisms, depending on the target audience.

*Recommendation: With the discontinuation of the publication of **Sea Grant Abstracts**, the Library and Abstracts Panel recommends that funding be allocated to the NSGL for programmer needs to improve the NSGL database and site:*

- To offer electronic submission forms for users to sign up to receive Sea Grant publication alerts via email in specific subject areas of interest. This would be particularly useful for users wishing to screen new Sea Grant publications in broad subject areas like "aquaculture and hatcheries" or "education and training" or "seafood science, technology, industry," or even more specific subject areas with the introduction of more specific subject indexing to NSGL records (see below). Users should be able to include or exclude specific formats. For example, a librarian monitoring Sea Grant publications for acquisition into a library collection would exclude journal article reprints from an alert.
- To offer electronic publication submission to NSGL from Programs. A web form should be developed for document submission, which would allow NSGL to capture citation/abstract text directly from the Programs, thereby saving NSGL on keyboarding. The web form would include electronic document uploading, allowed in multiple formats (PDF, DOC, RTF), since NSGL can convert them to PDF if the Program is maintaining them in house in another format. This form would be used if a Program were submitting only paper copies, since its intent is to gather the citation/abstract directly from the Programs, which can copy/paste such information from their own systems. The Program would print a publication submission form after entering the information into the submission form so that the Program can send the form along with its print copies going to NSGL.
- Develop pre-defined subject search URLs for broad subject headings, and also specific subject headings when indexing is revamped (see below). Pre-defined subject searching is useful for incorporation into Sea Grant materials, i.e. Theme Team pages, and for targeting specific audience



interests, i.e., seafood industry, shrimp aquaculture.

## **B. Enhancement of NSGL Database**

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel suggests a series of straightforward modifications of NSGL database and web site design.*

The extraordinary value of the online Sea Grant database, reflected in the geometric increase in usage statistics (e.g. number of downloads per month), can be greatly enhanced by a number of series of clear-cut and fairly basic changes. Some of the time, effort and budget currently targeted towards the SG Abstracts print product, can be reallocated to development of the online NSGL database. Regardless of whether or not funds can be shifted, the online presence and functionality of the current database must be changed to ensure a professional look and compliance with SG guidelines for Web site development.

Web surfers and advanced database searchers alike expect relatively sophisticated Web sites, a quality not evinced by NSGL's current online presence. The NSGL online database does not currently provide an optimal environment for searching. Search results are formatted without regard to the most efficient use of screen display (the "real estate"), and searching is not intuitive or advanced. To sum up, it is not immediately clear to those visiting the NSGL Web site, that this site represents a *National* program. The look and feel of the database must become more professional, aesthetic, and incorporate the guidelines developed and adopted for Sea Grant websites. Although individual SG Web sites have unique aspects, all follow established guidelines. In addition, the site must adopt the layout and design of the regional Sea Grant sites so it will have the same common look for continuity and recognition as part of the national Sea Grant network. Beyond adoption of the guidelines, graphic designers should be employed to assist with NSGL Web site design. Current relationships with Web masters and graphic artists at other SG offices should be exploited (e.g., RI Sea Grant re. bookmark graphics).

As previously mentioned, abstracted records must have a searchable Web-searchable analogue (i.e. separate Web pages for each record) so that Google or other standard Web search engines can index individual SG publications. This avoids the relegation of SG material to the "invisible Web," hidden from incoming Google or other search engine users within NSGL's database. However, search functionality must also be improved within the NSGL database itself. Such improvement can be made by designing advanced search features and modifying the structure of the abstract records. "Browsability" could be improved, and saved searches, e-mail alerts, and user-defined reports are just a few of the features that NSGL could consider for inclusion. More data elements can be captured and included in abstract records (e.g., URLs of the Sea Grant office; URLs of the publishers' web sites). The ability to refine and build accurate searches, however, will depend largely on the addition of original abstracts rather than the current short summaries.

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that many of the current summaries in the backfile can be replaced with original abstracts obtained from the ASFA database, or from publishers' Web sites which often display abstracts at no cost (e.g., Elsevier Science publications via <http://www.sciencedirect.com>).*

The addition of unaltered author abstracts or promotional summaries from the SG offices would provide much more detailed text that would provide a foundation for searchers to retrieve results. An author abstract within a research article is typically composed of 200-300 carefully chosen words. As noted earlier, abstracts provided by the WHDB are designed to be significantly truncated and use lay language, unsuitable for effective search retrieval on specific aspects.

The use of verbatim author abstracts would eliminate the need for creating abstracts, and the electronic submission of these summaries would eliminate keyboarding. This works best if each Program provides abstracts for all their publications. NSGL can chase down abstracts later if necessary. However work effort is saved if the Programs submit abstracts for their publications, since programs can obtain these directly from their authors. It is recognized that compliance with the SG submission rules can be ensured by communicating with SG personnel at the Program offices who can best enforce SG policies. Specifically, e-mail should be sent to the Program Communicator if abstracts are not forthcoming. If



this does not produce an abstract within a suitable period, the Communicator would receive a copy of a second request, this time sent to the Program Director. Both would receive a copy of the third request if the abstract were still not forthcoming, a request sent directly to the NSG Program Officer. The NSGO can provide the appropriate language for these e-mails. This enforcement protocol need not be limited to the provision of abstracts, but be expanded to any contravention of the submission guidelines agreed to by all Program offices.

Improved "searchability" and "retrievability" could be garnered through the addition of indexing terms to each NSGL record. At present, the broad subject category indexing added to the print SG Abstracts product does not make it into the online NSGL database. These broad subject headings would improve the NSGL database, enhancing access to collections of Sea Grant materials in subject areas like "aquaculture and hatcheries." Indexing – the addition of 5-10 descriptive words or phrases from a controlled vocabulary – could be added to the current database through a combination of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA) downloads and manual indexing by NSGL staff from the ASFA Thesaurus. The current publisher of ASFA (CSA; <http://www.csa.com>) has indicated this would be permissible, and a letter from NSGL to the publisher (specifically the VP of Editorial) requesting permission to include ASFA indexing in NSGL database records is all that would be required. It is expected that NSGL staff would be able to do their own indexing at some point, using the freely available ASFA thesaurus ([http://www4.fao.org/asfa/nons\\_en.htm](http://www4.fao.org/asfa/nons_en.htm)).

A further benefit to the elimination of the WHDB element and the overall change in workflow will be improved timeliness of the NSGL database. Program offices will reduce the time taken to send publications to NSGL, and with the elimination of shipping and abstract creation, the average time to database inclusion can be reduced from the current 1-2 years, to less than 1 year.

It is important to stress that many of the suggested changes to current procedures represent a reallocation of current NSGL duties rather than additional duties. Without the need for keyboarding abstracts and packaging/shipping hardcopy publications to WHDB, there will be a significant savings in time at NSGL. This time will be directed towards indexing, classification (the addition of broad subject category codes from the current WHDB list), and general quality control of the database. Retrospective indexing of records not within the ASFA database will take considerable resources, yet this project can take place over several years and be absorbed into the currently available resources.

### C. Publicity Function of Revised Publication

Although the Library and Abstracts Panel is recommending that the published version of the **Sea Grant Abstracts** be terminated or drastically redesigned, there are important questions of marketing, publicity and outreach that need to be addressed if either of these options is ultimately adopted. The Library and Abstracts Panel recognizes that the **Sea Grant Abstracts** has a circulation exceeding 6,000 customers, and that its reach is much greater when considering copies are often sent to offices where it can be viewed by many others. The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the publicity function of the *Abstracts* can be undertaken and actually enhanced by the NSGL. A hand-held, visual publication has certain distinct advantages over online publications, but as competition for resources becomes more intense different techniques should be developed to achieve comparable, if not better, results.

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the NSGL needs to reassess its capability to market the Sea Grant success stories and develop a variety of strategies, in consultation with the advisory board (discussed above), for advancing knowledge and information about the work of the Programs.*

For the NSGL to be truly effective in assuming the publicity and marketing function of the **Sea Grant Abstracts**, the theme teams, communicators, educators, and extension teams must work more closely with the Library. For example, the Library and Abstracts Panel was chagrined that there was no discussion of the NSGL in the Sea Grant Biennial Report, 2000-2001, the latest copy that was provided to the Panel. It is hoped that the NSGL will be featured and its important functions highlighted in the next Biennial Report. The Panel also believes that the NSGL Web site should be included in all Sea Grant publications and prominently displayed on the Programs' and National Office's Web sites. The



NSGL could have a page for each theme team with a link to a database search. The networks' various talents and initiatives should be better coordinated and efforts need to be focused into building NSGL into network one pagers, current links and research promotion. The NSGL Advisory Board should take the leadership and responsibility to ensure that this is happening and that the message is getting out to representative groups and constituencies.

*Recommendation: The Advisory Panel strongly recommends that graphics design expertise be used to develop a visually enhanced, user-friendly, and informative website with clear and distinct SG identity, and that the Sea Grant regional web layout and design be used for common look continuity.*

Improved Web site design is discussed more extensively elsewhere in this report. However, to the extent that an exceptional Web site encourages use and serves as a marketing tool, there is merit in emphasizing this issue during the discussion on publicity. To accomplish the task of designing a more attractive and useable Web site, the NSGL should seek guidance from the Web masters group and communicators in retrofitting and re-designing of pages. The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that the current web site is cumbersome, confusing, with little apparent connection to Sea Grant or the Programs. A casual or lay user would have little understanding of the NSGL or Sea Grant from an initial approach to the NSGL web site. This needs to be corrected so that the Web site invites and enhances curiosity about Sea Grant and in a sense "propels" knowledge about the successes and activities of the various Programs.

#### **D. Conditions Under Which Printing of Sea Grant Abstracts Would Continue**

*Recommendation: The Library and Abstracts Panel believes that if it is decided to continue print versions of **Sea Grant Abstracts** several fundamental changes should occur, especially in improved workflow and efficiency.*

Woods Hole Data Base, Inc., (WHDB) receives weekly packages with copies of each publication received by NSGL during that week. One of the WHBD staff makes a photocopy of the pertinent parts of the document and assigned a document number to the publication. A freelance writer or someone in house combines parts of the document to create an abstract. The material may be pulled from different sections of the publication by highlighting the photocopied pages or written long hand by the abstractor. The goal is to try to explain the publication in a few sentences using language understandable by the lay public.

After the abstract has been extracted from the publication or written, it assigned to a classification code based on whom the ultimate audience of the item as determined by the WHBD staff based on their experience with Sea Grant publications. The abstracts in an edition are organized by the text versions of the classification codes. A descriptive headline is written a similar manner.

The marked up copy is mailed back to NSGL, which types the information into its database along with extra information (e.g., project number, grant number) that is not used by WHDB. NSGL mails word processing versions of the material provided by WHBD back to WHBD to be used in the layout and indexing of the issue of **Sea Grant Abstracts** to which the publication will be included. Using Ventura Publishing software, the text is laid out electronically with space left for artwork. Paste-up copy is created using printed output from the publishing software and waxed on illustrations. The camera-ready copy is sent to a local printer, which sends the documents to the mail house and WHDB for distribution using the mailing list that is manually maintained by WHDB.

There are several ways that this workflow can be improved:

- Use electronic exchange of material by email or the web whenever possible (e.g., exchange of word processing files, and PDFs)
- The abstractor should create a word processing file (or augment/modify the file provided by NSGL) when writing the abstract.
- Use desktop publishing software, such as Quark or Adobe PageMaker, to create each edition of **Sea Grant Abstracts**, from which PDFs can be easily created.



- Create high-quality digitized versions of the illustrations so they may be incorporated into the edition created by the desktop publishing software. This digitization could be done by WHDB as needed or in bulk by contract with a company that provides such services.
- Bid out the printing of **Sea Grant Abstracts** to any of a number of printing houses that use current desktop publishing and print technology.
- Develop an online way to allow Sea Grant programs to easily update their portion of the mailing list. This should also be adapted in a way that allows one to subscribe to **Sea Grant Abstracts** (as well as allow one to change subscription information or unsubscribe).
- Email notification should be used to alert subscribers to the availability of a new edition on the web (or on the way by mail). This will provide a secondary way for subscribers to change their subscription information or unsubscribe.
- Indexing terms which are only added to the print SG Abstracts, must be made available to the Online version. These terms should accompany the abstract that is sent back to NSGL from WHDB.

The implementation of these recommendations will decrease the cost per issue of **Sea Grant Abstracts**. It will eliminate the time spent (re)keying in information about a publication as well as reduce the time and cost involved in transferring material between NSGL and WHDB.

### **E. Closing Thoughts**

It should be noted that Sea Grant was created over 35 years ago to be the analog to the Land Grant network. While caution must be exercised in making comparisons between the two programs for obvious reasons, most relating to the long and rich Land Grant history, it should be the goal of Sea Grant to enjoy the same reputation for products and services by its various user communities as the Land Grant community has. For this to happen, the user communities need to know much more about what Sea Grant actually does and the full range of its capabilities, from research to education to outreach. The NSGL is an essential component of the Sea Grant network and must have a higher profile both internally and in building bridges to user communities. Additionally, as Sea Grant continues expand its work into new areas and tries to reach additional audiences, the NSGL will be a critical element as a face of Sea Grant. Sea Grant has demonstrated that it is more than just a coastal program. It is a program that addresses needs of the entire nation, including non-coastal areas. Its work on seafood safety and severe storms, for example, readily show the value of Sea Grant to people across the country and from all walks of life. Further, as increasingly complex environmental problems require more multi-disciplinary responses, Sea Grant's role will become more important. The fact that most Sea Grant Colleges are located on the campus of Land-Grant institutions — or closely linked to them — and very much a part of the Land-Grant culture of discovery, learning, and engagement, accentuates the potential of Sea Grant to become part of a seamless academic asset addressing national needs. It is the view of the Library and Abstracts Panel that Sea Grant is of undeniable relevance to the nation, and that a first-rate, highly respected and well-connected library service will contribute substantially to Sea Grant's continued quest for excellence in all dimensions.

### **Technical Panel Biographies**

#### **Kerry Bolognese (chair)**

Kerry D. Bolognese joined the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges in 1993, as Assistant Director for Federal Relations in the areas of environment and natural resources. In September 2003, Mr. Bolognese moved into the position of Director for Federal Relations, Interna-



tional, Marine and Environmental Affairs. From 1984-1992, Bolognese worked on the professional staff for the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and its Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations. Prior to his service on the Committee, Bolognese was the Legislative Director and Press Secretary for U.S. Rep. Gus Yatron (6<sup>th</sup> - PA). Bolognese holds an M.A. in International Affairs from Rutgers - The State University of New Jersey, and a B.A. in Political Science from East Stroudsburg University, P.A., graduating Summa cum Laude.

#### **Peter Brueggeman**

Peter Brueggeman is Director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library at the University of California, San Diego Libraries. Brueggeman manages a library collections budget of \$716,000, and supervises a library operation comprising 10.75 FTE career positions and 3.5 FTE casual positions. Brueggeman has been a lead participant in two grant-funded digital library projects at the UCSD Libraries, focused on historical oceanographic materials in the collections of the SIO Library and its historical archives. Brueggeman is active in the management structure of the UCSD Libraries system, itself a member of the Association of Research Libraries comprising the leading research libraries in North America. The UCSD Libraries comprises eleven separate libraries (one of which is Scripps Library), with services and programs designed to support the academic and programmatic pursuits of the UCSD faculty, students and staff. Brueggeman was appointed as Scripps Library director in 1994 from his previous position as the Scripps Library public services librarian, and started his librarian career as a reference librarian at UCLA Biomedical Library. Brueggeman holds a bachelor's degree in microbiology and a master's degree in library science.

#### **Dr. Craig Emerson**

Craig Emerson joined Cambridge Scientific Abstracts in 1995 and served as Supervising Editor-Aquatic Sciences until 2001 when he became the Vice President-Editorial. Emerson has been a Research Associate for the Joint Global Ocean Flux Study-Canada since 1994. That study is part of JGOFS-Canada at Dalhousie University. In 1994 Emerson was a visiting scientist in China at the Yellow Seas Fisheries Research Institute. From 1990 - 1994 Emerson was a research associate with the Ocean Production Enhancement Network (OPEN). OPEN was part of the Centers of Excellence program funded by the National Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada. Emerson holds a bachelor's and master's of Science in Zoology from the University of Guelph in Ontario, and a Ph.D. in Oceanography from Dalhousie University in Halifax.

