



Sea Grant
Law Center

2024 – 2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

NSGLC-22-06-04

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

In 2001, the National Sea Grant Office issued a Request for Proposals for “the creation of a law center to coordinate and enhance Sea Grant’s activities in legal scholarship and outreach related to coastal and ocean law issues.” The University of Mississippi School of Law successfully competed to serve as the host institution for the National Sea Grant Law Center (NSGLC), which was officially launched in 2002. For over two decades, the NSGLC has fulfilled its five major responsibilities: (1) integrating the efforts of ocean and coastal law researchers and users in the Sea Grant network nationwide; (2) conducting research on current ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes law issues; (3) providing outreach and advisory services to the Sea Grant network and coastal constituents; (4) disseminating information and analysis through periodic workshops and conferences as well as publications; and (5) serving as a focal point for Sea Grant’s law-related issues and promoting the growth and development of a Sea Grant legal network.

In September 2019, the National Sea Grant Office designated the NSGLC as a Sea Grant Coherent Area Program, an advancement from its previous status as a Sea Grant Project. The NSGLC earned this status for providing “a rare or unique capability in a specialized field of marine affairs” for the National Sea Grant College Program. With this designation, the NSGLC became a more permanent fixture of Sea Grant and is now recognized as one of the 34 Sea Grant Programs across the country.

The NSGLC is a nationally recognized and respected resource for information on ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes law. Law Center attorneys contribute to the field of ocean and coastal law and policy through the analysis of current issues and the publication of their research results. In addition, Law Center attorneys respond to research requests from the legal community, Sea Grant College Programs, and state and federal agencies located across the country. The NSGLC organizes and participates in continuing education programs, conferences, and symposia that serve to educate policy makers, practitioners, and laypersons on issues of coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes resource policy issues. The NSGLC’s quarterly newsletter *The SandBar* and monthly *Ocean and Coastal Case Alert* inform subscribers about new court cases and legislation affecting coastal resource management. In addition, the NSGLC website is a source of critical information about ocean and coastal law and is a tool for the integration of law and policy into the National Sea Grant network.

The NSGLC also helps promote and support legal programming throughout the Sea Grant Network. The NSGLC is an active member of the Sea Grant Legal Network and NSGLC attorneys collaborate with colleagues at other Sea Grant programs across the country in a variety of ways. As funding permits, the NSGLC runs grant competitions that provide financial support for innovative law and policy research, post-graduate fellowships, and conference symposia and workshops.

OUTLINE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The NSGLC solicits input to inform strategic planning on an ongoing basis. Interested parties are continuously engaged in a number of ways. Priority is placed on soliciting input from the wider Sea Grant network through attendance at regional and network (e.g., Climate, Water Resources, and DEI) meetings throughout the year. These meetings provide opportunities for Sea Grant personnel across the country to provide feedback on NSGLC initiatives and projects and offer recommendations for future work. The NSGLC also participates in Sea Grant professional networks, including the Sea Grant Extension Assembly, the Sea Grant Communicators Network, and the Sea Grant Research Coordinators Network.

For the 2024-2027 strategic planning cycle, the NSGLC started the planning process by evaluating progress towards achieving goals and outcomes identified in the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan. In early 2022, the NSGLC worked with the University of Mississippi Center for Research Evaluation (CERE) to conduct a needs assessment survey of interested parties in the Sea Grant Network. The needs assessment was a comprehensive, 27-question survey sent to Sea Grant staff utilizing several different network listservs during late spring 2022. The NSGLC received 30 responses to the survey from individuals representing 18 Sea Grant programs. Survey results helped the NSGLC refine the strategic goals and objectives of the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan.

The highest priority ocean and coastal law issues identified by survey respondents were aquaculture, zoning/access/property rights, and climate/coastal change. Survey respondents indicated that the biggest challenge their programs face related to legal programming is lack of capacity. When asked what additional support programs needed to better respond to legal issues in their states, respondents prioritized continued interactions with the NSGLC and the dedication of NSGLC staff members to certain regions. This feedback informed the NSGLC's decision to continue its programmatic emphasis on aquaculture and to increase focus on coastal resilience by funding a grant competition. This feedback also reinforced the importance of the NSGLC's work with Sea Grant Programs through the advisory service which directly increases capacity.

