

Testimony for the Record
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Before the
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Committee on Appropriations
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, my name is LaDon Swann and I am the Director of the Alabama-Mississippi Sea Grant Consortium. I am submitting this testimony in my capacity as President of the Sea Grant Association (SGA). The SGA appreciates very much the support the Congress has provided the National Sea Grant College Program over the years. Because of that support, Sea Grant has been able to deliver a number of quantifiable benefits to the residents of our ocean and coastal communities which are documented below. To continue to achieve a high rate of return on federal investment and to produce impressive and quantifiable benefits to coastal residents in the future, the SGA recommends that the National Sea Grant College Program within NOAA be funded in FY 2014 at \$70 million. Recognizing the constraints in the budget process, this amount is \$22 million below the authorized level for FY 2014 and responds to guidance provided in the FY 2012 conference report that said:

“the Committee recognizes the important role the Sea Grant program plays in connecting coastal and Great Lakes communities with practical research and results, and encourages the growth of this program in future budget requests.”

The National Sea Grant College Program funds the best competitive science at our nation’s colleges and universities to inform public and private decision-making in order to enhance the practical use and conservation of coastal, marine, and Great Lakes resources while also expanding economy and maintaining a sustainable environment. Sea Grant addresses national priorities at the local level, by identifying citizens’ needs in order to help guide state and national research agendas.

The Return on Investment to the Nation Through Sea Grant

To those who ask if this federal program is delivering value and results to the taxpayer – we believe the answer is a resounding “yes.” According to the National Sea Grant Advisory Board, the Nation received the following in return for its FY 2012 investment in Sea Grant:

- \$170M in direct economic benefits to the Nation, which represents nearly a 2.5 to 1 return on the federal investment;
- 630 new businesses were created or retained, and more than 3,800 jobs were created or retained due to Sea Grant efforts;
- 900 communities across the nation have adopted more sustainable economic or environmental development practices and policies;
- More than 9,900 Fishers adopted responsible harvesting techniques;

- More than 56,000 stakeholders modified practices based on increased knowledge of safety, sustainability, and health;
- More than 600 communities adopted or improved hazard resiliency practices with Sea Grant assistance to make them better prepared to respond and to and recovery from hazardous coastal events;
- More than 1,500 individuals or businesses received new certifications in HACCP (hazard analysis and critical control point) handling of seafood products, improving the safety of seafood consumption by Americans across the country;
- More than 670,000 acres of degraded ecosystems were restored as a result of Sea Grant activities; and
- Sea Grant expanded the Nation’s workforce by supporting more than 1000 undergraduate and more than 950 graduate students, resulting in 350 graduate or undergraduate degrees awarded.

Approximately 95% of the federal funding provided to Sea Grant leaves Washington and goes primarily to state university-led programs where it is used to conduct research, carry out extension and outreach activities, and deliver valuable services to states that participate in this program. In addition, federal funding through the Sea Grant program has a significant leveraging impact with every two federal dollars invested attracting at least an additional dollar in non-federal resources in matching funding.

For more than 40 years, the National Sea Grant College Program has worked with its university partners to create and maintain a healthy coastal environment and a robust and productive coastal economy. The Sea Grant network includes more than 30 programs based at top universities in every coastal and Great Lakes state, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Sea Grant brings the robust intellectual capacity that we already have in our universities to bear on important societal problems and work force development. The programs within the Sea Grant network help citizens and businesses understand, conserve, and better utilize America’s coastal, ocean and Great Lakes resources. Through a partnership between universities and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Sea Grant directs federal resources to pressing problems in local communities. The partnership with universities is a great source of efficiency, and is why the National Sea Grant College Program is different from some of the other NOAA Coastal programs. By drawing on the experience of more than 3,000 scientists, engineers, public outreach experts, educators and students from more than 300 institutions, Sea Grant is able to make an impact at local and state levels, and serve as a powerful national force for change.

The Economic Importance of the Nation’s Coastal Communities

It is important to recognize that 52% of the nation’s total population lives in coastal watershed counties. The Nation’s coastal population increased by nearly 51 million people from 1970 to 2010 and by 2020, the coastal population is expected to grow by another 10% or 15.6 million. According to NOAA, the coastal economy contributed \$8.3 trillion to the Nation’s Gross Domestic Product resulting in 66 million jobs and wages worth an estimated \$3.4 trillion.