#### **Dr. Dan Jacobs**

Dan Jacobs has been associated with Maryland Sea Grant for more than 20 years — first as a trainee and Knauss Fellow, followed by employment as the Information Systems Manager and Webmaster. Jacobs was instrumental in the development of Maryland and many other Sea Grant program websites. All 30 programs and the National Sea Grant Office now have a solid web presence through the Sea Grant network. Jacobs holds a bachelor's degree in Wildlife Management from Rutgers University, a master's degree in Wildlife Management, with a minor in Statistics, from Frostburg University, and a Ph.D. in Environmental Science, also with a minor in Statistics, from the University of Maryland.



# **Sea Grant National Media Relations Program**

## **Technical Review Panel Report**

**March, 2004**

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## VIII. Conclusion

### I. Executive Summary

The Sea Grant (SG) National Media Relations Program (NMRP) Technical Review Panel was convened in Washington, D.C., on March 15-17, 2004.

The Technical Review Panel was charged with answering the following four questions:

- 1) Does the National Sea Grant College Program need a media relations office?
- 2) If yes, make recommendations for its purpose and mission
- 3) Make recommendations for management, location, and staffing of the office.
- 4) Are there specific lessons that can be learned from the experience of the previous NMRP?

In order to respond to these questions, the Technical Review Panel heard from a wide variety of interviewees who shared perspectives on these questions. Interviewees included: representatives from the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO), the Sea Grant network, including designees from the Educators, Communicators, and Extension Assembly, the former National Media Relations Project staff, Sea Grant Directors, current and past Sea Grant Association (SGA) External Affairs directors, representatives familiar with information needs on Capitol Hill, media users, media producers, journalists, NOAA Public Affairs, and reporters.

The Panel's specific recommendations are as follows:

- *The National Media Relations Program function should continue.*
- *Some structural changes should be made to the NMRP (see recommendations noted elsewhere in each section).*
- *The guidelines governing the NMRP should be revised with the establishment of a much smaller advisory panel and a designated representative for supervision and oversight of the media relations workforce.*
- *The relationship between advocacy (SGA staff) and the media relations incumbent needs to be clearly defined and regularly reviewed.*
- *The relationship between the media relations office and the NSGO needs to be clarified and understood by all involved.*
- *Two full-time positions are required to carry out the functions of a National Media Relations Program – a National Media Relations Director and a Media Relations Specialist.*
- *Advertise both positions in:*

*Washington Post*

*Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Job Center (web)*

*National Association of Science Writers (NASW) – web and print*

*Chronicle of Higher Education*

*Publisher's Weekly*

*Editor & Publisher*

*Also include other candidate search avenues:*

*Enlist the Sea Grant Network/Communicators' Working Group to identify candidates*

- *A Search Committee of no more than five (5) members. This would consist of three (3) members from the Sea Grant Network, a science journalist, and a Director of Communications of a scientific society, based in the D.C. area. In addition, candidate(s) could also be scheduled to meet with select NOAA and Sea Grant staff with whom they could logically be expected to interact.*
- *The Sea Grant National Media Relations Office and Program should be located in Washington, D.C., to capitalize on the many national media outlets based there as well as the wealth of communications opportunities and supporting resources available in the nation's capital.*



- *The program should be established through a grant or contract to a neutral organization, one philosophically aligned to Sea Grant and incorporating an academic or scientific mission. The Technical Review Panel specifically identified the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), or the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education (CORE) as possibilities.*
- *The grant/contract should be tied to the Sea Grant PAT cycle (i.e., four years), after which a comprehensive program performance review would be conducted.*
- *The NMRP should continue to be located in Washington, D.C.*

## **II. Background and Introduction**

The Sea Grant (SG) National Media Relations Program (NMRP) Technical Review Panel was convened in Washington, D.C., on March 15-17, 2004.

Technical Review Panel members consisted of:

### **Kerry Bolognese (chair)**

Director, Federal Relations, National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), Washington, D.C.

Kerry D. Bolognese joined the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges in 1993, as Assistant Director for Federal Relations in the areas of environment and natural resources. In September 2003, Bolognese moved into the position of Director for Federal Relations, International, Marine and Environmental Affairs. From 1984-1992, Bolognese worked on the professional staff for the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and its Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations. Prior to his service on the Committee, Bolognese was the Legislative Director and Press Secretary for U.S. Rep. Gus Yatron (6<sup>th</sup> - PA). Mr. Bolognese holds an M.A. in International Affairs from Rutgers - The State University of New Jersey, and a B.A. in Political Science from East Stroudsburg University, P.A., graduating Summa cum Laude.

### **Lori Arguelles**

Executive Director, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Silver Spring, MD

Lori Arguelles has more than 15 years of experience in public relations, government relations, and executive management. Her broad portfolio serves to enhance her current position as Executive Director of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation—the non-profit, private sector partner to the federally managed National Marine Sanctuary Program.

Previously, Arguelles served as Director of Communications for Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). Prior to her work with GSUSA, Arguelles served as Director of Public and Constituent Affairs for the U.S. Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Starting her professional career as a radio reporter, Arguelles has worked for several local and regional outlets, as well as the NBC/Mutual radio network in Washington, D.C. Her experience as anchor, reporter, and producer provides her with a unique perspective on effective media outreach. Arguelles also has inside knowledge of the workings of Capitol Hill, having served as press secretary for two members of Congress.

Arguelles earned her undergraduate degree in broadcast journalism and political science from Northern Arizona University and her master's degree in public communication from American University.

### **Lynne Friedman**

Communications Consultant, Friedmann Communications, Solana Beach, CA.

Lynne Friedmann is a public relations consultant and freelance writer with a specialty in science communications. Her clients include science-based companies, non-profit research institutions, and scientific professional associations. With training in science and journalism, Friedmann's career spans 20 years and includes PR agency, university public information, consulting, and freelance writing. Friedmann has assumed leadership positions in a number of professional organizations including the National



Association of Science Writers, Athena Program for Women Executives in Technology, Association for Women in Science, and the Public Relations Society of America where she is an Accredited Public Relations (APR) practitioner.

Friedmann holds a bachelor's degree in journalism with a minor in biology from California State University, Long Beach. An award-winning professional, she was named a "Woman Who Means Business" by the *San Diego Business Journal* in 1999. She is an AWIS Fellow and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

### **Ryck Lydecker**

Assistant Vice President of State Affairs and Associate Editor for *BoatU.S. Magazine*, Boat U.S., Alexandria, Virginia

Ryck Lydecker is Associate Editor of *Boat U.S. Magazine*, covering boating, fisheries, environment, public policy and marine resource issues. Lydecker represents recreational boaters on the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (Dept. of Interior/U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) and serves on the Recreation Activities Committee of the federal Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. He is on the Board of Directors of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Association and is a member of the National Sea Scouting Committee.

As a freelance writer Lydecker has written about boating, fisheries and maritime issues for consumer magazines, trade publications and newspapers for over 20 years. He began his writing career in Duluth, Minn., and served as a Great Lakes correspondent for a number of trade and consumer publications in the maritime field.

Lydecker has served as Communications Manager for the University of Minnesota Sea Grant Program and was selected for a three-year assignment to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as Communications Director for the National Sea Grant College Program in Washington, D.C.

Lydecker is a native of Englewood, N.J., where he grew up fishing and boating on the Hudson River, Long Island Sound and at the Jersey shore. As a young man, he sailed around the world in the crew of a Danish merchant vessel resupplying stations in the Antarctic and Greenland.

The Technical Review Panel was charged with answering the following four questions:

- 1) Does the National Sea Grant College Program need a media relations office?
- 2) If yes, make recommendations for its purpose and mission
- 3) Make recommendations for management, location, and staffing of the office.
- 4) Are there specific lessons that can be learned from the experience of the previous NMRP?

In order to respond to these questions, the Technical Review Panel heard from a wide variety of interviewees who shared perspectives on these questions. Interviewees included: representatives from the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO), the Sea Grant network, including designees from the Educators, Communicators, and Extension Assembly, the former National Media Relations Project staff, Sea Grant Directors, current and past Sea Grant Association (SGA) External Affairs directors, representatives familiar with information needs on Capital Hill, Media Users, Media Producers, Journalists, NOAA Public Affairs, and reporters.

### **III. Summary of Interview Sessions**

Although they represented a wide variety of different viewpoints, the interviewees all agreed that a National Media Relations Office function is a valuable asset to the Sea Grant network. And while several interviewees noted potential areas of concern, all believed that with appropriate adjustments to structure or scope, the NMRP should continue. The Technical Review Panel spent a great deal of time and effort evaluating the interviewees specific concerns regarding structure, budget, and the ability of the Sea Grant network to appropriately utilize such a function.

The Technical Review Panel noted that some interviewees had a more direct connection to the NMRP as direct users or "customers" of that function, including the reporters that were part of the interview



process. All of the reporters indicated that the NMRP was of significant benefit to them and that the position had provided valuable assistance in connecting them with Sea Grant experts around the country on both breaking news stories as well as more evergreen topics. All of the reporters were complimentary of the incumbent's knowledge and understanding of their needs.

Other users of the information created and/or provided by the NMRP incumbent included Sea Grant Directors, Sea Grant Association Directors (past and present) and NOAA staff, including representatives of public affairs. Although not end users, in the same way as the media, nearly all indicated a significant interest in, and great benefit from the materials (articles, tip sheets etc.) that were generated by the NMRP. By the nature of their involvement, these individuals were better poised to give insight into the structure of a successful NMRP as it relates to the NSGO, SGA and SG Directors and programs individually. Thus, it is not surprising that any issues that arose came from these voices as opposed to those of reporters, to whom these structural issues were opaque.

The concerns that were expressed from these secondary audiences centered primarily on the logistics of where and how the function was managed. Much discussion took place about the value of having the NMRP as a separate and independent function that had autonomy from both the constraints of the NSGO and/or NOAA Public Affairs, as well as the potential limits in focus of the SGA, whose primary responsibility is advocacy for Sea Grant programs with an ultimate eye on funding. Other sections of this report will detail findings and recommendations of the Technical Review Panel.

One additional primary concern that continually surfaced was the need for a definition not only of the scope of work for this position (see Qualifications section), but the need to define some key terms such as communications, communication strategy and media relations.

#### **IV. What is Media Relations?**

In the view of the Technical Review Panel, media relations is a critical component of any successful strategic communications plan/activity. It is, however, only one component of a much larger activity. For the purposes of applying abstract thoughts to the specific Sea Grant situation, the Technical Review Panel recommends using the Wittman Report as a frame of reference. In that report a wide variety of audiences are targeted within a strategic communications plan. Five goals are identified including:

- 1) Excelling in Communications Capability
- 2) Building NOAA Partnerships
- 3) Strengthening NGO Alliances
- 4) Maintaining Congressional Support
- 5) Engaging the Executive Branch

The plan takes a holistic look at the entire scope of audiences to whom key messages about Sea Grant need to be communicated. While the media are not explicitly identified by name in any of the sectional titles, it is clearly implied in the first category, and in fact work with the national media can help support and validate efforts in the remaining four categories.

The topics of communications and media relations have long been a focal point for the Sea Grant community, which first tackled this issue in 1991. Much has been written on this topic, and past documents point out explicit definitions of media relations, and perhaps the best brief description of this activity is to be an "information broker." (Strategic National Sea Grant Communications Plan, page 9). A media relations function is designed to leverage mass media vehicles such as newspapers, radio and TV outlets, and web sites as a bridge to the general public as well as other key audiences. Thus, as a result of circulation numbers, viewership, and listenership, there exists the potential to reach and influence mass numbers of individuals through a targeted effort. On a very basic level it's the difference between using a community newsletter or email to inform interested parties of an issue as opposed to knocking on individual doors or calling people's homes with the news. The collective media (papers, magazines, TV, radio, web sites) serve this function on a much larger scale. Thus, with a relatively small but greatly targeted effort, there is a significant informational impact.

Journalists and media outlets are the means to an end—that end being to inform the public about Sea



Grant messages and stories. The “public” at large is a huge audience that deserves to be more narrowly refined, so the Technical Review Panel suggests that key segments of the “public” include those identified in the Wittman Report, including Members of Congress, NGO’s and other constituencies, as well as NOAA and Administration officials. While the NMRP might not have direct contact with any of these secondary audiences, the fruits of their labors with their primary audience—national news media—can and should be utilized by others, such as NSGO and SGA, to communicate with these secondary audiences.

Based on the significant endorsements of the wide variety of interviewees, as well as drawing from its own expertise, the Technical Review Panel makes the following overarching recommendations:

**Recommendation:** *The National Media Relations Program function should continue.*

**Recommendation:** *Some structural changes should be made to the NMRP (see recommendations noted elsewhere in each section)*

The Technical Review Panel makes its recommendation recognizing that a media relations function cannot be truly effective unless it operates in the context of a larger strategic communications environment. The Technical Review Panel recognizes that such a strategic structure is embodied in the Wittman Report and presumes that all interested parties, including NSGO, SGA, and SG Directors embrace, and will to their fullest ability enact, the recommendations of that report. The panel notes that over time (the past 10 years) the NSGO in particular has strengthened its communications planning and execution capabilities, and presumes that the NMRP, while remaining a separate and independent voice, will have the benefit of working closely with the NSGO staff and will not have to duplicate any of their efforts.

Specifically, the Technical Review Panel endorses the following goals and objectives of the NMRP:

**Goals:**

- The NMRP will make a significant contribution to improving the understanding of scientific issues by the news media.
- The NMRP will improve the Sea Grant’s network’s outreach to the general public through the news media at national levels.
- The NMRP will leverage national media to assist in increasing the visibility of the Sea Grant networks’ programs, issues and experts.
- The NMRP will provide support services and advice designed to improve the network’s overall news media relations skills and effectiveness.

**Objectives:**

- Increase public awareness of scientific issues in the Sea Grant agenda by working with print, radio, TV, and web based media outlets.
- Improve visibility of Sea Grant by working with news media to encourage access to Sea Grant scientists and experts.
- Improve understanding within the network of media relations and communication.
- Monitor opportunities and make recommendations opportunistically.

**V. Governance and Structure**

**Recommendation:** *The guidelines governing the NMRP should be revised with the establishment of a much smaller advisory panel and a designated representative for supervision and oversight of the media relations workforce.*

One of the most glaring weaknesses of the media relations effort related to questions of day-to-day supervision. If a structure cannot be created for the media relations program to function effectively, then the value of such an office drops dramatically, and the resources might be better spent on strengthening other parts of the communications network. Most of the interviewees in a position to know, believed that the process of managing the media relations workforce was flawed. The Technical Review Panel



heard a multitude of statements indicating that the advisory committee structure was too large, cumbersome and unwieldy, and susceptible to manipulation and micromanagement by strong personalities on the outside. For a good part of the incumbent's tenure, there was little day-to-day supervision, and little guidance when conflicts emerged among Sea Grant Directors, or their programs, regarding a press event or the release of a press story. The incumbent was in an untenable and unenviable position of making decisions out of his realm of responsibility or stymied by unnecessary indecision on timely, important stories. Questions were also raised regarding conflicts among and between SG Directors and SG staff to use the media relations program for more overt political purposes, which would have subverted the perception of "objectivity" that the incumbent had established with the media. Additional concerns were raised regarding the undue influence and control exercised by the Sea Grant Program at the institution responsible for managing the media relations office grant. This seemed to work to the detriment of the whole because, as we were told, in these cases the individual Sea Grant Program's director felt obliged to assert prerogative, and become de facto chair, with the media relations incumbent giving priority to the Director's Program. The Technical Review Panel heard testimony that the process, established back in 1991, worked reasonably well at first, primarily because of a widely respected and highly capable director who was seen more-or-less as the daily supervisor. When this individual made decisions there was little second-guessing or efforts to undermine them. This individual also gave proper guidance and the necessary support for the incumbent to perform effectively.