The NSGLC's strategic planning is guided by the input of its external Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee serves as an unbiased and independent sounding board and source of ideas and expertise for existing programs and new initiatives. To ensure the NSGLC is fulfilling its mission, Advisory Committee members are drawn from the various Sea Grant networks, including both position-based (e.g., Sea Grant Association, Assembly, Research Coordinators) and thematic (e.g., legal, fisheries), as well as law schools and relevant agencies. An NSGLC Advisory Committee call was held in early July 2022 to share high level findings of the needs assessment and solicit additional input. Committee members were supportive of the NSGLC's programmatic priorities, including the coastal resilience grant competition. The NSGLC held a follow-up call in September 2022 with select representatives from the NOAA Office of Coastal Management to obtain additional input and feedback on the coastal resilience grant competition.

Following this review and needs assessment phase, the NSGLC outlined priority actions for each of the four focus areas and respective goals identified in 2024-2024 National Sea Grant Network Strategic Plan.

PROGRAM'S VISION:

The NSGLC envisions diverse, thriving coastal communities and ecosystems that are supported by an engaged, environmentally-literate public and informed decision-makers. Communities and decision-makers will be knowledgeable of the legal framework governing the use of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources and capable of engaging in policy discussions on the local, state, and federal levels.

PROGRAM'S MISSION:

Sea Grant's mission is to enhance the use and conservation of coastal, marine, and Great Lakes resources to create a strong and sustainable economy, a healthy environment and resilient and inclusive communities. The NSGLC helps fulfill this national mission by implementing integrated legal programming based on the three legs of the Sea Grant "stool" – research, education, and outreach, which includes extension and communications. The NSGLC also works to build the legal capacity of individual Sea Grant Programs.

How We Work:

The NSGLC integrates its efforts across the following functional areas, which represents how the NSGLC generates, transmits, translates, and transitions knowledge to address critical law and policy issues with interested parties and partners.

Research:

NSGLC attorneys conduct scholarly research on a variety of topics of importance to the Sea Grant Network and its constituents. Research topics may be selected for a number of reasons, including priority issues identified in the National Sea Grant Strategic Plan or by a Sea Grant constituent. NSGLC research is routinely published in specialty law journals around the country. The NSGLC also contributes to the legal literature through its publication of the *Sea Grant Law & Policy Journal*.

The NSGLC's competitive funding opportunities address a critical need in the legal field, as very few funding opportunities exist to support legal research. The NSGLC's grant competitions support the efforts of (1) legal and policy scholars to answer pressing questions related to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes law and (2) Sea Grant programs across the country to enhance and build their legal capacity by building partnerships, organizing symposia, and hosting post-graduate fellows.

Education:

The NSGLC enhances the formal education of students at its home institution, the University of Mississippi, and around the country. Through its Law Student Research Assistant (RA) Program, the NSGLC hires law students to write articles for NSGLC publications and to provide research assistance. In the summer, the NSGLC offers two full-time 8-week summer internships, including one through the NSGLC's *Sea Grant Law Diversity Internship Program*. This program

provides experiential learning opportunities to diverse law school students in the field of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes law.

Outside of the RA program, the NSGLC also provides opportunities for law students around the country to publish in the *Sea Grant Law & Policy Journal*, *The SandBar*, and the NSGLC Blog. These writing opportunities allow law students to work with NSGLC staff, who serve as editors and help law students hone their writing skills and provide mentoring opportunities.

The NSGLC also works with undergraduate students at the University of Mississippi through its partnerships with the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College and the Croft Institute for International Studies. In addition to co-teaching courses with faculty members in other departments, NSGLC attorneys serve as advisors or readers for undergraduate theses related to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes law and policy.

Finally, the NSGLC fulfills a need in the legal profession for continuing legal education (CLE) on topics related to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes laws. There are limited CLE courses on ocean and coastal law topics, and those that are offered are often quite expensive. The NSGLC produces and presents substantive and specialized CLE in virtual formats at no cost to attendees.

Extension:

The NSGLC's primary extension activity is its Advisory Service. The Advisory Service is a non-advocacy legal research service provided free of charge to the Sea Grant College Program and its constituents, which include federal and state environmental and natural resource agencies. Through the Advisory Service, NSGLC attorneys provide neutral legal research findings and information to help decision-makers and resource users understand the existing legal framework governing coastal and ocean resources; highlight gaps, overlaps, and conflicts in the legal framework that should be addressed; and contribute to policy change on a local, state, and national level.

