



Sea Grant Association

On the Proposal to Authorize the NOAA Coastal Ocean Program as part of the NOAA National Sea Grant College Program

Position Statement February 1, 2002

Situation

A recently introduced bill to reauthorize the NOAA National Sea Grant College Program (H.R.3389) proposes to also authorize the NOAA Coastal Ocean Research Program within the National Sea Grant College Program. This legislation is designed to greatly improve both programs.

Background

The NOAA National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) conducts priority-driven research, transfers scientific results to the public, provides educational opportunities from K-12 to graduate degrees, and conducts successful outreach programs. Sea Grant is a partnership among academia, government, and the private sector, using a combination of research, education and outreach to improve the nation's economy and the coastal, marine, and Great Lakes environment. Sea Grant serves a broad constituency at the state and regional levels, through coordinated activities designed to address national issues, by solving problems and creating opportunities in areas such as fisheries, aquaculture, ecosystems and habitat, ocean engineering, coastal hazards, marine biotechnology, urbanization, community development, and marine education. Sea Grant is "Science Serving America's Coast."

The NOAA Coastal Ocean Program (COP) supports national and regional research programs that utilize multi-disciplinary teams of investigators, including Federal scientists, and fosters long-term collaborations among NOAA, other Federal agencies, academic institutions, and state governments. As with Sea Grant, COP programs are expected to produce products useful to coastal residents and the management community. The issues addressed by COP—fisheries, harmful algal blooms, and cumulative impacts of stressors on coastal ecosystems—tend to be long term and national or regional in scope. COP is "Science for Solutions."

Sea Grant Association Principles Governing Program Integration

The Sea Grant Association believes that the following principles must be adhered to if the Coastal Ocean Program is to be integrated with the National Sea Grant College Program:

- Integration of COP with Sea Grant should only occur if both programs are a part of NOAA, U.S. Department of Commerce.
- Integration of COP with Sea Grant must create positive benefits for COP, Sea Grant, and the nation.
 - COP will gain a strong and proven outreach capability it currently lacks at no additional cost.
 - Sea Grant will gain research focused on national and regional needs identified from a national perspective.
 - The United States will gain by having a stronger and more cohesive university-based coastal research and outreach program.
- The integrity of COP must be maintained, including its
 - national and regional coastal and ocean resource issue focus,
 - large-scale, long-term, and multidisciplinary program emphasis,
 - current programmatic commitments,
 - involvement and support of both university and federal scientists, and
 - provision that no matching funds are required.
- The integrity of Sea Grant must be maintained, including its
 - regional, state, and local coastal and ocean resource issue focus,
 - partnership among academia, government, and the private sector,
 - structure of an integrated program of research, education, and outreach,
 - focus on the nation's coastal, marine, and Great Lakes economic, environmental, and education needs.

The Sea Grant Association Perspective

The Sea Grant Association has developed a vision for the National Sea Grant College Program—that it “become the nation’s primary university-based research, education, training, and technical assistance program in support of coastal, marine, and Great Lakes resource use, management, and conservation.” The proposal to integrate COP with Sea Grant within NOAA represents one step in this direction. The Sea Grant Association recognizes that there are advantages of program integration, and is committed to unequivocally support the principles stated above if integration does occur. These advantages include:

- **Authorization of the Coastal Ocean Program.** The COP would for the first time be codified in law, with clear Congressional intent, through an authorization under the Sea Grant Act and with the common goal of coastal and marine resource conservation, management, and use.
- **Enhanced Program Coordination, Planning, and Integration.** Opportunities for coordination between the COP and NOAA’s other coastal and marine research efforts—including Sea Grant and throughout OAR—will be enhanced.
- **Broadened Stakeholder Involvement in Priority-Setting.** Program integration would provide a common process of setting priorities that will give all stakeholders a

role. Combining Sea Grant’s user-driven priority-setting process with COP’s federal and academic priority-setting process will (a) broaden the base of political and constituent support for both through enhanced involvement with a wider constituent base, and (b) enhance the transfer of knowledge to users and to both university and federal scientists through existing extension and outreach mechanisms.

- **Improved Coordination of University- and Government-based Coastal and Marine Science within the Federal Government.** The integration of COP with Sea Grant will enhance the value and contributions of the research and outreach programs within NOAA and the Federal government by promoting greater programmatic interactions with NOAA programs and scientists, promoting interactions with Federal agencies, and providing a basis for participation in broad national projects and studies.
- **More Efficient Delivery of Products and Services.** Program integration will provide for a more efficient management framework, including a combined administrative structure and a common performance evaluation process, thus resulting in reduced administrative costs overall. Sufficient infrastructure and staff must be maintained to ensure that COP and Sea Grant both can function with a high level of efficiency and impact.

Sea Grant Association

For further information, contact the Sea Grant Association:

M. Richard DeVoe
President
Sea Grant Association
843/727-2078
rick.devoe@scseagrant.org

James C. Cato
Chair, External Relations Committee
Sea Grant Association
352/392-5870
jcato@mail.ifas.ufl.edu