Although the Technical Review Panel heard testimony that the strong personalities responsible for some of the tensions are no longer involved in Sea Grant, the current structure remains vulnerable to manipulation. While it is perhaps human nature that ambitious people with leadership abilities assert themselves (which of course is not necessarily a bad development), it would be prudent to craft a set of rules or guidelines that do not invite such opportunities, as the current ones seem to do. The past experience would suggest that a smaller advisory committee, with fewer voices, would be less bureaucratically cumbersome, not subject to as much contention or competition, and probably more likely to manage the program effectively. There seemed to be the recognition that an Advisory Panel of 5 or 6 people representing key parts of the Sea Grant network, including SGA, NSGO, and the SG Communicators, would ensure representation from the major relevant segments. But, it is strongly suggested that the panel members be individuals who speak with authority and not simply figureheads who can't exercise independence as panel members. Additionally, the people on the advisory body must understand the true importance of media relations, as well as its distinction from, and relationship to, advocacy. The guidelines must clearly delineate responsibilities and must be communicated throughout the network to maximize consensus. The Advisory Panel should designate someone to whom the media relations staff reports and ensure someone is authorized and empowered to arbitrate conflicts quickly. The media relations workforce would report to the supervisor on a regular basis, and the supervisor in turn would be responsible for providing periodic reports to the Advisory Panel. The Advisory Panel would meet annually or semi-annually to make corrections as necessary and provide a written report to the full system. The guidelines should also establish clear goals and objectives with benchmarks and performance measures for assessing the media relations office.

**Recommendation:** *The relationship between advocacy (SGA staff) and the media relations incumbent needs to be clearly defined and regularly reviewed.*

The Technical Review Panel heard ample testimony that the relationship between the SGA staff and the media relations incumbent was fraught with problems. Over the years the relationship varied from attempts by SGA staff at overt control and micromanagement to very little contact. There was even the surprising revelation that clippings and news stories generated by the media relations office were rarely used in advocacy to "sell" the accomplishments of the program. While media relations is not advocacy, in order to ensure that the purity of the product is not compromised, the harvest of the media relations office should be available for advocacy efforts to reinforce the value of the Sea Grant Program in real and demonstrable terms.

**Recommendation:** *The relationship between the media relations office and the NSGO needs to be clari-*



*fied and understood by all involved.*

Confusion arose during the interviews regarding the nuances among media relations, public advocacy, public relations, and how they all fit within a communications strategy. Clarity on the responsibilities and functions of the different components of a communications plan, as outlined in the Wittman Report, would enhance the overall effectiveness of the media relations office. We heard from present and past Sea Grant personnel, who had differing perspectives on these issues, and the media relations advisory body should work to make sure that there is a common understanding of the plan and its constituent parts.

## **VI. Qualifications and Skill Set**

**Recommendation:** *Two full-time positions are required to carry out the functions of a National Media Relations Program – a National Media Relations Director and a Media Relations Specialist.*

The consensus of reporters and communications experts interviewed by the Technical Review Panel is that a minimum of two people is needed to create and sustain an effective national media relations effort for the National Sea Grant College Program. Based on the Technical Review Panel's expertise, it is recommended that the National Media Relations Director (NMRD) take the lead in formulating and directing media relations efforts supported by a Media Relations Specialist. Interviewees consistently spoke of the important role the NMRP can and should play as an "information broker" for the media and gave high marks to the incumbent in this regard as a knowledgeable and trustworthy "one-stop" source for information.

The Technical Review Panel heard again and again of the vital need for Sea Grant to speak with one voice in order to deliver a consistent message to key audiences through the tool of the national media. Thus, an important part of the NMRD's charter is to coordinate communication efforts by NSGO, SGA, and NOAA so that messages are consistent and targeted for the greatest impact. As a separate and independent voice, the NMRD is in a unique position to do this (but only with the full cooperation and support of the various entities).

Working with the media is both a proactive and reactive process: proactive in identifying and pitching news stories and reactive in having to respond, often on very short notice, to reporter calls for information. Having a two-person National Media Relations Program ensures that deadlines for opportunistic coverage are met without interruptions to long-range media efforts, the cultivation and maintenance of media contacts, the mining of information from the various Sea Grant programs, education of the Sea Grant Network about key messages/strategies, and the sharing of news coverage results to support other communication outreach efforts within the Network.

### **National Media Relations Director**

**Duties and Responsibilities:** The National Media Relations Director (NMRD) serves as the main point of contact between the Sea Grant network and the national news media. The successful candidate must demonstrate a strong "news sense" in identifying story ideas, the ability to translate scientific information for a lay audience, and practical knowledge of the needs, working environment, and constraints of print, broadcast, and web reporting. The NMRD is responsible for promoting appropriate news coverage of Sea Grant's scientific research as well as its education and outreach activities. The NMRD works directly with the members of the national news media to:

- identify topics in which they have interest.
- answer questions and queries for appropriate information.
- promote Sea Grant and its institutional members' roles in support of the topics or stories identified.
- serve as a resource to additional or more appropriate information sources in the marine-science community.

Additionally the NMRD serves as a network-wide resource for media relations outreach activities by individual Sea Grant programs and will recommend activities related to outreach activities at local



regional or national levels as appropriate or as requested. The NMRD is also expected to take an active leadership role in appropriate science/environmental journalism societies in order to further increase the visibility/recognition of Sea Grant among the national media and solidify the reputation of the NMRD as a major "player" within the journalism community.

**Minimum Qualifications:**

- Bachelor's Degree in journalism, English, communications, or public relations
- Excellent written/verbal skills
- 8-10 years of experience in media relations and/or communications with a track record for placing national news stories
- Demonstrated knowledge and ability to use current technologies to support the collection, dissemination, and evaluation of media relations activities/information
- Management/supervisory experience
- (OR) any equivalent combination of education and/or experience from which comparable knowledge, skills, and abilities have been achieved.

**Desired Qualifications:**

- Demonstrated knowledge of science
- Master's Degree
- Prior news reporter experience
- Ability to establish priorities, plan/coordinate activities
- Membership in the National Association of Science Writers and/or Society of Environmental Journalists
- Event-planning experience
- Established national media contacts
- Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to work effectively across functional teams and with all levels of employees

**Note:** Within communication circles the title "coordinator" denotes a low-level, subordinate position. This would be a detriment to recruitment efforts if qualified individuals ignored job ads for a "coordinator" position. Therefore, the title National Media Relations Director is strongly recommended in order to attract and recruit top candidates.

**Media Relations Specialist**

**Duties and Responsibilities:** Assist the NMRD carrying out the responsibilities of the National Media Relations Office by performing significant media relations projects and assignments. Write media relations related material, such as news releases, tip sheets, articles, correspondence, reports, and other materials for external and internal distribution. Assist in proofreading and editing of material. Maintain national media and other public/network contact lists. Monitor and keep track of media coverage. Assist in the planning and coordination of special events and press briefings. Participate in meetings, conferences, and other forums, working to develop media and public understanding of Sea Grant. Perform other duties as required in order to support a team-based effort.

**Minimum Qualifications:**

- Bachelor's Degree in journalism, English, communications, or public relations
- Excellent written/verbal skills
- 3-5 years of experience in media relations and/or communications
- Proficient in Microsoft Office products including Word, PowerPoint and Excel as well as media search tools
- Superior organizational skills, attention to detail and the ability to juggle multiple projects

**Desired Qualifications:**

- Knowledge of writing for online communications



- Commitment to quality and accuracy in written communications
- Some knowledge of web site development
- Excellent interpersonal skills

**Note:** Additional professional services to support the National Media Relations Program, such as publications and World Wide Web site design, postings, and maintenance, to be contracted on an as-need basis.

**Recommendation:** Advertise both positions in:

*Washington Post*

*Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Job Center (web)*

*National Association of Science Writers (NASW) – web and print*

*Chronicle of Higher Education*

*Publisher's Weekly*

*Editor & Publisher*

*Also include other candidate search avenues:*

*Enlist the Sea Grant Network/Communicators' Working Group to identify candidates*

**Recommendation:** A Search Committee of no more than five (5) members. This would consider of three (3) members from the Sea Grant Network, a science journalist, and a Director of Communications from a scientific society, based in Washington D.C. In addition, candidate(s) could also be scheduled to meet with select NOAA and Sea Grant staff with whom they could logically be expected to interact.

Recruitment is expected to be a two-step process in which the NMRD is hired first in order to allow him/her to participate in the subsequent interview/selection of the Media Relations Specialist.

As the media relations function develops, future consideration might be given to adding a part-time or full-time Administrative Assistance.

## **VII. Program Administration, Site Considerations, and Required Resources**

**Recommendation:** *The Sea Grant National Media Relations Office and Program should be located in Washington, D.C., to capitalize on the many national media outlets based there as well as the wealth of communications opportunities and supporting resources available in the nation's capital.*

The Technical Review Panel heard repeatedly from interviewees regarding the ability of the Washington, D.C., location in enabling the prior NMRP to function as effectively as it did with the media (indeed, this was the one issue almost universally agreed upon among interviewees). A Washington, D.C. location also allows the NMRP to participate in National Sea Grant Office staff meetings, NOAA Public Affairs staff meetings and Sea Grant Association events, while facilitating less formal interactions with staff of the above organizations as well as numerous others, including the Dept. of Commerce.

**Recommendation:** *The program should be established through a grant or contract to a neutral organization, one philosophically aligned to Sea Grant and incorporating an academic or scientific mission. The Technical Review Panel specifically identified the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), or the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education (CORE) as possibilities.*

Under the most desirable scenario, the host organization would provide office space, support services, possibly the use of furniture and equipment, as well as access to the purchasing of goods, supplies and services. The ability to provide some form of employee benefits package that would assist in recruiting



would be highly desirable to help ensure the effectiveness of the NMRP. Such a host organization is likely to have the necessary conference/meeting facilities and equipment that will enable the NMRP to operate effectively and at lowest cost.

Such an arrangement would give the NMRP an added measure of independence that the Technical Review Panel perceived was lacking under prior arrangements. Association with a university/academic organization would bolster NMRP credibility with the media, enhance the program's stature within the Sea Grant network and reinforce its employee morale and retention potential. (Such an arrangement could potentially lend itself to a shared part-time administrative position should the NMRP be required to expand in the future.)

**Recommendation:** *The grant/contract should be tied to the Sea Grant Program Assessment Team (PAT) cycle (i.e., four years), after which a comprehensive program performance review would be conducted.*

While the project grant/contract cycle would extend four years, regular monitoring and more frequent periodic evaluations must be built into the NMRP from the outset (see Governance section above).

**Recommendation:** *The NMRP should continue to be located in Washington, D.C.*

In the interviews conducted by the committee and in subsequent deliberations, it became apparent that to be truly effective, the NMRP would need a Washington, D.C., base of operations, one that would provide a collegial setting for the benefit of the employee(s). It could also provide the administrative support services and physical plant necessary to support the operation while offering a measure of stature as well as operating efficiency that we perceive was lacking in the prior arrangements under grants to Sea Grant institutions.

In arriving at the above recommendations, the committee considered multiple management options. The seven rejected are listed below, followed by brief discussion of the negating factors for each. They are listed in no particular order and it was assumed that in each case, the operation would be based in Washington, D.C.

### **1) Independent Contractor (contracted by NSGO)**

This assumes a consulting arrangement with a private individual (a "freelancer") well versed in media relations but not necessarily familiar with Sea Grant. While this is certainly a potentially workable option if managed as outlined in the Governance section, based on what the Technical Review Panel heard from interviewees as well as the past experience of several panel members, it was rejected for the following reasons:

- Potential skepticism on the part of the Sea Grant community could hamper effectiveness, particularly during the "learning" phase, i.e., acceptance could be hard-won and detract from performance as the NMRP earned credibility with the network.
- To effectively perform the function, in the Technical Review Panel's view, requires a staff of two. While partnerships or subcontracting are possible solutions, the panel felt such arrangements would be difficult to monitor and manage effectively.
- Such consultants often are required to serve other clients to maintain solvency, thus it could be difficult to track performance and an element of doubt concerning the contractor's level of effort could prevail.

### **2) Federal Staff Position (within NOAA Public Affairs or National Sea Grant Office)**

The Technical Review Panel viewed this option as highly unlikely given the current Federal budget climate. Because effective performance of the NMRP would require a staff of two, this option is untenable. Federal status would sacrifice independence of the NMRP would likely hamper effectiveness and job performance.

### **3) Contractor to NOAA Public Affairs**

In this case the incumbent(s) would be contracted by NOAA and located at NOAA headquarters in Silver Spring.



- The Technical Review Panel felt that having “two masters” (i.e. NOAA PA and the NMRP Advisory Structure), whether in fact or merely perceived, would undermine program effectiveness. Again, it should be emphasized, the NMRP requires a staff of two.
- The likelihood that the principal(s) could be co-opted to perform other functions is high in this case or that the contract could be terminated abruptly further clouds this option.
- Delineation of duties could be unclear and misperceptions regarding NMRP mission could hamper effectiveness.

#### **4) Contractor to National Sea Grant Office**

This assumes a “hands-off” contract administered by NSGO with the NMRP Task Force managing/monitoring the program. The staff would be located in Silver Spring.

- The Technical Review Panel felt it would have similar disadvantages to the scenario immediately above but that missions/motives would suffer from added misconceptions, particularly outside the Sea Grant network.

#### **5) Staff position, grant or contract relationship with Sea Grant Association (SGA)**

History, as revealed by interviewees, does not suggest this as an effective option, particularly due to the advocacy role of SGA and the non-advocacy nature of the NMRP. Real or perceived confusion of missions/motives would tend to undermine NMRP effectiveness. While the NMRP staff should work closely with SGA and the SGA Washington, D.C. representative, any more direct relationship would detract from NMRP effectiveness, both inside and beyond the Sea Grant network.

#### **6) Institutional Grant (to a Sea Grant Program)**

This assumes a grant directly to a Sea Grant program, as in the past with Maryland SG and the South Carolina SGC.

- At most programs, overhead costs would likely run higher than under other contractual arrangements as noted above.
- Operating under such a grant could lead to confusion of roles, responsibilities, and allegiances as cautioned by a number of interviewees.
- Remote administration of the MNRO could impair performance, although that need not be the case.
- While somewhat effective in the past two experiences, it became apparent to the Technical Review Panel that under this scenario every effort would have to be made to insulate the NMRP from the “parent” program, lest it exert inordinate influence over NMRP operations, either in fact or in perception.

Note: The Technical Review Panel was cautioned that there is a natural tendency for a host Sea Grant program to influence the NMRP to give priority to its own program needs, thus there is a continual need to exercise restraint in this regard to avoid the issues related to favoritism or compromised objectivity. Revised NMRP program guidelines should address this issue (see “Governance” above).

#### **7) Public Relations Firm**

Retaining a bona fide public relations agency to operate the NMRP was deemed an overly expensive option, for the following reasons:

- The time required by the learning curve to truly apprehend Sea Grant, its mission and its goals in media relations would likely absorb too much of the NMRP budget before any real results would be obtained.
- Such firms are often prone to high account executive turnover.
- Using a “PR firm” could engender unnecessary skepticism (or outright mistrust) from the media.
- Further, purchasing such services in these austere budget times could project to the Sea Grant network a perception of “waste” and extravagance in media relations operations.



## **Budget Considerations**

Budget: \$250k

2 FTEs

Media Relations Director: salary range, \$65,000 - \$75,000

Media Relations Specialist: salary range, \$45,000 - \$55,000

Overhead 10%

Budget should allow for:

- - Event costs (press briefings, "newsmaker breakfasts," teleconferencing, etc.)
- Travel to Advisory Committee meetings, Sea Grant week, Communicators sessions, regional Sea Grant events (can be estimated in advance for budgeting purposes and adjusted accordingly, etc.) sufficient local travel
- Travel to appropriate venues as dictated by subject matter, press events, financial latitude required
- Annual media relations training (or other professional development opportunity)
- Dues/Memberships:
  - National Press Club
  - Society of Environmental Journalists
  - National Association of Science Writers
  - Outdoor Writers Association of America
  - Other applicable societies

Fully aware of current budget constraints, hiring top media relations professionals is not inexpensive. However, professionalism is the key to having an effective media relations office, and it is the consensus of the panel that if enough resources cannot be devoted to the office that it may be preferable to re-think its resumption.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

The Panel fully understood the importance of a professional media relations office to any national organization in reaching audiences and expanding a support base. The fundamental issue that presented a real struggle was whether a Sea Grant Media Relations Office could be successfully operated to justify the investment. Is it possible for 30 fairly independent Sea Grant institutions to have a coordinated national message? Since each Sea Grant Program has solid state and local connections, good local media networks, and strong grass roots support, is a national media relations office superfluous? Does it really matter if Sea Grant is perceived as having a national voice? Could the investment in media relations be better spent elsewhere in the Sea Grant system?