The NSGLC produces two extension publications that disseminate information on developing issues in ocean and coastal law: *The SandBar* and the *Ocean and Coastal Case Alert*. The NSGLC Blog provides short, timely updates of law and policy issues related to coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes resources. Finally, the NSGLC also produces extension publications, such as factsheets and white papers, organizes webinars, and gives presentations at conferences and other meetings to disseminate findings from its research projects.

Communications:

The NSGLC's primary communication tool is its [website](#). The NSGLC website provides information on NSGLC's current projects and houses an archive of all NSGLC products and publications, including webinars and Advisory Request memos.

The NSGLC uses social media platforms to engage with and inform its followers. The NSGLC primarily uses Twitter and Facebook to notify followers of the availability of its products and services and to relay updates relevant to ocean and coastal law. The NSGLC also has LinkedIn and YouTube pages, which are used primarily to stay connected with former students and host recordings respectively.

The NSGLC organizes and hosts a webinar series for the Sea Grant Network that is designed to share information on law and regulatory issues relating to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources. The NSGLC Blog provides short, timely updates of law and policy issues related to coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes resources. The NSGLC also distributes a monthly email newsletter that features research and outreach efforts by the NSGLC staff, promotes the top tweet of the month, and links to recent NSGLC publications.

Management:

Together, the NSGLC Director and the Senior Research Counsels form a “management team” responsible for overseeing, implementing, and evaluating the entirety of NSGLC projects and activities. The work of the NSGLC is coordinated across projects and staff members utilizing a variety of tools. The NSGLC coordinates with the wider Sea Grant network through its service and participation in the Sea Grant Association and numerous Sea Grant Networks.

Like all Sea Grant Programs, the NSGLC is rigorously evaluated through the NSGO’s Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation (PIE) system. The PIE system includes annual cycle evaluations and quadrennial cycle evaluations. Annual cycle evaluations include annual reports and annual NSGO reviews. Quadrennial cycle evaluations include site review visits, an external evaluation, and an extended NSGO review. The NSGLC management team works collaboratively to collect and organize data, write impacts and accomplishment statements, and prepare site review documents and other reports such as the NOAA Research Performance Progress Report.

Building Capacity:

One of the major responsibilities of the NSGLC, as set forth by the National Sea Grant Office in its original request for proposals to create a law center, is to promote the growth and development of a Sea Grant legal network. As the result of NSGLC leadership and work with the Sea Grant Association (SGA), the [Sea Grant Legal Network](#) (SGLN) was formally established as an official network recognized by the SGA in 2009. The SGLN consists of the recognized law and policy programs within the Sea Grant network and attorneys employed by or receiving ongoing funding support from a Sea Grant program to work on law and policy issues. The NSGLC is an active member of the SGLN with its attorneys often serving in leadership positions.

While the Sea Grant Legal Network is growing, the majority of Sea Grant programs remain without a formal legal program or a full-time legal extension specialist. Given the ever-increasing technical assistance needs of coastal communities and the current budget climate, few Sea Grant programs can justify allocating scarce resources to launch new law and policy programs. Through its advisory service, grant and fellowship competitions, and Journal

symposia, the NSGLC increases the capacity of the individual Sea Grant programs to address legal issues in their states and regions.

PROGRAM'S CORE VALUES:

Sea Grant's core values are essential and enduring tenets that influence the organization and support its mission. The core values support a culture of integrity and scientific neutrality enabling Sea Grant to serve as a trusted broker of information. The NSGLC strives to implement all programming in adherence to the five core values of the National Sea Grant College Program.

- Vision – Advancing creative, innovative solutions that address emerging and chronic challenges through engagement, science and stewardship.
- Collaboration – Seeking and sustaining partners with whom we leverage each other's strengths, and responsively, respectfully integrating diverse expertise and perspectives to reach shared goals.
- Sustainability – Advancing environmental stewardship practices and communicating the value of the services that the coastal, watershed, ocean and Great Lakes ecosystems provide to the nation.
- Accountability – Operating with integrity and transparency while maintaining quality and relevance in all functional areas, including program management.
- Non-Advocacy – Maintaining a commitment to objective research and programming that avoids bias and advocacy in the development and delivery of information, tools and services.
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Accessibility – Proactively engaging with the range of identities, cultures, communities and capacities present throughout our areas of work, with respect and sensitivity to each person's experiences, history and systemic challenges.

