



Sea Grant Association

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Dr. Berrien Moore III, Chair
Blue Ribbon Review Committee – NOAA OAR
Morse Hall, Room 306
30 Silver Street
Dover, NH 03820

Dear Dr. Moore:

The Sea Grant Association (SGA) appreciates this opportunity to provide the Blue Ribbon Review Committee with comments on NOAA's research enterprise. SGA represents the universities and research institutions that participate in NOAA's National Sea Grant College Program. These academic and research institutions constitute our nation's most advanced capabilities in marine, coastal, and Great Lakes research, education, and outreach.

The universal feeling held by the SGA and its member institutions is that the National Sea Grant College Program, and the university community as a whole, are underutilized assets that can clearly fulfill a more significant role in achieving NOAA's mission. The Sea Grant enterprise should be empowered to meet the needs of NOAA and its constituencies through an expansion of responsibilities and the provision of additional resources. We encourage you to view Sea Grant – a well-known, respected, and successful partnership network – as a means to more fully address NOAA's research, education, and outreach needs.

The SGA has developed the following points for consideration by the Blue Ribbon Review Committee, most of which have been adapted from SGA testimony presented before the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Congress, as well as SGA comments to Admiral Lautenbacher on the results of the NOAA Program Review.

1. **NOAA will greatly benefit from the development of an integrated research and outreach plan that:**
 - a) **Defines the nature of NOAA's research enterprise(s);**
 - b) **Identifies needs based both on NOAA's operational requirements and input provided by external stakeholders at the national, regional, state, and local levels;**

- c) **Recognizes that the agency's outreach function must be inextricably tied to its research function;**
- d) **Cuts across all NOAA elements (= LOs); and**
- e) **Strengthens NOAA's reputation as a proponent of objective, scientifically robust policies and programs.**

NOAA should formally apply the planning/outreach model used by agencies such as NSF and NIH to engage the extramural-university community in workshops and other forums aimed at generating NOAA priorities for research AND education AND outreach in key programmatic areas. This would ensure that NOAA's programmatic priorities reflect the current state-of-knowledge concerning coastal, marine, and Great Lakes resource issues and the real needs of NOAA's constituencies. This would also vest the extramural community in a partnership effort to ensure that NOAA priorities are adequately addressed.

2. The integrity of the National Sea Grant College Program must be maintained regardless of any recommendations that are forthcoming from this Blue Ribbon Review Committee or any restructuring of NOAA Research that might result.

The strength of Sea Grant is its partnership arrangement among the nation's premier universities and laboratories, federal, state, and local governments, the private sector, and the public. These partnerships enhance program strength, reduce costs, and focus resources on real world problems and opportunities. Sea Grant has enjoyed great success with an integrated approach involving peer-reviewed research, directed education, technical assistance and grass-roots extension to identify and deliver needed products and services to citizens, industry and government. It is this **integration** of research, education and outreach that is crucial to Sea Grant's success and should not be compromised. We feel that the integrity of Sea Grant has been well-maintained within NOAA-OAR.

3. NOAA should integrate its education and outreach activities with research in partnership with the extramural community.

Interaction and regular contact with external constituencies contribute to NOAA's identification of critical coastal, marine, and Great Lakes issues and to its effectiveness in delivering information and products to stakeholders. Numerous studies¹ have recognized the NOAA-university partnership as one of the principal means to connect with these constituencies. Effective education and extension programming is critical to NOAA's mission and should be identified, along with research, as core missions for NOAA and the U.S. Department of Commerce.

¹ National Research Council's 1994 review of the National Sea Grant College Program; NASULGC Board on Oceans and Atmosphere 2001 white paper on NOAA in the 21st Century; President's Council on Ocean Exploration (2001); Sea Grant Review Panel 2001 report *A Mandate to Engage Coastal Users*; and NOAA & Academic Partnership Building Conference Report of 2001.

4. NOAA's extramurally based research and outreach programs, including Sea Grant, should be positioned within NOAA where they can most effectively contribute to the overall environmental, economic, and educational goals of the agency and the nation.

NOAA proposes to commit 50% of any new research funds to the extramural community. Improved coordination among NOAA university-based coastal and ocean programs would provide needed leadership in an increasingly complex arena and would also be more efficient and cost-effective. Repositioning NOAA's extramural research and outreach programs to have more direct access to the Administrator would allow NOAA to (1) serve the research and outreach needs of all of its line offices, (2) better tap Sea Grant's unique grassroots contacts, (3) engage the intellectual capacity of its universities, and (4) enhance its close working relationships with the scientific community and Congress by providing science-based solutions to real-world problems.

If NOAA is intent on reorganization, SGA believes that NOAA's research and outreach enterprise should be elevated within NOAA to best serve as a cross-cutting hub across the five program Line Offices. This would raise the stature of NOAA's extramural funding efforts in research and outreach and enhance communication and collaboration among NOAA and university scientists, resulting in a more coordinated and stakeholder-driven research and outreach program within NOAA.

Thank you again, on behalf of the Sea Grant Association, for providing us with an opportunity to offer input to the Blue Ribbon Review Committee on NOAA Research. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,



for Robert R. Stickney, Ph.D.

Cc: Ron Baird
Rick Rosen
SGA Delegates
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