It was not until the end of the interview sessions and extensive discussion, that the Technical Review Panel resolved that an effective media relations office for Sea Grant is achievable and would provide the national exposure and visibility Sea Grant deserves. Sea Grant is more than the sum of its parts. The American people benefit from knowing that their tax dollars are paying valuable dividends through Sea Grant. It is also important for communities within a Sea Grant radius to know what other Sea Grant Programs are doing, and for non-Sea Grant communities to know what Sea Grant is doing for them in terms of seafood safety and other issues that transcend coastal boundaries. Further, Sea Grant Colleges, as part of a university network, do not operate in a vacuum, but are in the business of creating new knowledge and sharing ideas for the benefit of humankind. Finally, by raising important issues in the public consciousness and increasing the level of awareness, Sea Grant is providing an important educational function that is essential to a democratic society. Sea Grant has a stake in the market place of ideas.

The Panel determined that some fundamental changes are necessary for the Sea Grant Media Relations Office to accomplish its goals and realize its potential. The Technical Review Panel recognizes that these suggestions will be neither easy, nor inexpensive. The Technical Review Panel based its recommendations on the interviews and is confident that it heard from a sufficient number of individuals and interests with diverse perspectives to justify our conclusions. The Technical Review Panel sincerely



hopes that its report will be viewed constructively, and contributed in some way toward enhancing Sea Grant's overall communications endeavor.



## **Appendix F**

DRAFT

### **A STRATEGIC NATIONAL SEA GRANT COMMUNICATIONS PLAN** Submitted by the National Sea Grant Communicators Steering Committee

Stephen Wittman, Chair

November 1993

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

For Sea Grant to survive today's tough economic and budgetary climate, we must begin to effectively communicate the program's vital national role in providing the scientific knowledge and technology transfer necessary for wise stewardship of the nation's coastal, ocean and Great Lakes resources. It is especially timely now, with pending federal reauthorization of the program, for the network to embrace a coordinated national communications strategy that creates greater awareness of Sea Grant and its benefits among federal officials, resource users and managers, the media and the public. This report recommends a wide range of short- and long-term actions for making Sea Grant communications more effective at the national level. Implementation of this plan will result in greater recognition and support for Sea Grant on a national scale, thereby increasing the program's ability to justify and obtain funding from federal, state and industry sources. The plan has four goals:

- 1) Develop a strong national network identity;
- 2) Create national visibility for the network;
- 3) Increase the national availability & access to Sea Grant information;
- 4) Enhance networking through better internal & external communication.

Achieving these goals will require a significant commitment of personnel and funds by each university program in the network as well as the National Sea Grant College Program. It also requires a philosophical commitment by each program to make its own identity and communications efforts secondary to that of the network as a whole. A key mechanism for meeting these goals is the creation of the post of a national media relations specialist to focus and coordinate the network's national communications efforts, including a budget for funding the creation of appropriate national communications products by the network's communications specialists. This plan was developed at a National Sea Grant Communicators Steering Committee planning retreat Oct. 20-21, 1993, at Topsail Island, N.C., at which 16 Sea Grant programs were represented. The draft plan was subsequently distributed for review by all Sea Grant communicators and had been endorsed by 21 (a two-thirds majority) as of Nov. 5, 1993.

#### **SITUATION ANALYSIS**

Sea Grant clearly has strong national value. It is the nation's primary source of information about the oceans and Great Lakes resources; it supports wise stewardship and sustainable economic development of those resources; it provides new knowledge in the form of cutting-edge, innovative research; and it has educated a cadre of marine and Great Lakes scientists, resource managers and entrepreneurs who are now moving into leadership positions. More importantly, the national need for and relevance of the program has not diminished but continues to grow. Sea Grant also has a very large and diverse potential national audience. A growing majority of the U.S. population lives within 50 miles of the nation's coasts. Our three major client groups are (1) resource users (the fishing community, coastal entrepreneurs & residents, seafood consumers, marine-related industry & businesses, recreationalists, etc.); (2) decision-makers (both private and public at the national, state and local level); and (3) information



**OBJECTIVE #2: Assess the methods that successful organizations have implemented in creating and maintaining strong national identities.**

Many other science/research organizations have successfully maintained a strong visibility among their constituencies for years. Interviewing communication professionals at these organizations will provide us with valuable information on what communications methods have worked for them on a national level. By building on the experience of others, we can save time and money while avoiding some of the pitfalls others have experienced. Methodology: The task group will arrange interviews with a selection of appropriate organizations with solid national identities (e.g., the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Wildlife Federation, the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, the Center for Marine Conservation, National Geographic, etc.). The selection should also include organizations that are similar to Sea Grant in their university-based origins. Implementation: This task can be completed within the next six months. Because many of these organizations are centered around the Washington area, communicators in Maryland and Virginia will take the lead in this task.

**OBJECTIVE #3: Develop a national network graphic identity to increase Sea Grant's recognition among its publics.**

The development of a national logo is an issue that has arisen periodically within the Sea Grant network. Previous attempts to establish a national identity have failed for a number of reasons, among them a lack of understanding among key members of the network as to the purpose and benefits of an institutional identity program, various requirements of universities and other sponsoring agencies regarding the use of their logos, and lack of consensus among the network on what the logo should look like. Many state programs have local logos to which they feel a strong loyalty. These factors notwithstanding, any communications professional in the public or private sector will attest to the necessity of having a strong visual image to create a national identity. The Sea Grant communicators at the strategic planning meeting (representing 16 programs) are ready to put personal (or local) preferences aside in order to further the goals of an effective national identity program. We recognize that unanimity among either the communications network or the directors will never be achieved, but we feel that even with a dissenting minority, it is important for Sea Grant's future that we put forth a unified national identity for the network that still allows for state program identification. Where applicable, each program needs to work cooperatively and persuasively with their home-based university to come to a mutually agreeable understanding on how the national Sea Grant logo and locally required logos can complement one another's placement without competing. Methodology: Good design does not take place by committee. However, we recognize the importance of a national logo having strong support across the network. Therefore, we propose that a well-qualified graphics specialist be appointed to develop a national logo that prominently places the logotype "Sea Grant," and that this logo be designed so that any state or regional program could incorporate its specific name within that logo in a noncompetitive way with the primary logotype. Once the designer has created the art, it will be reviewed by the communicators steering committee. Input at this stage is invited and encouraged, after which the steering committee will approve the logo for presentation to the Council of Directors. A majority will rule. Implementation: A logotype has been created by Alaska Sea Grant for use in the National Sea Grant office that the communicators at the strategic communications planning meeting thought had potential for meeting the needs of the national program. We have asked that Alaska review this piece of art and make any revisions it feels would be appropriate. We plan to incorporate a "tag line" or slogan into the logo once the internal and external assessments are completed. It should take nine months to a year for this to be developed and go through the approval process. It should take the individual programs another year to incorporate the logo into their publications, business cards, stationery, etc.

**OBJECTIVE #4: Develop and effectively disseminate national communication tools that explain Sea Grant and its benefits to the public while building support for the program's mission.**



Building on the organizational identity proposed above, the task group recommends the development of a variety of communications tools over the next three years that will seek to explain Sea Grant and raise awareness of its benefits to its constituencies. The end result of this activity will be heightened awareness and appreciation of the national network. All of the proposed tools will be national in scope, but will be undertaken and/or supervised by experts within the network in cooperation with the proposed national media relations specialist (see Goal 2, Action #1). These tools include, but are not limited to:

Level 1

- A national network educational booth to heighten awareness at national conferences and events; Sea Grant success stories publications that can be used by the proposed national media relations specialist, the NSGO and others in raising awareness of Sea Grant's mission and benefits (see Goal 2, Action #2);
- Op/Ed pieces in the national media; this would help identify Sea Grant directors and program personnel as experts on coastal and ocean issues;
- Appliques of the national logo that researchers and others could quickly, easily and inexpensively affix to research posters and other materials to give them an immediate visual identification to the national Sea Grant network.

Level 2

- Video success stories based on the success story publications; this increasingly popular format is particularly suited for broad educational purposes; Video public service announcements for television broadcast;
- Educational posters for school children.

Level 3

- National radio program (see Goal 2, Action #3); National periodical publication (see Goal 2, Action #5);
- A national "Friends of Sea Grant" network of supporters for communicating the need for and benefits of Sea Grant; their function would be loosely analogous to an alumni group.

**Implementation:** These levels have been determined in an effort to build upon success. The first level activities will take relatively less effort, planning and/or money to accomplish; the second more so, and the third yet more. Varying levels of support and oversight will be required for each project. Specific tools, personnel and budget will be determined once the internal and external reviews have been completed and thoroughly evaluated. These reviews may result in the addition, deletion or redirection of these tools.

## **GOAL #2: INCREASE SEA GRANT'S NATIONAL VISIBILITY AMONG TARGET AUDIENCES**

Task Group: Phyllis Grifman, Southern California (chair); Pamela Casteel, Texas; Kathy Hart, North Carolina; Carole Jaworski, Rhode Island; Jill Katter, Hawaii; Victor Omelczenko, National Sea Grant College Program; and Julie Zeidner, New York.

**OBJECTIVE #1:** To measurably increase awareness of Sea Grant as a source of coastal, marine and Great Lakes information among the nation's coastal population (identified target audiences living within 50 miles of the coast or Great Lakes) within two years.

**OBJECTIVE #2:** To enhance awareness of Sea Grant as a source of coastal and Great Lakes information among 5 percent of the inland population identified as target audiences by within one year.

**OBJECTIVE #3:** To enhance awareness of Sea Grant as a source of sound science, innovative extension efforts and resourceful education projects in Congress, the Executive Branch, and the U.S.



Department of Commerce and its subagencies, beginning immediately.

To increase Sea Grant visibility in both public and governmental contexts, the task group has developed a multi-pronged approach. Each element will improve long-term chances for funding success at legislative and executive levels, and increase public awareness of Sea Grant research and outreach programs among target audiences. The six actions outlined below will be coordinated by the communicators' national steering committee, with the additional input of designated task forces.

1. Hire a network media relations specialist to work with national and regional media (newspapers, radio, television, magazines and trade journals). (immediate)
2. Develop ongoing "Sea Grant Success Stories" publications about Sea Grant for use with Congress, other governmental agencies and other organizations and businesses. (1-2 years)
3. Develop a national radio program. (1-2 years, broadcast 3rd year)
4. Support and encourage workshops and conferences on specific national topics of concern and interest that will boost Sea Grant's image as a leader in science, education and outreach. (ongoing effort; augment existing programs)
5. Investigate development of a national periodical publication for specific target audiences. (long-term effort)
6. Identify Sea Grant personnel who can eloquently and enthusiastically articulate the program's mission and accomplishments at conferences, national meetings and to the media. (begin immediately).

#### **Action #1: National Media Relations Specialist**

Our key recommendation for increasing national visibility for Sea Grant is the creation of a National Media Relations Specialist position (highlights presented below; see accompanying funding proposal for details). This individual would be Sea Grant's point of contact with news media, serving as network media liaison and information broker. He/she would work closely with the network's communicators, Council of Directors and National Sea Grant Office to identify needs and strategies for ensuring effective communications at the national level. The work of this specialist will be directed by an executive subcommittee of a media relations advisory committee consisting of two communicators, two directors, one MAS leader, an outside media expert, and the NSGO director or deputy director. This specialist will work with the network to place news and other information based on Sea Grant research, outreach and education efforts in national media. Proactively, the specialist will endeavor to interest national, regional and trade media in specific topics or stories recommended the advisory panel. The specialist will use query letters, tip sheets, fact sheets, video clips, network and program publications, and direct contact with journalists, editors and freelance writers in a wide range of media.

Reactively, the specialist will respond to current events (i.e., hurricanes, oil spills, red tide events, sewage spills, etc.) and direct journalists to expertise in the Sea Grant network and to create linkages between hard news and ongoing Sea Grant work. In addition, this specialist will aid in the placement of feature-style stories of ongoing Sea Grant program efforts in national media outlets, including national and regional trade magazines and television. The network's communicators will provide the ideas and material for these stories. A number of substantive areas for potential feature stories already exist within the network. Areas for focus during the first year include:

- Aquaculture
- Water Quality
- Marine Debris
- Early Marine Biotechnology Efforts
- Zebra Mussel Awareness
- Threatened & Endangered Marine Species

**Hiring Process:** We recommend a selection process involving a national search and personal interviews. Previous experience in national broadcast media and/or a national media consulting firm should be required. We recommend a one-year renewable contract, and we believe an annual salary of \$45,000 per year will be necessary to attract someone with the needed qualifications.

**Location:** We recommend that the proposed National Media Relations Specialist be located in the



Washington, D.C., area so that he/she will have close proximity to both national media, the federal government and the National Sea Grant Office. The position should be funded through a Sea Grant university with low or waived indirect charges. To provide office, equipment and support staff at minimum cost, we recommend that the media relations specialist work out of an existing Sea Grant communications office. Because of the need to get this effort up and running quickly, the specialist should initially work closely with a senior Sea Grant communicator. These considerations lead us to recommend locating this person in the communications office of the University of Maryland Sea Grant College Program.

**Supervision and Evaluation:** The specialist's activities will be supervised by a four-person executive committee, with guidance and regular evaluation by a seven-person media relations advisory committee representing the Council of Directors, NSGO, MAS and communicators. We also suggest hiring a professional communications auditor to evaluate the specialist's first-year performance.

**Budget:** We request an annual budget of about \$137,500. This includes \$17,000 for first-year travel, a primary use of which is get-acquainted visits to several programs in each region. The budget also includes a minimum \$30,000 for production costs, the principal use of which would be to contract for or purchase production services from the network's existing communications offices to create national publications, press packages, displays/exhibits, letterhead, business cards, media resource guides, Sea Grant experts lists, etc. The costs for providing the specialist with news and feature story material should not significantly affect individual state program budgets in the first two years, as a wealth of material already exists.

## **Action #2: Development of "Sea Grant Success Stories"**

A series of short, straightforward pamphlets and/or one-pagers outlining Sea Grant efforts in a number of areas will be developed on behalf of the network by individual programs and produced by those programs with existing print and design capabilities. Major funding will be provided through the budget of the National Media Relations Specialist. They will be used to enhance awareness of Sea Grant products in the Congress, Executive branch and other government agencies. Success story subjects will be determined by the proposed media relations advisory committee. Subjects could include:

- Stimulation of Coastal Business Development
- Aquaculture
- Marine Biotechnology
- Water Quality

The Clinton Administration and Congress are people-oriented, and Sea Grant needs to capitalize on that when developing these success stories. The pamphlets should, depending upon subject area, focus on ongoing Sea Grant research, outreach and education efforts. These will be interdisciplinary in nature, and they will draw and focus upon the work of several programs with excellence in the subject area. The material for this work already exists within individual programs and in the network, and the cost of production can be shared by programs "buying into" or sharing printing costs. Implementation: The pamphlet series should be developed immediately; distribution should begin in the spring of 1994 and continue through reauthorization. Development of a common template and designation of a series editor are the first tasks; this will ensure that the series is consistent in visual design and editorial quality. The series could be produced relatively quickly using desktop publishing and existing expertise.

## **Action #3: Radio Program**

Radio is a major, cost-effective way to reach large audiences and offers an excellent mechanism for enhancing Sea Grant visibility. The Northeast Sea Grant Network recently began preliminary exploration of the costs and production of a regional Sea Grant radio series and have indicated this could be developed as a national effort, wherein each program would provide stories and/or scripts (for daily broadcast, this would amount about a dozen stories per year per program). Preliminary cost estimates are about \$1,500 per program per year. Rhode Island communicator Carole Jaworski and Wisconsin's "Earthwatch" producer Rich Hoops are currently pursuing this idea. Implementation: To further develop this effort, we recommend that a radio programming task force be formed to marshal existing expertise and interest within the network, instruct communicators unfamiliar with the medium, and develop a



more detailed proposal and budget. Existing ongoing Sea Grant radio efforts — such as Wisconsin's "Earthwatch," Oregon's "Coastwatch," North Carolina's "Seascope," Delaware's "Sea Talk" and New Jersey's "Coastwatch" — will serve as models and as sources of broadcasting expertise.