CROSS-CUTTING PRINCIPLES:

Cross-cutting principles provide a common foundation for all of the following Focus Areas and the work that the NSGLC conducts. Recognizing these Cross-Cutting Principles enhances Sea Grant's capabilities in order to meet future national needs. In the course of implementing the 2024-2027 National Strategic Plan, the NSGLC will:

- **Cultivate and sustain partnerships** by integrating the expertise and capabilities of partners from international, federal, tribal, state and local communities as well as from academia, nongovernmental organizations and industry.
- **Enhance diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and accessibility** by seeking and integrating diverse perspectives to advance cultural understanding and enable the network

to pursue its vision and mission with, and for, all audiences. We will actively create mechanisms to allow all people to participate in network activities. Bringing a range of perspectives, values and tools together to find solutions that are more innovative, creative, inclusive and responsive will help us be successful in tackling problems facing coastal and Great Lakes communities.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To help the nation understand, manage, and use its coastal resources wisely, the National Sea Grant College Program has identified four focus areas central to what Sea Grant does. The focus areas are:

1. Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development
2. Healthy Coastal Ecosystems
3. Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture
4. Resilient Communities and Economies

In addition to establishing goals for each of the focus areas, the NSGLC has developed a foundational cross-cutting programmatic goal that supports all other goals. The NSGLC's legal research, education, and outreach activities over the next four years will align with the national goals within each of these focus areas in the following ways.

Cross-cutting Programmatic Goal: Facilitate informed policy- and decision-making by Sea Grant constituents to improve management of the nation's ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources.

Action: Provide information to Sea Grant programs and constituents, including federal and state agencies, on federal and state laws, regulations, and policies related to coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes resources utilizing a range of publications, social media, and other communication tools, such as webinars and podcasts.

Outcome: Increased interested parties' awareness and understanding of developing ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes legal issues.

Action: Provide legal research and advisory services to the National Sea Grant Network and their constituents.

Outcome: Sea Grant personnel routinely utilize the NSGLC's Advisory Service to address legal research needs.

Outcome: Reduction in legal barriers, both real and perceived, to the implementation of Sea Grant programming.

Action: Increase the capacity of individual Sea Grant programs to address ocean and coastal legal issues in their respective states.

Outcome: Increased visibility of Sea Grant law and policy programming.

Outcome: Sea Grant programs have the support, information, and resources to address coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes law and policy issues of concern in their states.

Outcome: Increased number of Sea Grant programs actively involved in the Sea Grant Legal Network due to the hiring of new law and policy specialists or development of new fellowship programs or legal partnerships.

Performance Measures and Metrics:

- Number of peer-reviewed publications produced by Sea Grant.
- Number of Sea Grant tools, technologies and information services that are used by our partners/customers to improve ecosystem-based management.

Focus Area: Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development (ELWD)

Goal: A diverse, environmentally literate public participates in lifelong formal and nonformal learning opportunities.

Action: Provide learning opportunities for Sea Grant personnel and interested parties on the function and structure of legal frameworks and political systems governing ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources, including opportunities for public participation and engagement.

Outcome: Sea Grant personnel and interested parties gain knowledge and understanding of the legal frameworks and political systems governing ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources.

Outcome: Sea Grant personnel and interested parties participate and engage in decision-making processes related to management of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources at local, state, and federal levels.

Goal: A diverse, skilled and environmentally literate workforce that is engaged and able to build prosperous lives and livelihoods in a changing world through traditional and innovative careers.

Action: Provide law students with educational and professional experiences and training related to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes law.

Outcome: Law students around the country receive valuable practical experience and training.

Outcome: The University of Mississippi School of Law, due to the presence of the NSGLC, is recognized as a leading academic institution for law students and recent graduates seeking to specialize in the field of ocean and coastal law.

Action: Provide and support post-graduate fellowship opportunities for recent J.D. and LL.M. graduates.

Outcome: Recent law graduates receive specialized training in ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes law preparing them to pursue a career in the field.

Action: Develop and implement programs, such as the Sea Grant Law Diversity Internship Program and Community Engaged Internship, to attract and introduce diverse individuals to the field of ocean, coastal and Great Lakes law.

Outcome: NSGLC attracts a diverse and well qualified pool of candidates for law student and fellowship positions.

Outcome: Diverse and skilled workforce addresses critical ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes legal issues.

Action: Develop and deliver relevant, timely, and high-quality continuing legal education courses on topics related to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes Law.

Outcome: Legal practitioners gain knowledge of developments in ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes law.

