



Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium
Science Serving America's Coasts

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Dr. Gene Kim
NOAA/Sea Grant, R/SG
1315 East-West Highway
SSMC-3, Eleventh Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Response to the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium Site Review Team recommendation and suggestion

Dear Dr. Kim,

In May 2011 the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium (MASGC) Board of Directors (BOD) held their annual meeting and discussed several items from the site visit. This letter addresses the one recommendation and a suggestion identified in the "Site Review Team's Review of the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium."

The only recommendation identified in the report was:

Recommendation: Evaluate the membership of the Advisory Council, not simply based on representing a range of agencies, but rather by focusing on specific areas of expertise and access that would most benefit the MASGC. One path to such evaluation is evaluating the networks that the MASGC can influence through extension and other outreach. Such an evaluation might result in the inclusion of additional members, for example, elected officials and representatives from emergency management and other organizations.

The MASGC has addressed this recommendation through a thorough evaluation of the Advisory Council (AC). Elected officials from both Mississippi and Alabama have been invited to join the AC. After thorough consideration emergency management representation also is being added to the MASGC AC. In addition, input will be leveraged through a separate advisory board that exists for the Coastal Storms Program, which is managed through the MASGC. After the evaluation there were several other additions to the AC, and these new members increase representation of specific areas of expertise that would most benefit MASGC. Several state and federal agencies were formerly represented on the AC. They will now be represented on a separate bi-state strategic planning taskforce, which will be convened during MASGC strategic planning sessions and other times as appropriate. This will allow MASGC to remain engaged with appropriate agencies while maintaining an independent AC.

The MASGC Board of Directors (BOD) discussed one of the suggestions identified in the report, which was:

Member Institutions:

Auburn University
Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Jackson State University

Mississippi State University
The University of Alabama
The University of Alabama at Birmingham

The University of Mississippi
The University of Southern Mississippi
University of South Alabama

Suggestion: This two-state consortium represents a powerful model that has been effective for 38 years. A full analysis, however, recognizes that there are resulting costs to this consortium arrangement. Managing operational, fiduciary and political differences between the states does exert additional transactional costs. And, it is possible that either state might take a stronger advocacy role if the program was not a shared program. Revisiting the cooperative model would be a major distraction. However, there are very effective one-state and one-institution organizational models elsewhere in the country. Therefore, it is suggested that the MASGC should informally re-evaluate if the current model remains the best model for the two states.

The BOD addressed this suggestion during the BOD annual meeting. They observed a presentation by the MASGC Director, which focused on how other Sea Grant College Programs were structured, options for how the MASGC could become two separate programs, and opportunities and limitations of creating two programs. The BOD asked several questions of the MASGC director and the NOAA Sea Grant director, who also participated in the meeting. After a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of creating two programs the BOD concluded that the program should take advantage of the strengths of the bi-state program and not create two programs at this time.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the above or would like further clarification.

Sincerely,



LaDon Swann, Ph.D.
Director, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium

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