#### **Action #4: Workshops and Conferences**

As a means of highlighting and disseminating the results of network research, maintaining a Sea Grant presence at high-visibility scientific workshops and professional conferences should be an ongoing priority effort. Many programs already sponsor or cosponsor such events, often in conjunction with MAS efforts. In October, several communicators made valuable contacts at the national conference of the Society for Environmental Journalists, and several Sea Grant programs jointly sponsored an informational coastal tour for journalists in conjunction with that conference. A Sea Grant experts list produced for the SEJ tour has already prompted a call from National Geographic. The task group recognizes the continuing value of such efforts in creating visibility among target audiences (ie., scientists, policy-makers, federal officials, etc.), and encourages greater participation of Sea Grant personnel in national and regional conferences, and the production and distribution of proceedings and other publishing efforts. We also suggest that news conferences be held in connection with such events to present major Sea Grant research findings and new initiatives. Calls for papers, nationally and internationally, by Sea Grant and non-Sea Grant researchers, allows for enhanced visibility of Sea Grant work in multiple contexts. Publishing the proceedings of conferences and workshops enables the network to disseminate broad-based research results that extend beyond the scope of Sea Grantsponsored research and outreach activities. Topics that promote Sea Grant work already ripe for this kind of effort include:

- Seafood Safety
- Global Change Education
- Water Quality/Storm Drain Runoff
- Coastal Business Development
- Zebra Mussel Research and Awareness

**Implementation:** Workshops and symposia on these subjects could become part of individual program plans. Cohosting conferences and participation in relevant workshops and conferences is a relatively inexpensive means of furthering Sea Grant's reach in substantive areas, and the task group encourages the production of proceedings from these efforts. As part of ongoing efforts, this element of our plan requires only increased awareness of opportunities and some additional budget within programs for the production of proceedings. Expertise in producing conference proceedings exists within the network.

#### **Action #5: National Periodical Publication**

A periodical publication could be very useful in raising the Sea Grant network's visibility among select national audiences. Despite the failure of Sea Grant Today, the success of cooperative efforts like the Northeast Sea Grant Network's *Nor'easter* regional publication and South Carolina's national internal newsletter, *The Communicator*, indicates that development of a new national Sea Grant periodical may be worth investigating. The success and continuing usefulness of the Marine Education catalog developed by the Texas Sea Grant program provides another model for cooperation.

Besides *Nor'easter*, the network has individual programs that produce successful awardwinning magazines (e.g., North Carolina's *Coastwatch* and Texas' *Texas Shores*). **Implementation:** We recommend the chair of the communicators steering committee appoint a task force to explore the need, value and feasibility of developing a national periodical publication. Two models to be considered include (1) a cooperative effort based on the model developed by the Northeast network, with stories submitted by individual programs and cost-sharing among programs, or (2) a subscription-supported periodical produced by a program with magazine production experience. Marketing and distribution responsibilities will be determined later.

#### **Action #6: Network Speakers Bureau**

Most successful organizations and corporations have a readily identifiable leader or spokesperson. We urgently need one or more persons who can speak eloquently and enthusiastically about the program at national conferences, on national broadcast media and at Department of Commerce/NOAA events.



Implementation: This is an immediate need. The chief qualifications include a thorough knowledge of Sea Grant, personal charisma, excellent speech-making abilities, and strong presence on broadcast media. The proposed national media specialist would be chiefly responsible for placing a network speaker on the agenda of important meetings of scientists, federal administrators, journalists, etc. The chief costs will be for travel and lodging expenses. In many cases, these costs will be paid by the conference organizers or host news media program; otherwise, these costs would be paid from the travel budgets of the National Media Relations Specialists and/or individual programs.

**GOAL #3: TO CREATE GREATER NATIONAL AWARENESS OF THE mGH. QUALITY, SCIENCE-BASED INFORMATION GENERATED BY SEA GRANT.**

Task Group: Mike McLean, Minnesota (chair); Steve Adams, Maine/New Hampshire; Tracy Crago, Woods Hole; Lynn Davis, Virginia; Beth Hens, Virginia; Peg Van Patten, Connecticut; and Susan Waters, Virginia.

**OBJECTIVE: Increase availability of and access to Sea Grant information.**

The ability to respond quickly and accurately to the information needs of a diverse client base is a prime strength of Sea Grant. Part of this national communication strategy includes building upon the local and regional strengths to broaden Sea Grant's reputation as a source of timely, high-quality, unbiased information for national client groups, media and policy-makers. We recommend that all programs become familiar with and learn to use computer network opportunities to increase Sea Grant's presence in the electronic media. This includes not only the placement of **Sea Grant Abstracts** into online database systems, but a Sea Grant presence in a number of electronic resources.

**Action #1: Identify & track development of online computer information services**

To respond effectively to requests for information, Sea Grant must position itself in the exploding world of electronic online communication. Because this field is developing so quickly, the communicators steering committee recommends creating a computer communications task force to inventory existing Sea Grant capabilities and expertise in online data services. Implementation: The national communicators chair will appoint a task force of communicators to explore issues of file format, compatibility, meta data and information exchange between programs. They will also request the assistance of a number of communicators, MAS personnel and researchers in identifying those bulletin board and data systems that would be appropriate "locations" for establishing a Sea Grant presence. The task force will also survey client groups and the media to determine what kinds of online services are being used. The task force will also contact communications counterparts in industry and academia for advice and information. This information will be shared as it is developed with all elements of the program and help Sea Grant grow into this new technology. This task force will be appointed immediately and operate on an ongoing basis through email and conference calls. Costs will be minimal.

**Action #2: Set up Sea Grant file servers on the Internet highway.**

To increase Sea Grant visibility within the Internet highway, we recommend that a network of Sea Grant "gopher" file servers be set up on a regional or individual program basis. These file servers will make Sea Grant research and outreach products available to a broad audience. Because inquiries can be tracked, Sea Grant programs can easily identify audiences which are looking to Sea Grant for information. Implementation: A preliminary estimate of the costs of establishing and operating regional gopher servers is \$20,000 to \$30,000 per region. However, the necessary equipment and technology is already being used by a number of Sea Grant programs. By folding this effort into existing program capability, these costs could be minimized and perhaps greatly reduced. The task force will also investigate a NOAA initiative on Internet access to research data.

**Action #3: Make the National Sea Grant Depository accessible via the Internet.**

Efforts are underway to make the National Sea Grant Depository accessible via the Internet. We expect this national service to be online by early 1994. Implementation: The communicators steering committee will work with the depository, NSGO and proposed national media relations specialist to market new



online services to national client groups, media and policy-makers. Planning for this marketing effort should begin immediately, with implementation as soon as the depository is online. Mailing, printing and phone costs for this national promotional effort will cost only \$1,000 to \$2,000.

**Action #4: Adapt local and regional Sea Grant products to a national audience.**

Sea Grant programs produce a variety of successful information products that can be adapted to the national markets. There are many examples of high-quality products

produced by one program that meet information needs regionally and nationally. To this point, however, there has been little formal incentive for taking the best Sea Grant has to offer and adapting and marketing it to a national audience. Implementation: The National Communicators Steering Committee will poll Sea Grant programs to list and prioritize quality information products that have national potential. We recommend that the National Sea Grant Office recognize the importance and costs of adapting and marketing existing high-quality products by setting aside \$5,000 to \$10,000 annually to assist individual programs with modifying these products and marketing them nationally.

**Action #5: Decrease response time for information requests.**

Sea Grant research and outreach information must be available at a moment's notice to client groups, media and policy makers. Information that focuses on Sea Grant successes, economic benefits and sustainable development initiatives must be organized to be available on demand. Visibility as a national program should center around its research and outreach successes (e.g., coastal hazards, water quality, aquaculture, marine biotechnology, fisheries, nonindigenous species, aquatic ecology, naval architecture, etc.). Implementation: The communicators steering committee will appoint a task force immediately to gather and organize this information. This core information base will (1) give Sea Grant's national media relations specialist a resource base from which to gather stories for the national press, and (2) give Sea Grant a head start on the reauthorization process. The work of this task force should be completed by the fall of 1994, but it should be well under way when the National Media Relations Specialist is hired.

**Action #6: Compile a national Sea Grant network experts list.**

Implementation: Each program will identify and compile a list of articulate, knowledgeable and readily accessible research and outreach experts. A national experts list will then be compiled and maintained for distribution to key national and international media by the national media relations specialist. The persons on this list will understand that they must be ready to respond quickly to media inquiries in their area of expertise.

**GOAL #4: ENHANCE NETWORKING THROUGH BETTER INTERNAL & EXTERNAL NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS.**

Task Group: (not identified - Stephen Wittman, Wisconsin, acting chair)

**OBJECTIVE #1: Maximize use of existing Sea Grant communications expertise.**

Sea Grant could improve its national communications without additional personnel and funding. However, this requires a commitment by all programs to support and contribute to national communications efforts whenever called upon to do so. This means national communications must at times take precedence over state program communication efforts. Such a shift in priorities is essential to effective national communications, especially without the incentive of supplemental funding.

**Action #1: Identify Expertise for National Communications Assignments**

**Implementation:** The national communications chair will assign a volunteer or appoint a communicator to compile list of Sea Grant personnel with expertise in writing/editing, graphic art, video production, radio programming, computer networks, etc., for use by the National Sea Grant Communicators Steering Committee, the proposed national media relations specialist and the SGA in selecting personnel for specific national communications project assignments. Appropriate MAS personnel and freelancers will also be considered. This will be undertaken immediately and should be completed by Feb. 1, 1994. Costs are negligible.



### **Action #2: Organize Task Forces and Convene Workshops on Specific Media**

**Implementation:** Based on the above experts list, the national communications chair will appoint task forces to work on the proposed strategic national communications efforts (national radio program, coastal magazine, computer networking, etc.). While much of their work can be accomplished by conference calls and electronic mail, expediency suggests these task forces will need to convene intensive planning workshops early next spring and summer to pool Sea Grant expertise for planning and implementing such national communications efforts based on existing models (e.g., Wisconsin's "Earthwatch" radio and the Northeast Sea Grant Network's *Nor'easter* magazine). This action should be implemented immediately upon completion of Action #1, with the first workshops held next spring. Travel/food/lodging costs are estimated at about \$5,000 per workshop, which would have to be shared by the network or borne by the participating programs.

### **Action #3: Talent Sharing to Enhance Expertise and Improve Networking**

**Implementation:** Each Sea Grant communicator (including the NSGO communications monitor and proposed national media relations specialist) or a member of her/his staff should spend at least a week each year working at another program's communications office to share expertise and to teach or learn specific new communications technology and techniques. This should begin now and become an ongoing activity. Estimated costs are under \$500 per person per program for a full week's food/lodging, plus travel costs.

### **OBJECTIVE #2: Improve National Planning, Production and Marketing Efforts**

Sea Grant needs to improve the planning, production and distribution of network information products if it is to continue to be effective without additional personnel and funding. This requires a shift in focus from state to regional/national network efforts and products, and marketing strategies that transcend state boundaries; this may also require a voluntary reallocation of such funds through contracting of production and distribution services among programs. Also, we find the biennial Sea Grant Week conferences too infrequent for communicators to meet and plan adequately for coordinated, effective national communications efforts. We observe that the Council of Directors has found it essential to meet more frequently, and we further note that the Topsail Island meeting was the first such national communications planning retreat in more than a decade.

### **Action #1: Adopt-an-Inland.State Program**

**Implementation:** The Steering Committee chair will select one or more inland states for each Sea Grant program to adopt as its "sister Sea Grant state," which will be the focus of efforts by that program to familiarize inland state media, government agencies and other audiences with the products and information available from the national Sea Grant network. Selection will be by volunteers and assignment by the chair. This concept and program will be further evaluated and refined in cooperation with the council's communications committee and the proposed National Media Relations Specialist. Immediate costs are minimal; but we recommend the network as a whole devote several thousand dollars annually to efforts to increase Sea Grant visibility among inland state constituencies.

### **Action #2: Annual National Communications Strategic Planning Meetings**

**Implementation:** We recommend that the National Sea Grant Communicators Steering Committee conduct annual national communications strategic planning meetings. The costs for such meetings will be minimized through careful planning and association with national professional meetings (e.g., food, lodging and materials for the three-night, two-day strategic planning meeting that resulted in this document totaled only \$115 per participant, who were able to attend the SEJ conference at no additional travel cost). Moreover, those regional networks not currently holding biennial regional meetings are encouraged to do so. The steering committee chair and the national communications monitor should attend such regional meetings. We also suggest that the local communicator be permitted to attend Council of Directors meetings held in his/her immediate vicinity. For expediency's sake, we also support convening



national task force meetings and media workshops as described above.

### **Action #3: Centralize Certain Common Communications Functions**

**Implementation:** This concept needs further investigation, but the general idea is for a few individual communications programs to take on various marketing, production and distribution responsibilities on behalf of the rest of the network. The models are the national **Sea Grant Abstracts Service** and New York Sea Grant's national Zebra Mussel Information Clearinghouse. From a national identity perspective, this approach would help ensure consistency in the marketing, quality and delivery of network products, and enable users to go to only one or two programs to obtain network products vs. 29 programs. It could also help stop duplicative efforts at the production point, and ensure wider distribution of existing products.



## Appendix G

(Revised 2/1/02)

### *The Sea Grant National Communications Network Strategic Plan 2001-2005*

*This evolving document was prepared by a national network of Sea Grant Communicators, with leadership from the network steering committee. The network bylaws provide additional background.*

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sea Grant must effectively communicate its vital national role in providing the scientific knowledge and technology transfer necessary for long-term, sustainable use and development of the nation's coastal, ocean and Great Lakes resources. Such efforts are especially timely in light of heightened public interest in marine resources, growing population pressures, rapid advances in technology and increasing global interaction. Sea Grant must embrace and enhance a coordinated national communications strategy, creating greater awareness of Sea Grant and its benefits among federal officials, resource users and managers, the media and the public.

This plan recommends a wide range of short- and long-term actions to increase effectiveness of national Sea Grant communications. Implementation will result in greater recognition of—and support for—Sea Grant on a national scale, thereby affirming the program's requests for funding from federal, state and industry sources. The plan has six goals.

1. Strengthen the national network identity.
2. Increase national visibility for the network.
3. Foster collaborations and partnerships to leverage resources and results.
4. Increase national availability and access to Sea Grant information.
5. Enhance internal and external communication and collaboration to strengthen the Sea Grant Network.
6. *Chronicle communication advances through technical assessment practices.*

Achieving these goals will require a significant commitment of personnel and funds by each university program in the network, as well as the National Sea Grant College Program. It also requires a philosophical commitment by each program to make its own identity and communications efforts supportive of — and complementary to — those of the network as a whole.

A key mechanism for meeting these goals is network participation in and support of the national media relations project to focus and coordinate the Sea Grant presence in the national media and at events of strategic importance to project goals. Network support involves stable funding for the project and its various functions, as well as interaction and information sharing from each of the 30 Sea Grant programs.

This plan is an update and revision of the Strategic National Sea Grant Communications Plan of October 1993, accepted by the Sea Grant Association. Updating this plan was a goal established by the National Communicators Steering Committee in early 1997. Revisions were considered in various meetings, including August 1997 in Wisconsin, October 1997 in Arizona, and October 2000 in Alaska. In 2001, communicators reviewed the draft at Sea Grant Week and sought input from all program directors. Nearly every Sea Grant program was represented at one or more of these meetings.

#### BACKGROUND

The national need for and relevance of the Sea Grant program continues to grow. Sea Grant clearly demonstrates its strong national value by:

- Serving as a primary source of information about ocean and Great Lakes resources;
- Supporting responsible stewardship and sustainable economic development of those resources;



- Providing new knowledge in the form of cutting-edge, innovative research; and
- Educating a cadre of marine and Great Lakes scientists, resource managers and entrepreneurs who are now moving into leadership positions.

The entire nation values and enjoys coastal resources, from abundant seafood to major seaports to memorable vacation vistas. Sea Grant thus serves the entire nation, but has particular audiences within the growing majority of the U.S. population living within 50 miles of a coastline. Major client groups include: (1) resource users, including fishing communities, coastal entrepreneurs and residents, seafood consumers, marine-related industry and businesses, recreationalists, etc; (2) decision makers, including federal, state and local officials as well as private industry and interest groups; (3) information users, including academia, news media, environmental organizations, citizen activists, K-12 educators, informal educators and interpreters at parks, museums, etc.; (4) the research and outreach communities, including Sea Grant staff members and related agencies and partners.

The Sea Grant network's primary strengths include quality research and effective outreach components, including extension, communications and education projects. Over the past 35 years, Sea Grant has earned a reputation among user groups and local media as a neutral and nonadvocating source of sound, scientific information. Organizationally, the program is cost-effective, flexible and continues to evolve. At the state level, most programs have strong local recognition for being in touch with real people and meeting real needs, which engenders support from coastal state and federal legislators. Technology transfer and science education programs such as Sea Grant have been viewed favorably by many federal and state officials.