Recreational coastal fishing contributed about \$73 billion in total economic impact supporting over 320,000 jobs. For commercial fishing, the average annual value of all U.S. marine fisheries

from 2008 to 2010 is estimated at \$4 billion providing about 1 million jobs and generating over \$32 billion in income.

Our nation's ports, often located in the heart of sensitive coastal ecosystems, are an essential driver of the U.S. economy. About \$1.9 trillion worth of imports came through U.S. ports in 2010 supporting an estimated 13 million jobs.

Over 50% of the total energy produced domestically occurred in coastal states including natural gas production, electricity generation, and oil and gas production. Coastal areas are providing opportunities for renewable energy development with projects that seek to extract energy from the movement of ocean water due to tides, currents, or waves; from the temperature differential between hot and cold ocean water; and from strong winds in offshore ocean environments.

In 2010 over 13.5 million people in the U.S. were employed in the tourism industry in coastal states and communities (transportation, lodging, food services, entertainment, and retail) in over 750,000 business establishments, earning combined wages of \$266 billion. The total economic value generated by the U.S. coastal tourism industry in 2010 has been estimated at \$531 billion.

The Role of Sea Grant in Supporting The Nation's Coastal Communities – Increasing Coastal Resiliency

In addition to the annual positive scientific and economic impacts delivered by the National Sea Grant College Program, the relationships formed in coastal communities and with local stakeholders have proved extremely beneficial and supportive in disaster response. Beginning with hurricane Katrina and including the major disasters of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and most recently hurricane Sandy, the Sea Grant network has provided substantial and much needed "boots-on-the-ground" assistance to affected communities. Following each of these disasters, it was often Sea Grant training and programs that brought the first response to these impacted communities.

Sea Grant works with Federal and State agencies to provide critical information following natural and man-made disasters. In the wake of these events, Sea Grant programs assist impacted communities and states by facilitating community planning and capacity building by working with Department of Commerce Disaster Response Teams, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mitigation assessment teams, State resource agencies for fishery and aquaculture impacts, local governments, as well as others in addressing coastal impacts.

Immediately following every event, Sea Grant extension professionals and scientists were there, helping communities assess impacts to coastal businesses including local marinas, aquaculture businesses, and commercial fishing. Sea Grant also helped determine the extent of changes in coastal geology, barrier islands, beach erosion, and sand dune migration. Sea Grant capabilities allows the program to provide expertise and experience in assessing other environmental impacts such as marine debris and changes to water quality. Sea Grant adds to its ongoing efforts of providing coastal communities with technical assistance, helping to prepare community recovery plans, long-term resilience plans, and explaining future mitigation choices ranging from seawalls

to green infrastructure. Sea Grant has expanded its role to include the development of tools and programs for addressing the long-term health impacts of disasters on coastal residents.

Future Directions of the Sea Grant Program

Over the next five years, Sea Grant plans to concentrate its efforts in four areas: healthy coastal ecosystems; resilient communities and economies, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture and environmental literacy and workforce development. These four interrelated focus areas emerged from the NOAA and program's strategic planning processes as areas of critical importance to the health and vitality of the nation's coastal resources and communities. They respond to issues of major importance to NOAA, are consistent with the work of NOAA coastal program integration efforts, and are topical areas in which Sea Grant has made substantial contributions in the past and is positioned to make significant contributions in the future.

In each of the four focus areas, Sea Grant has identified goals to pursue and strategies designed to take advantage of its strengths in integrated research, outreach, and education, and its established presence in coastal communities. Understanding relationships and synergies across focus areas is vital to achieving the focus area goals. Sea Grant is one of many partners working to address these complex and interrelated issues. Understanding how activities in one area can support and complement other activities, and using partnerships to accomplish shared goals, are strategies inherent to Sea Grant, and will be central to achieving the goals outlined in the NOAA and National Sea Grant College program's strategic plans.

Concluding Thoughts

America must use its coastal resources wisely to increase the resilience of our coastal communities and sustain the health and productivity of the ecosystems on which they depend. With the requested Federal funding used to leverage significant state and local support, the National Sea Grant College Program will be uniquely positioned to continue to make significant contributions to improving the lives and livelihoods of the Nation's coastal communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these views. The SGA would be happy to answer questions or provide additional information to the Subcommittee.