ELWD Performance Measures and Metrics:

- Number of Sea Grant products that are used to advance environmental literacy and workforce development.
- Number of people (youth and adults) engaged in Sea Grant-supported informal education programs.
- Number of Postsecondary Students and Degrees Financially-Supported by Sea Grant in Higher Education Programs (Undergraduate, Graduate)
- Number of Sea Grant supported graduates who become employed in a job related to their degree within two years of graduation.
- Economic and societal impacts and benefits derived from Sea Grant activities (market and non-market; jobs and businesses created or sustained; patents/licenses)

Focus Area: Healthy Coastal Ecosystems

Goal: Coastal and Great Lakes habitats, ecosystems and the services they provide are protected, enhanced and/or restored.

Action: Conduct research and implement outreach programming on legal and policy mechanisms available to protect and restore ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems.

Outcome: Interested parties have knowledge of available tools to legally protect ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems

Outcome: Laws and policies on a federal, state, Tribal, and local level support and facilitate the protection and restoration of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems.

Goal: Land, water, and living resources are managed by applying science, tools and services to sustain resilient coastal and Great Lakes ecosystems.

Action: Support the development and implementation of effective federal, state, tribal, and local laws, regulations, and policies to sustain resilient ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems by performing analyses of existing relevant laws, regulations, and policies to identify gaps and potential solutions.

Outcome: Federal and state resource managers and policymakers take action to enact or reform laws, regulations, or policies to sustain resilient coastal and Great Lakes ecosystems.

Action: Support the development and implementation of effective state laws, regulations, and policies to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species by conducting national comparative analysis to identify best practices, gaps, and enforcement barriers.

Outcome: Federal and state resource managers and policy-makers take action to enact or reform invasive species laws, regulations, or policies to address identified gaps, overlaps, and conflicts.

Performance Measures and Metrics:

- Number of resource managers who use ecosystem-based approaches in the management of land, water, and living resources as a result of Sea Grant activities.

Focus Area: Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture

Goal: Domestic fisheries, aquaculture and other coastal and freshwater living resources supply food, jobs and economic and cultural benefits.

Action: Support the development of an effective federal and state food safety regime for seafood products, including shellfish, seaweed, and other products.

Outcome: Federal and state regulators and policy-makers use NSGLC research and products to enhance and improve seafood food safety regimes.

Outcome: U.S. consumers have access to safe seafood.

Goal: Natural resources are sustainably managed to support coastal communities and working waterfronts, including commercial, recreational, subsistence fisheries and aquaculture.

Action: Provide legal research and outreach services that increase knowledge of the legal framework governing U.S. fisheries and aquaculture.

Outcome: Sea Grant constituents have access to timely information on legal developments affecting fisheries and aquaculture operations.

Outcome: Increased understanding of the legal framework governing marine and Great Lakes fisheries and aquaculture operations.

Performance Measures and Metrics:

- Number of fishers, seafood processors, aquaculture industry personnel or seafood consumers who modify their practices using knowledge gained in fisheries sustainability and seafood safety as a result of Sea Grant activities.

Focus Area: Resilient Communities and Economies

Goal: Coastal and Great Lakes communities have the capability and resources to prepare for and adapt to extreme and chronic weather and coastal hazards, climate change, economic disruptions and other threats to community health and well-being.

Action: Support competitive research into the effectiveness of coastal adaptation and resilience laws and policies through the implementation of a national grant competition.

Outcome: Increased number of studies on the effectiveness of coastal policies.

Outcome: Increased knowledge of whether coastal policies are achieving desired policy changes.

Action: Provide legal research and outreach services that increase knowledge of the legal framework governing the management of coastal lands and responses to coastal hazards.

Outcome: Increased understanding of the legal framework governing coastal property and coastal hazards.

Goal: Water resources are enhanced, sustained and protected to meet existing and emerging needs of the communities and economies that depend on them.

Action: Develop and disseminate legal research products and services that improve understanding of the legal framework governing the nation's water resources.

Outcome: Increased understanding and awareness of federal, state, and local laws and policies enacted to protect water quality and quantity.

Outcome: Sea Grant constituents have increased access to timely information on legal developments related to water quality and quantity issues.

Action: Conduct research and outreach on the regulation of existing and emerging contaminants under the Safe Drinking Water Act to increase understanding and identify gaps in the legal framework and management options.

Outcome: Increased understanding and awareness of the legal framework governing drinking water contaminants.

Performance Measures and Metrics:

- Number of communities that adopt/implement sustainable economic and environmental development practices and policies as a result of Sea Grant activities.
- Annual number of communities that adopt/implement hazard resilience practices to prepare for and respond to/ minimize coastal hazardous events.