Since the first communications strategic plan was implemented in 1993, the network has strengthened Sea Grant's ability to communicate with impact. An award-winning national identity program was developed and now has been voluntarily adopted by the various individual programs. This graphic identity — used on everything from slide presentations, publications and letterhead to pins, shirts, posters and mouse pads — has become the single visual image that unites the network as a national entity.

Instituted in 1994, our national media relations project has assisted individual programs with developing media contacts and placements at the national level. A national Media Relations Advisory Committee established a structure for operation and hired a coordinator to plan the project's activities. With the assistance of this project, the communications network has conducted national media forums that not only generate sustained media interest but also improve Sea Grant's image among congressional staff and government agencies in the D.C. vicinity. Network communicators have collaborated on national projects, including a series of Sea Grant "briefs," a national brochure and various reports, and a coordinated national presence on the World Wide Web. More recently, communicators have played an important role in preparing documents for the National Sea Grant theme team initiatives.

To help improve internal communications and to encourage program collaboration and talent sharing, *The Communicator* newsletter, originally a newsletter for communicators only, was expanded to include all components of Sea Grant, including extension leaders and agents, researchers, educators, directors, review panel members and the national office. A Web site was added to complement the newsletter. In March 2001, the entire network was surveyed to provide updated information on the newsletter's role as an internal communications tool. Following a discussion at Sea Grant Week 2001, the communicators network determined the current *Communicator* should not continue. The network is awaiting an update from the national office regarding potential national Sea Grant newsletters options that could serve a variety of audiences. In the meantime, communicators will continue to seek informal methods, including Web-based opportunities, to maintain internal communications and encourage collaboration.

### INTRODUCTION

Sea Grant faces many challenges in the years ahead — challenges that communication efforts can help address. The trend toward coastal population growth is expected to continue, causing increasing pressures on coastal ecosystems and resources. Critical issues include deteriorating water quality, habitat losses and the depletion of fisheries and others. Already we are seeing media attention to land use and water rights conflicts, nonpoint source pollution, public access, erosion and the impacts of exotic species.

Addressing any of these problems requires investment of time and money — and the ability to compete for often limited funds. Sea Grant will continue to look to its national office for core funding, but we



must consider other sources if we want to expand our reach, implement new activities, improve existing projects, or strengthen the network through cooperative efforts. We must diversify funding sources, look for cost recovery from our products, and develop partnerships for particular products or projects.

We can make the best use of funds for communication activities by focusing on the areas where we can have the greatest impact. Research has indicated repeatedly a high public interest in science news, but still many Americans do not feel well informed about science. In a survey published by the National Science Board in 1996, only "one in nine Americans thinks that he or she is very well informed about science and technology." According to the Foundation for American Communications, 80 percent of Americans depend on the news media for their environmental information. And growing numbers are turning to the Web, where they need to be assured the information is reliable. Sea Grant's communications activities not only provide science-based information to the news media, but also to numerous targeted audiences through publications, events, networking and participation in formal and informal educational programs.

To be competitive and to have real impact, Sea Grant must become more widely recognized as a national network that funds important research, educates the citizenry, addresses real world problems, and pays for itself in tangible economic benefits. These values are emphasized both in NOAA's strategic plan *A Vision for 2005*, Sea Grant's network plan and the *National Sea Grant College Program Biennial Report, 1998-1999*, issued in March 2000. In this new century, Sea Grant can rely on more than 30 years of success as it steps to the forefront of the marine science information business. The goals outlined in the plan strengthen Sea Grant's position in marine science and marine resource information, and support the overall Sea Grant mission.

As we move ahead, the communicators' network has the opportunity to coordinate national projects with the National Sea Grant priorities, goals and objectives, along and with the goals of other federal agencies with interests in coastal and Great Lakes science and policy. In addition, the Sea Grant Association has a particular interest in strategic communications. At the individual program level, communications should be integral pieces to the program's strategic plan and planning process. Communications professionals will ensure that goals at each level support the others — and that all are based on sound communications theory and methodology. To be successful, this requires inter and intraprogram cooperation and information sharing, and the willingness to work together toward common national goals. When new projects are completed, we should apply emerging evaluation techniques. Such results allow us to continuously improve our approach.

### ***THE PRESENT COMMUNICATION PROCESS***

High-quality, effective communication is the responsibility of everyone in Sea Grant—including directors, outreach specialists, researchers and national office personnel. Directors lead efforts to establish program goals and priorities, and to provide the resources necessary to reach those goals. Sea Grant researchers, administrators, extension specialists, educators and other staff members develop and transfer the information base. Communicators ensure that information delivery is properly planned, packaged and channeled to various audiences.

Effective communication requires ongoing audience research and interactive communication with target audiences by all members of the Sea Grant family. Most individual programs do well at the state and local levels, but in many programs, communications staffs are small. Thus each program is selective in channeling energy and resources, often focusing on local/regional media relations, events and publications. Sometimes overburdened individual programs cannot assist in research and communication efforts at the national level.

Communicators have skills to strengthen and focus the Sea Grant network. Communicators should be encouraged to investigate and develop innovative new communications technology and capabilities such as the Web and video conferencing. They will be called upon to share this technology with other members of the Sea Grant family. In aggregate, a wealth of communications skills exist within the network. Yet, communication professionals and opportunities are not always used to full potential, due to various administrative, financial and geographic constraints. Past difficulties have included insufficient marketing research, and/or inadequate staff and funding.

On the other hand, sustained national efforts, such as the National Sea Grant Library and Sea Grant



**Abstracts** are successful when they are focused efforts with distinct funding. Also, high-quality national reports—*Marine Biotechnology*—(1988), *Economic Competitiveness & the Coastal Environment* (1993) and *Marine Aquaculture: Economic Opportunities for the 21st Century* (1999) — resulted from a clearly focused, cooperative effort under the direction of one program with funding from the Sea Grant Association or the National Sea Grant Office. The same was true for two national media forums—“Can America Save its Fisheries?” (1995) and “Marine Biotechnology” (1997) — coordinated by communicators, with support of the entire network and funding from the national office.

Sea Grant communicators have established a track record of success within a variety of arenas. Each project demonstrates network cooperation and productivity:

- Network World Wide Web cooperation: Communicators led development of sites for individual Sea Grant programs and regional Sea Grant gateways. Program communicators also have helped the national program and national office understand the role the Web can play in internal, as well as external communication, by pioneering on-line grant proposal systems and accountability databases. Current challenges include federal accessibility requirements and the need to provide mentors for smaller programs with limited Web experience.
- Design and network-wide use of the national display: Housed and maintained by the national office, this display is used at conferences and events all over the nation. It carries the national message of marine research, education and outreach, and can be adjusted for local, regional or topical needs. A Web site allows staff members to view the display for planning purposes.
- Improved working relationship with extension: The communicators' network and extension assembly have established liaisons and collaborated on projects. Recent meetings include a joint session during October 2000 meetings in Alaska, and a joint executive committee meeting at Sea Grant Week 2001. A joint professional development session on assessment and evaluation of projects is planned for March 2002. Communicators and extension leaders collaborated for several of the proposals submitted for the 1997 Outreach Investment competition. They work together on specific projects, such as MarinaNet, HazNet, a coastal ecosystem restoration pilot project and the Marine Science Careers Website. Also, in many Sea Grant programs, there is a coordinated effort to select program priorities when preparing omnibus proposals.

The national office has encouraged more national and regional cooperation. Current efforts, such as the theme team concept, are more inclusive, seeking input from various components of the overall Sea Grant program in setting priorities in targeted areas. Despite such progress, some issues defined in the 1993 strategic plan remain. For example, the overall network needs a clear infrastructure, funding mechanism or point person to focus, plan and direct strategic efforts — including internal communications, national Web presence and potential national marketing efforts — on a continuing basis. The communicators' network is eager to work with all Sea Grant colleagues to address these and other issues as we move into this new century. In particular, we highlight six goals and provide particular steps toward achieving these goals.

### *The Goals and Objectives of the Sea Grant National Communications Network Strategic Plan 2001-2005*

Sea Grant Communications has numerous strengths, along with a unique combination of rapid response capability, programmatic flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and a national network allowing for both “top down and bottom up” organizational strength. These represent significant competitive and operational advantages over most other federal programs — and provide considerable potential for niche definition and resource growth in future federal coastal and ocean agendas. For example, Sea Grant communications offers:

- More than three decades of successful experience in collaborative efforts.
- A program that gets things done, has a track record for relevance, and is known for quality in products/services.
- A reputation for objectivity and credibility in information transfer, which is especially important in



light of the abundance of information which has instant accessibility on the Web.

- Highly motivated and competent network of more than 400 experienced extension, communications, and education professionals nationwide.
- Access to expertise, facilities, and constituencies not always readily available to other organizations.

In updating the Communications strategic plan through 2005, communicators took considerable time reviewing and reconsidering the goals and pertinent objectives and implementation strategies outlined in the 1993 strategic plan. While there has been significant progress, the goals themselves are still important to the network's communications. In addition, this 2001 document considers recent changes in the program evaluation process and other updates to the national Sea Grant efforts. A discussion of each goal follows, with objectives and action steps for the five-year period.

### **GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN THE SEA GRANT NATIONAL IDENTITY**

As Sea Grant positions itself as the national leader in coastal science, we must strive to reinforce the program's identity across the country. Sea Grant should be known for its results that benefit not only coastal residents but the entire nation. Individual Sea Grant programs are known for strong track records in coastal research, education and outreach. In particular, each program has identified and responded to many marine and coastal issues on the state and local levels. Sea Grant should build upon that success — and recognition — as more regional and national issues are addressed. The "image" of Sea Grant is reflected in our reputation — and reinforced through a shared graphic identity program that is already in place.

#### **Objective 1: Determine and assess current perceptions of Sea Grant.**

- Mine the PAT reports to identify valuable insight into the perceptions of Sea Grant by various user groups.
- Evaluate potential survey formats to determine the perception of Sea Grant among various audiences on the national level and provide recommendations to the National Office and the Sea Grant Association on the most cost-effective survey options.

#### **Objective 2: Work in concert with the Sea Grant Association to clearly define the Sea Grant identity.**

- Provide our professional communications skills and knowledge of the Sea Grant programs to present cohesive messages from the national and individual programs.
- In particular, work on the concise "elevator message" that describes Sea Grant.

#### **Objective 3: Encourage full acceptance and more effective use of the National Sea Grant Graphic Identity Program.**

- Update a Sea Grant ftp site to include all possible uses of logos, offering versions compatible with most popular graphics programs. The site is currently housed on the Alaska Sea Grant site, but that does not limit this effort to the Alaska Sea Grant program.
- Link the logo ftp site with National Sea Grant site.
- Advertise ftp site to ALL Sea Grant folks for easy access when logos must be shared with partner agencies, etc.

#### **Objective 4: Encourage network-wide acceptance and effective use of common Sea Grant descriptors/identifiers online.**

- Continue placement and updates of Sea Grant Regional Web pages online. Uniform regional pages can link to diverse individual program pages.
- Encourage and assist the national office, SGA and other program components in developing sites that include common identifying elements that reinforce the Sea Grant "branding."

### **GOAL 2: INCREASE NATIONAL VISIBILITY FOR THE NETWORK**



In addition to the Internet, Sea Grant must continue information delivery via more traditional methods — developing and maintaining relationships with news media and distributing printed publications at special events. Biennial Reports serve the National Sea Grant Office and the Sea Grant Association; along with a Sea Grant general brochure completed in 2000. These documents should be updated on a regular basis, with information and visual content supplied by communicators. They should be placed on the Web for ready access by the network and the public.

Sea Grant visibility and credibility at the national level depend largely on the continued success of the National Media Relations Project. Issue forums, press briefings, news tip sheets, Sea Grant's *Guide to Coastal Science Experts*, and responsiveness of the National Media Relations Office make Sea Grant an important resource for news reporters and other interested audiences such as environmental groups, legislative staff, lobbyists and industry representatives. The mass media remain the main source of environmental science information for most Americans. Thus, the National Media Relations Project is vital to fulfilling Sea Grant's mission of contributing to the scientific literacy of the general public.

**Objective 1: Determine the need, purpose and message for national Sea Grant information products.**

- Draw upon the professional expertise of Sea Grant communicators to effectively deliver information and enhance Sea Grant's identity among key audiences. The CSC's Publications Task Group should be involved in the conceptualization, implementation and delivery of National Sea Grant communications products.
- Consider the variety of formats, including emerging options, needed for each product.

**Objective 2: Maintain and support the goals and objectives of the National Media Relations Project.**

- Raise collective visibility in the news media, thus contributing to the understanding of scientific issues by the reporters, editors and producers, thereby meeting the network's strategic goal of "assuring an environmentally and scientifically informed citizenry." Communicators in each program provide the critical link for connecting national media, via the National Media Relations Office, with research and outreach experts throughout the coastal and Great Lakes states. The media relations project will consider highlighting different Sea Grant topics each year in order to provide cohesive packages that demonstrate the strength of the local and national programs.
- Expand and update the Sea Grant Media Center Web site with substantive content. This requires a commitment of resources by the Sea Grant Network, and particularly a ready supply of information and specific links from Sea Grant communicators. The National Media Relations Project is directed by an Advisory Committee (NMRAC), which includes representatives of the Sea Grant Association, the National Sea Grant Office, the Sea Grant Extension Assembly, the National Sea Grant Communications Network, the National Sea Grant Review Panel, as well as an outside communications professional. The national media relations coordinator also participates as an ex-officio member of the Communicators Steering Committee (CSC) and communicates regularly with the Sea Grant Communicators Network.
- Assess needs and opportunities in the greater Sea Grant Network for the potential development of communications outreach. The national media relations coordinator and the CSC can lead this effort. For special events or publications, the national media relations coordinator may work with standing task groups to enhance and support program efforts.

**Objective 3: Enhance Sea Grant's visibility and position among relevant professional peer and constituency groups.**

- Effectively deliver Sea Grant science through a presence in various science and professional arenas. To raise Sea Grant visibility among specific target audiences, attend professional association or interest group meetings, network with participants, and exhibit Sea Grant publications and activities. The National Media Relations Project identifies and attends such meetings regularly to provide the greatest exposure to media interested in marine and coastal science issues. As a network, communicators should coordinate attendance and encourage presentation of Sea Grant research and products



at national meetings, specialized briefings, including legislative hearings, and events to increase Sea Grant's national visibility.

- Utilize the National Sea Grant display as another tool to achieve this objective. It is managed by the National Sea Grant Office and should be reviewed and updated periodically.
- Attend and actively participate in events or recruit others from the network, such as researchers and Extension advisors, as appropriate. These events may be selected through interaction/cooperation with the national media relations coordinator, the National Sea Grant Office efforts and the CSC Subcommittee on Conferences, Exhibits and Special Events. All could suggest target events where Sea Grant participation would have the greatest impact on national visibility.

### **GOAL 3: FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS TO LEVERAGE RESOURCES AND RESULTS**

If Sea Grant is to grow, it must look outward to sources that can augment core funding from the national office. We must enhance, diversify, and leverage our communication resources with those groups that most identify with the Sea Grant mission. Sea Grant has a great opportunity to build new partnerships and forge new alliances to realize the vision of the National Sea Grant College Program. We can expand our collaborative communications efforts with partners who support Sea Grant research and outreach. Communicators have worked in the national sphere to develop high-quality products that underscore our successes and represent Sea Grant as a smart investment in the future of our nation's coasts.

There are special concerns related to funding development. In forging new partnerships we must ensure that new alliances are compatible with national and individual program priorities. By reducing its focus on internal issues, Sea Grant can begin thinking "outside the box" for opportunities to strengthen its alliances with coastal programs within NOAA and other agencies. Thus, we should consider the particular opportunities presented for each program within its own institutional structure.

#### **Objective 1: Pursue partnerships for funding and shared effort with other groups whose interests and priorities overlap; explore opportunities among federal, state, and local organizations while maintaining the integrity of the Sea Grant mission.**

- Leverage efforts and resources to increase effectiveness. This does not always mean specifically seeking funding. Sea Grant has earned the trust and credibility that attracts potential partners and collaborators. Sea Grant best presents its capabilities and strengths in pilot projects that encourage others to seek us out. In any new partnership or collaborative effort, we must make sure that Sea Grant maintains a leadership role in a process that ensures Sea Grant does not lose sight of primary national and programmatic priorities.
- Maintain productive relationships and forge new collaborations by direct contact through phone conversations, talking to people at meetings, and connecting with prospects one-on-one. "Prospects" might include state environmental resource agencies; nonprofit organization leaders in science, education, citizen volunteers and activist groups; media; and others. This means actively seeking regular opportunities to present Sea Grant, "sell" the Sea Grant concept and its past accomplishments, and foster recognition that Sea Grant's motives match those of the new collaborators and partners. It is also important to be cautious about turning into simply a "job shop" for other groups and agencies.
- Offer enthusiasm — it is contagious and effective when backed up by consistent performance. Personal connections are key. Encourage staff in their connections with potential partners, provide the resources and backup, and keep all promises and agreements.

#### **Objective 2: Actively participate in National Strategic Investment and Initiative opportunities through participation on theme teams.**

- Join Theme Teams, the wave of the future for Sea Grant. They define the program's top priorities and the way that Sea Grant will "do business." Sea Grant's evolving mission will increase emphasis on the Theme Team concept — a format in which communicators play active roles in concert with



colleagues from all aspects of the Sea Grant program.

- Work with the Sea Grant Association via the theme teams. Together, we may identify funding sources that meet national goals, with an emphasis on communications and relationship-building activities.

### **Objective 3: Identify and pursue grant opportunities from nontraditional sources.**

Traditionally, Sea Grant has relied almost entirely on its federal and state funding. In the past, these funds have been leveraged by state programs using traditional methods such as joint projects and additional agency grants. However, in many cases this has only provided a static funding base without much growth. There are resources to tap — agencies and groups that have much in common with Sea Grant. State and federal government agencies, as well as foundations, interest groups, and other non-governmental organizations, are concerned with environmental quality, sustainability, science, and environmental education. These are the same areas where Sea Grant has a credible and laudable track record. One obstacle to seeking such funds is simply tracking down sources, an often time-consuming and painstaking task. Sea Grant — and especially the communications network — needs to be proactive and innovative in building the funding base by employing new techniques and going after nontraditional collaborations. Such actions not only will raise the attractiveness of Sea Grant and its mission, but also will encourage others to join — and contribute funding towards — our efforts.

- Host professional development sessions at Sea Grant Week that provide assistance in pursuing nontraditional grants and effective grant-writing techniques.
- Hone development skills among all in Sea Grant communications through talent sharing and education in ongoing internal communication and dialogue.
- Explore options for a central resource, such as a Web site, that aggregates information about funding and partnership opportunities. This will include “case studies” of various proposals and results — both positive and negative.
- Tap university and institutional offices, such as research, publications, and public relations departments.

### **GOAL 4: INCREASE NATIONAL AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS TO SEA GRANT INFORMATION**

Increasing access to and availability of Sea Grant information is central to the program’s mission. This information should be disseminated through all appropriate means including video, radio, print, special events/exhibits and the World Wide Web. We can leverage our communication efforts through links with NOAA and partnerships with the public and private sectors.

#### **Objective 1: Increase visibility of the Sea Grant Library, which currently houses a centralized database of Sea Grant-funded documents and products. It is key to increasing accessibility and availability of Sea Grant information.**

- Continue efforts to digitize the Sea Grant collection, including training and support for individual programs to provide products in pdf format that is searchable rather than simply scanned as a large graphic.
- Increase marketing of services.
- Ensure that the library is linked to the proposals that a searchable project database be developed on the national level.

#### **Objective 2: Web sites must be made accessible to people with disabilities by conforming to state and federal requirements.**

- Investigate current regulations and monitor changes.
- Keep network alerted to ongoing requirement changes through listserv discussions, workshops and updates of the Sea Grant web guidance document.



- Encourage the state and national network leaders to build time and funds into budgets for staff training and implementation of these requirements.

**Objective 3: The utility and method of distribution of the Sea Grant Abstracts should be examined.**

- Participate in ongoing discussions within the greater Sea Grant network regarding the role of Sea Grant Abstracts and how it fits with the national library services.

**Objective 4: Many Sea Grant products could be better marketed through a national operation with a centralized office and warehouse for accepting orders.**

- Investigate appropriate agencies and explore funding for such a project.
- Engage the Sea Grant Association and National Office regarding product marketing discussions.

**Objective 5: Develop partnerships to reach larger audiences through methods such as list servs.**

- Build stronger bonds with extension and educators through joint planning meetings.
- Increase collaboration with the national media relations specialist.
- Investigate being added to partners' list serv.

**Objective 6: Ensure widespread circulation of theme team materials.**

- Provide updated materials to Congressional offices and various agencies with the federal government, especially as leadership changes occur.
- Provide materials to other partners on the national, state and local levels.
- Consider Web opportunities to provide more immediate updates of theme team information; develop a template and format for consistent presentation of Sea Grant theme team information on the Web.

**Objective 7: Web policy should change as technology evolves.**

- Seek annual reviews of Web policy by the electronic task force within the communications network steering committee.
- Ask the task force to suggest professional development regarding the Web and related arenas to be provided during regional and national Sea Grant meetings, and encourage attendance by all who focus on Web activities.
- Encourage programs to send Webmasters to technical training workshops to develop skills.

**GOAL 5: IMPROVE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION TO STRENGTHEN THE SEA GRANT NETWORK**

The National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) consists of various entities, including: The National Sea Grant Office in NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), the National Sea Grant Review Panel (NSGRP) of presidential appointees, and the Sea Grant Association, which includes delegates from each of the 30 university-based Sea Grant Programs. The programs support research and provide outreach through extension, education and communication projects. Extension leaders have a national assembly, communication leaders have a national network, and education leaders have a national committee. Planning and working together, these groups can accomplish a great deal.

Internal and external communication and collaboration are essential if the overall Sea Grant network is to continue growing at a pace commensurate with the nation's need for marine-related information. However, internal communication and collaboration is a continuing challenge for Sea Grant because of the program's complex structure and varied operating arrangements at the local, regional and national levels.

External communication and collaboration are also essential elements of this effectiveness because Sea Grant's mission and mandate far outstrip the public resources allocated to them. Initiating appropriate



alliances with other agencies, organizations and institutions and responding appropriately to others' initiatives can produce great progress and public benefit. The potential for alliances exists within NOAA, the Department of Commerce, other federal agencies and programs, as well as stakeholder organizations, educational institutions, and not-for-profit groups. This strategic goal seeks to improve Sea Grant's effectiveness through internal and external communications and collaboration by focusing energy on practical actions based on the belief that unity is strength and that communication is a partnership effort, a two-way street.

**Objective 1: The National Sea Grant College Program will enhance internal communications and collaboration.**

- Communicators will be represented in each of the Theme Teams and will be active in the team process.
- The communications network will offer to sponsor joint professional development programs with other components of Sea Grant's overall network. In addition, we will provide liaisons to each of these groups, and seek their input.
- Members of all Sea Grant groupings can subscribe and post messages to the e-mail list serves of the other components.
- The communications network encourages development of a user-friendly Intranet site, which would feature, among other things, policy statements, RFPs and funding procedures, including standard grant forms, proposal summaries, products in development, Web site guidelines, minutes of the various entities (SGA, SGRP, Extension Assembly, communicators' network, educators committee, etc.) theme team developments, the Making a Difference database, and other items designed to facilitate communication. Location of the site could be determined in concert with the SGA and the national office.
- Assist the national office in developing a communications center that would include products necessary to rapidly respond to requests for information. The center could include hard copies as well as a virtual library.

**GOAL 6: CHRONICLE COMMUNICATION ADVANCES THROUGH TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT PRACTICES**

All Sea Grant Communication offices will work to actively assess and update systems of evaluating their program efforts. These systems will be founded on principles and standards of evaluation developed by the Sea Grant Communications Network. Individual Sea Grant programs will apply those principles/standards with the goal that evaluations be widely understandable, comparable between and among programs, fair and credible. Through the documentation and presentation of credible evaluation, Sea Grant Communication programs can demonstrate their accountability and substantial value to both internal and external interests/stakeholders.

Effective evaluation practices explicitly tie communication projects to desired objectives and outcomes with target audiences. By assessing the outcomes of activities, programs discover their value to others and may thereby improve performance. Ultimately, the ability to credibly portray the effectiveness and appropriateness of communication efforts figures into rigorous review of each program, which influences future program direction and funding. External interests, including constituents, legislators and the public as a whole, have legitimate concerns in knowing that public funds have been expended wisely.

**Objective 1: Improve documentation of results/outcomes of projects.**

- Provide professional development programs on evaluations.
- Share productive evaluations with other Sea Grant programs.
- Regularly survey and report on existing communications evaluation methods and procedures for all Sea Grant programs;
- Follow trends in methodologies and procedures, such as tracking databases;
- Describe opportunities to assess qualitative vs. quantitative evaluations; Sea Grant communicators are integral players in the overall Sea Grant mission of sharing science-based approaches to resolv-



ing pressing coastal issues. We recognize that in order to obtain these goals and objectives, we must work with other aspects of the Sea Grant network, on the national and state levels.



# **Positioning Sea Grant**

## **An Integrated National Communications Plan**

### **2003-06**

Prepared and Submitted March 10, 2003  
by Stephen Wittman, Wisconsin Sea Grant

## **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 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 nongovernmental 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.



# Positioning Sea Grant

## An Integrated National Communications Plan

### 2003-06

Prepared and Submitted March 10, 2003  
by Stephen Wittman, Wisconsin Sea Grant

#### 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.

\* \* \* \*

#### 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 shortterm, 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 annu-



ally.

- At least three national news media/congressional briefings are held in Washington each year.

\* \* \* \*

## **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 cross-cutting 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.

\* \* \* \*

## **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:
  - o Inviting NGOs to cosponsor and/or participate in educational briefings for congressional staffers, media and special interest groups.
  - o Inviting NGO representatives to Sea Grant Week and the Capitol Hill Oceans Week and Knauss Fellows receptions.
  - o 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).
  - o Facilitating a Sea Grant presence/participation in at least two NGO conferences and meetings annually.
  - o Issuing joint position papers or comments on issues of common interest and/or lending its (non-advocate) support to NGO position papers.
  - o 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.

\* \* \* \*

## **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.

\* \* \* \*



## Appendix I

### South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium

#### PROJECT SUMMARY

TITLE: SEA GRANT NATIONAL MEDIA RELATIONS PROJECT  
Project Number: E/C-1 Revision Date: October 1, 2001  
Grant Number: Initiation Date: March 1, 1998  
Sub Program: Communications – Other Completion Date: February 28, 2004  
Principal Investigator: Linda J. Blackwell Affiliation: S.C. Sea Grant Consortium  
Marsha A. Gear CA Sea Grant  
John Greer MD Sea Grant  
Associate Investigator: Benjamin M. Sherman (12.0 mm)  
Affiliation: Sea Grant National Media Relations  
Grant Funds to Date: \$731,447 Match Funds to Date: \$ 000  
Current Funds to Date: \$193,619 Current Match Funds: \$ 000  
Proposed Grant Funds: \$195,014 (Yr.1) Proposed Funds: \$ 000  
\$195,044 (Yr.2) \$ 000  
Related Projects: Parent Projects: P/M-4  
Classification Number: III.C.162

Keywords: COMMUNICATION, MEDIA RELATIONS, NATIONAL, SOUTH CAROLINA

#### **Objectives:**

##### **To Improve:**

1. Scientific literacy of segments of the public that rely on print media for their science news.
2. Scientific literacy of segments of the public that rely on radio for their science news.
3. Scientific literacy of segments of the public that rely on over-the-air and cable television for their science news.
4. Scientific literacy of segments of the public that seeks their science through computer services, the World Wide Web or other electronic formats.
5. News media access to Sea Grant science and expertise.
6. Understanding and participation in media relations throughout the Sea Grant Network.
7. Operations of the NMRP with better use of the National Media Relations Advisory Committee (NMRAC).

#### **Methodology:**

Story tip sheets, expert source comment on topical subjects, news curve comments, presence at meetings & conferences, one on one news media visits, educational media briefing sessions, science issue forums, and WWW activities.

#### **Rationale:**

The Sea Grant media relations project aims to meet the need for a science literate news media ~d public The National Sea Grant College Program, if it works to raise its collective visibility to the news media, can make a significant contribution to improving the understanding of marine and coastal scientific issues by the news media and thereby meeting the state National Sea Grant Network Plan strategic goals of “assuring an environmentally and scientifically informed citizenry.” This proposal aims to be a significant part of that effort.

Accomplishments/Benefits: See Proposal 2003-2004 for key accomplishment listing.

- (7) Make a significant contribution toward national communications efforts. Methodology: Publications, newsletters, SCSGCP booklets, bulletins, PSAs, proceedings, educational exhibits, conferences,



## **GOALS, PROGRAM PLANNING, OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION**

### **A. Goals**

- The National Sea Grant College Media Relations Project will make a significant contribution to improving the understanding of scientific issues by the news media and thereby meeting the stated National Sea Grant Network Plan strategic goal of "assuring an environmentally and scientifically informed citizenry."
- The National Media Relations Project seeks to improve the Sea Grant Network's outreach to the general public through the news media - print and electronic - at both regional and national levels. The National Media Relations Project will help position Sea Grant as one of the nation's premier sources of expert, unbiased information on marine science and coastal issues.
- The National Media Relations Office will provide resources and consulting advice designed to improve the network's overall news media relations skills and effectiveness.

### **B. Objectives / Action Items:**

Objective 1: To improve the scientific literacy of the segments of the public that rely on print media for their science news.

Action Item 1: Seek placements about Sea Grant research and expertise among the 50 largest circulating papers in the United States papers.

Action Item 2: Seek placements about Sea Grant research and expertise in the 50 largest general circulation magazines.

Action Item 3: Seek placements about Sea Grant research and expertise in selected trade publications.

Objective 2: To improve the scientific literacy of the segments of the public that rely on radio for their science news.

Action Item 1: Seek placements of Sea Grant research and expertise on national and regional radio.

Action Item 2: Investigate the possibility of developing a network actuality/interview service.

Objective 3: To improve the scientific literacy of the segments of the public that rely on television and cable television for their science news.

Action Item 1: Investigate opportunities for placements of Sea Grant research and expertise on national television.

Action Item 2: Investigate the possible airing on cable television of Sea Grant Network educational video productions.

Action Item 3: Identify independent production companies that might be able to use Sea Grant scientific expertise in their programming.

Objective 4: To improve the scientific literacy of the segments of the public that seeks their science through computer services, the World Wide Web or other electronic formats.

Action Item 1: Increase the presence of the Sea Grant Media Relations Project on the World Wide Web through marketing and computer partnerships.

Action Item 2: Assist the Sea Grant Network to collectively improved, expand and better organize the information offered by Sea Grant on the World Wide Web.

Action Item 3: Increase the circulation of the Sea Grant Electronic News Service.

Objective 5: To improve news media access to Sea Grant science and expertise.

Action Item 1: Increase and improve distribution of electronic wire news delivery.

Action Item 2: Update and expand both print and World Wide Web versions of Sea Grant's Guide To Coastal Science Experts.



- Action Item 3: Conduct visits with Sea Grant scientific experts to news media in their offices.
- Action Item 4: Conduct scientific educational briefings for news media on marine science topics.
- Action Item 5: Develop "news curve quote" service, topic expert resource information.
- Objective 6: Improve the understanding and participation in media relations activities throughout the network.
- Action Item 1: Prepare a brochure offering tips for dealing with the news media.
- Action Item 2: Provide consulting advice on media outreach efforts at local and regional levels.
- Objective 7: Improve the operation of the NMRP, with better use of the National Media Relations Advisory Committee (NMRAC).
- Action Item 1: Establish regular committee meetings.
- Action Item 2: Use the NMRAC for network communication and interaction where appropriate.

### **C. Program Planning:**

The project will include both planned (60%) and unplanned (40%) activities. Unplanned time is essential to allow the project to respond to fast-moving, often unpredictable news curves. Planned time will focus on specific issues important to the Sea Grant Network.

The NMRC will develop a yearly work plan for the national media relations project under the guidance of the National Media Relations Advisory Committee at its annual meeting.

The National Sea Grant Network Strategic Plan will form the basic guiding document for topical identification. Specific selection of media outreach stories is done through reading of existing Sea Grant material (i.e., newsletters, magazines, news releases) forwarded to National Media Relations Office; through daily review of national news outlets (i.e., *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times* etc.) for current event tie-ins to Sea Grant activities and research focus; Prof Net monitoring; NMRAC and network project issues (i.e., issues forums); contact with National Sea Grant Office, NOAA and Commerce Department Public Affairs personnel; and participation in national and regional communicators conference call meetings.

The NMRAC in its meetings will seek, through feedback from its various represented network constituencies, to provide a strongly topical focus for annual work periods. The National Media Relations Advisory Committee, as a result of a combination of network polling, news media interest, network expertise available, and the recently established "theme team" approach to Sea Grant research recommends that the media relations project mirror, when possible, the theme areas of:

- Aquaculture
- Coastal Hazards
- Coastal Communities and Economics
- Education and Human Resources
- Fisheries
- Ecosystems and Habitats
- Ocean and Coastal Technologies
- The Urban Coast
- Seafood Science and Safety

These topical areas are currently highly visible and important to both the public and the news media. Of particular interest are aquaculture, coastal hazards, education, and seafood science and safety. The NMRAC may create subsets of its memberships to assist in the evaluation of specific topical issues that maybe part of the project work plan or media response activities as deemed necessary.

This focus will allow for all 30 Sea Grant programs around the country to participate in some aspect of the National Media Relations Project.

Specific efforts in support of these topical designations will include

- Story tip sheets: The NMRC will produce an on-going series of bi-monthly story idea tip sheets, reflecting the diversity of Sea Grant activity, to be distributed to the news media. The goal is to increase general media awareness of Sea Grant as a national program and stimulate original media



reporting on the topics suggested. Feature story backgrounders will be developed from these tip sheet items and be individually directed to appropriate media outlets.

- Expert source comment on topical subject: The NMRC will seek to identify knowledgeable sources throughout the network who can be used by the news media for guidance and commentary on topical areas. The development and maintenance of a widely used resource expert directory in both print and electronic formats is the goal. The NMRC will also seek placement of Sea Grant experts in additional media resource directories such as those maintained by the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Eurekalert and by Prof Net.
- News curve comments: The NMRC should be proactive in making available to the news media Sea Grant expertise which could educate or explain to the public the significance of contemporary events such as hurricanes, oil spills and other coastal and Great Lakes events.
- Presence At Meetings & Conferences: The overall public awareness of Sea Grant can be enhanced by exhibits and Sea Grant sponsored presentations at appropriate professional meetings and conferences. The topical focus of single theme issues brings a higher profile to key areas of Sea Grant research and meets stated national program strategic goals of bringing "the latest scientific and technical advances from the academic sector to the public realm." Professional association panel presentations or news media briefings, on the previously designated primary topics, with specific targeted organizations being the annual meetings of:
  - American Association for the Advancement of Science
  - National Association of Science Writers
  - Society of Environmental Journalists
  - Outdoor Writers Association of America
- News Media Sessions: The opportunity to have one-on-one news media visits and interviews between Sea Grant leadership, scientists or outreach specialists should be encouraged. Efforts in this area would assist in meeting the strategic goal of educating the public through the education of news reporters and editors on complex topics. Results could range from a better informed reporter to significant news coverage.
- Issues in the Marine Environment: A National Forum. The NMRC will provide guidance and administrative support to any potential national issues forum sponsored by the Sea Grant Program Network on a major marine environmental scientific topic. While the National Media Relations Coordinator will be an active contributor to any such forum effort, the project itself remains a network project guided by the project's sponsoring principal investigators. Likewise the NMRC will assist NOAA's National Sea Grant Office and the Sea Grant Association in any similar such undertakings.
- World Wide Web Activities: The explosion of the "Information Superhighway" – the Internet and the World Wide Web - demands a visible and organized presence by Sea Grant. According to Raaan's Media Report, in three short years over 80 percent of newspapers now have their own on-line sites reflecting the ever increasing popularity of this medium. The National Media Relations Project will continue to include the electronic world of the Web in the planning process of its activities and develop an appropriate WWW presence including special topical reference information relative to the designated subject focus. This effort helps meets the Sea Grant Network strategic objective of "an environmentally and scientifically informed citizenry."

### ***C. Methodology and Evaluation by Objective***

Objective 1: To improve the scientific literacy of the segments of the public that rely on print media for their science news.

Methodology:

- Prepare focused topical pitches.
- Circulate bimonthly tip sheets.
- Host press briefings.
- Conduct media visits.



- Field media requests (e.g., Prof Net).
- Respond to news curve opportunities. (e.g., Hurricanes)
- Prepare and distribute an update of the national Sea Grant media expert guide. (Sea Grant's *Guide to Coastal Science Experts*)

Evaluation:

- Overall placements, with assistance from the network.
- Media visits made and placements resulting from them.
- Media attendance at briefing, feedback received and placements resulting.
- Placements resulting from Prof Net and similar such service responses.

Objective 2: To improve the scientific literacy of the segments of the public that rely on radio for their science news.

Methodology:

- Prepare focused pitches.
- Circulate bimonthly tip sheets.
- Host press briefings.
- Conduct media visits.
- Fielding media requests (e.g. Profnet).
- Prepare and distribute an update of the national Sea Grant media expert guide. (Sea Grant's *Guide to Coastal Science Experts*)

Evaluation:

- Locate and tabulate overall placements, with assistance from the network.
- Media visits made and placements resulting from them.
- Media attendance at briefing, feedback received and placements resulting.
- Placements resulting from Prof Net and such similar service responses.

Objective 3: To improve the scientific literacy of the segments of the public that rely on television and cable television for their science news.

Methodology:

- Meet with Sea Grant Communications Steering Committee Video Task Force to determine feasibility; and to develop possible approaches and potential long-term strategies.
- Circulate materials such as the Sea Grant's *Guide to Coastal Science Experts* to television producers.
- Investigate use and stockpiling of background "B roll" for networks.
- Include television and cable producers in invitations for media briefings and panel presentations.
- Include television and cable producers in media one-on-one visits as appropriate.
- Fielding media requests (e.g., Profnet).
- Prepare and distribute an update of the national Sea Grant media expert guide. (Sea Grant's *Guide to Coastal Science Experts*)

Evaluation:

- Locate and tabulate placements, with assistance from the network.
- Development of network plan for approaching television and cable industries.
- Media one-on-one visits with television and cable producers.
- Television presence at media briefings, or stories resulting from them.

Objective 4: To improve the scientific literacy of the segments of the public that seeks their science news through computer services, the World Wide Web or other electronic formats.

Methodology:

- Expand Sea Grant information and topics available to the media on the web.
- Increase useful linkages to appropriate sources of marine information.



- Promote use of Sea Grant Media Center Web site and the National Media Relations Project by preparing a Sea Grant computer mouse pad and/or bookmark with NMRP and WWW information and distributing it to National Association of Science Writers (NASW) and Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) membership.
- Improve the interaction between the NMRP web page and entire Sea Grant Network to make good use of the NMRP site as a "front door" to information from the network.

Evaluation:

- Tabulate number of site visitors.
- Anecdotal comments that may come from users of site via various comment buttons.
- Number of links to the site.
- Number of new topical sections and their usage numbers.

Objective 5: To improve news media access to Sea Grant science and expertise.

Methodology:

- Maintain a steady increase in the subscribers to Sea Grant Newswire tip sheet service.
- Explore possibility of polling subscriber list concerning usefulness.

Evaluation:

- Number of subscribers versus current levels (702,10/2001).
- Number of placements resulting, anecdotal evidence and both polling and individual feedback from subscribers.

Objective 6: Improve the understanding and participation in media relations activities throughout the network.

Methodology:

- Participate in and attend national and regional Sea Grant Communications Steering Committee meetings.
- Organize, schedule and report on to the network a series regional communicator conference calls to be held approximately once every quarter for each of the Sea Grant regions.
- Attend monthly NOAA National Office of Sea Grant staff meetings.
- Attend weekly NOAA Public Affairs staff meetings at U.S. Department of Commerce headquarters.
- Attend meetings of the Sea Grant Association.
- Attend meetings of the Sea Grant Extension Service Assembly.
- Visit, as directed by NMRAC, state programs.
- Prepare a national media relations brochure offering tips on dealing with news media.
- Provide "media training" when appropriate for significant Sea Grant media presentations, such as professional meeting press briefings.
- Prepare an update of the national Sea Grant media expert guide, Sea Grant's Guide to Coastal Science Experts.
- Assist in communications/outreach efforts of SGA.

Evaluation:

- Number of programs responding to NMRP information requests.
- Number of programs developing news media oriented outreach efforts such as regular tip sheets, local topical media briefings, or one-on-one media visits.
- Increased collective network emphasis on news media outreach and coordination of such efforts both within the network and with the Sea Grant Association and NOAA's National Sea Grant Office.

Objective 7: Improve the operation of the NRMP, with better use of the National Media Relations Advisory Committee (NMRAC).

Methodology:



- Institutionalize operation, through regularly scheduled meetings of the advisory structure.
- Assist the NMRAC Chair with preparation of detailed agendas and meeting summaries.
- Copy committee members on appropriate correspondence.

Evaluation:

- Improvement in network response rates and overall participation in NMRP.
- Increased collective network emphasis on news media outreach and coordination of such efforts both within the network and with the Sea Grant Association.

### **Key Accomplishments, National Media Relations Project: 1999-2001**

During the current Sea Grant biennium, key accomplishments of the National Media Relations Project included the following:

- Coordinated an organized network response to ProfNet reporter information service that in the past 21 months has provided reporters with over 500 Sea Grant topical expert sources.
- Redesigned and significantly expanded the Sea Grant Media Center World Wide Web site, which has developed into an introductory site for all other Sea Grant sites, and is averaging 8,764 visitors per month as of September, 2001, up from 7,313 monthly visitors two years ago.
- Established an expanded electronic, searchable database of Sea Grant scientific expertise by translating the previously published "Sea Grant's Guide To Coastal Science Experts" into HTML format and placing it on-line at the Sea Grant Media Center World Wide Web site. It is averaging 633 users per month as of September 2001. Updated, Summer, 2001. Third printed edition to be published in November 2001.
- The Sea Grant National Media Relations project sponsored a special topical media education briefing entitled: "Science In The News: Public Choices, Science and Salmon" that was held in conjunction with the National Association of Science Writers and American Association for the Advancement of Science meetings in Washington D.C., on February 16, 2000 at the National Press Club. The session drew 21 reporters and interested parties to learn about the multitude of issues confronting policy makers in the Pacific Northwest concerning salmon and the possibilities of invoking the Endangered Species Act. Stories resulted on the Associated Press, Donrey News, UPI and Gannett News wires, as well in *The Christian Science Monitor* and on the Pacifica Radio Network. In addition to the media in attendance members of Congressional and gubernatorial staff as well as fishing industry representatives were present.
- Printed "Sea Grant's Guide to Salmon Issues in the Pacific Northwest," a reference guide to resources for reporting on the complex salmon issues. A PDF version of the guide is also available at the Sea Grant Media center website.
- The National Sea Grant Media Relations Project hosted a science briefing on the aquatic nuisance species science research looking at the issues facing the West Coast of the United States, in particular the greater San Francisco Bay Area on February 13, 2001 in Berkeley, CA. Titled "The Aliens are Here (& more are coming) - A Look At Aquatic Nuisance Species," it was followed by a field trip, featuring world class researcher Andrew Cohen, to the Berkley Harbor where Cohen showed 20 members of the media examples of alien species located along the harbor docks. The field trip was a popular addition to the annual Sea Grant research briefing which was held in conjunction with the National Association of Science Writers and American Association for the Advancement of Science Meetings in San Francisco on February 13, 2001. Stories resulting from the briefing appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, *Madison State Journal*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Monterey County Herald* and other publications.
- Organized a National Press Club media briefing on a special Sea Grant rapid response "white paper" report presenting results of a survey on public understanding of Pfiesteria issues and the latest developments concerning Pfiesteria in the Maryland region. The report entitled, "Understanding The Public's Concerns, Attitudes, and Perceptions about Harmful Algal Blooms; was presented to an audience of 27 reporters, government agency personnel and other interested groups. Stories, resulting from the briefing by Delaware Sea Grant's Extension leader Jim Falk, appeared in the *Wilmington*



(DE) *News Journal*, *Delaware State News*, Gannett News Wire, Science Update Radio Program, *Baltimore Sun*, American Oceans Campaign Newsletter, and the *Journal of the Ecological Society of America* as well as on the Associated Press wire.

- Additionally the Sea Grant Media Relations Project sponsored the appearance of Louisiana Sea Grant researcher Dr. Nancy Rabalais at the Society of Environmental Journalist Convention in East Lansing, MI in October 2000. An expert on the Gulf of Mexico's "deadzone," Rabalais was part of a panel on water quality issues. According to the SEJ officials in charge of the meeting, the session drew one of the largest audiences of any non-plenary panel presentation with nearly 60 environmental writers in attendance. *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* environmental reporter Tom Meersman organized the panel and contacted Sea Grant for its help.
- Added more than 120 subscriptions to an/electronic e-mail wire service for distribution of Sea Grant news to media and interested government and educational personnel. A combination of tip sheets, newsletters, and news releases featuring information about Sea Grant research or outreach efforts, have been published and distributed using this service. Media subscription list currently numbers 702 subscribers including reporters at the nation's top five circulating newspapers, 20 of the nation's 25 largest circulating papers and 44 of the overall 100 largest daily papers. Other media subscribing include producers at all five major television and cable networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox), both national and regional wire service reporters, and a growing group of reporters and freelancer science writers corresponding for such diverse publications as *National Wildlife*, *National Geographic*, *Pacific Fisherman*, *New York Times*, *Scientific American*, *Technology Review*, *American Airlines In-Flight Magazine*, *Minority Business Journal*, *Environmental Health Perspectives*, *Discover*, *BioScience*, *Science*, *Natural History*, *Science News*, and *Popular Science* among them. This builds on an earlier established and still existing fax distribution to approximately 120 news and talk radio stations (including two in every state).
- Established improved "internal" audience communication efforts by expanding above "media" subscription email news service to include the line office administrators of every NOAA sub-agency, the entire NOAA Public Affairs staff, and most components of the National Sea Grant network including Sea Grant extension leaders, communicators, educators and National Sea Grant office staff. Congressional staff, and other government agency staff who contact a NOAA officer or the National Media Relations Office are also included in this "internal audience list of approximately 100 people. The National Sea Grant Office also relays these news releases to the current class of Knauss Fellows thereby bringing current Sea Grant efforts to attention of a wide variety of agencies and legislative offices.
- Instituted in 1999 an ongoing series of regional conference calls among the individual state program communicators to promote better internal communication, and to identify and develop potential media opportunities that otherwise may not be developed beyond the state level. The calls will continue to be conducted approximately four times annually.
- Working with the Congressional Research Service and The Library of Congress arranged for the inclusion of the Sea Grant College Program Websites in the November 20, 2000, "CRS Report for Congress: Fishery, Aquaculture, and Marine Mammal Online News and Information Sources" publication that was distributed to all members of Congress and their staffs.
- Successfully promoted increased public awareness of Sea Grant through website subscription service to Sea Grant News by the general public of story tip sheets (without contact information). Subscriber list totals over 500 members of the general public as of September 2001.
- The Sea Grant National Media Relations Office has worked to improve NOAA Public Affairs awareness and understanding of Sea Grant activities. The media relation specialist has attend NOAA Public Affairs staff meetings regularly since April, 1998, participated in their in-house staff retreat and planning sessions and has met with some success in leveraging his efforts through their resources. Notable has been inclusion of a NOAA Coastal Oceans speaker in Pfiesteria briefings, inclusion of selected Sea Grant news releases on the front page of the NOAA News website which is the fourth most visited government website, and the inclusion of Sea Grant story ideas on the 1999, 2000 and 2001 NOAA Hurricane Tip Sheets which has resulted in network television coverage of Sea Grant



coastal hazard mitigation research. The Sea Grant National Media Relations Office also authored the NOAA Fact Sheet "Ocean Exploration" which highlights impacts of Sea Grant marine biotechnology research in everyday life. An example benefit of this partnership with NOAA Public Affairs was the interaction with then Secretary of Commerce William Daley's office for information concerning Sea Grant projects. As a result of one such contact Sec. Daley included comments about Sea Grant's work with aquatic non-indigenous species at the first meeting of President Clinton's Council on Invasive Species on July 22, 1999. NOAA Deputy Administrator Scott Gudes has also increasingly included Sea Grant in remarks made at his various public appearances.

Overall media placement activities of the National Media Relation's Project has resulted in 416 documented placements between October 1, 1999 and October 1, 2001 that reached an estimated audience of in excess of 300 million people, and has a conservatively valued advertising equivalency rate (one-to-one) dollar value of approximately \$2.2 million. At the more commonly used three-to-one equivalency, the placement values would be in excess of \$6.74 million.







