

National Sea Grant

Sustainable Coastal Community Development

Extension Strategy

The central focus of the Sustainable Coastal Community Development extension program is to enable America to develop vibrant and productive coastal communities integrated into a healthy and productive coastal and marine ecosystem. We will do this by putting the tools of sustainability into the hands of coastal citizens and decision makers and by facilitating the widest possible spectrum of participatory decision making.

The Sustainable Coastal Community Development extension network, meeting in Washington, D.C., January 2008, developed a consensus on the following issues related to building our extension network:

BOUNDARY ISSUES –WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE SCCD?

SCCD is a potentially very large umbrella. If the umbrella is too large, there may not be enough focus for group cohesion. If our focus is too narrow, on the other hand, we may leave out many essential players. A general consensus emerged that “community” is central to our focus, implying a fairly broad agenda that includes both the built and natural coastal environments. We have a key role to play as a convener and integrator as communities negotiate a path to sustainability through a maze of complex information and resources.

We have purposely not defined a sharp boundary. There is, rather, a loosely-defined “core” focus, with community and development issues at the center, and any number of allied issues with varying degrees of overlap extending out from this core. How the core and allied issues are defined is left up to individual state Sea Grant programs. While we see extensive overlap with all of the other emerging Sea Grant focus areas, our core focus is on facilitating coastal community efforts to meet sustainability goals as we transition into the 21st Century.

There was overall agreement that several core themes and issues addressed by SCCD should include a balance of issues identified at the local or regional level, while keeping in mind the national focus of the program.

RESOURCE ISSUES – HOW DO WE BUILD THE NETWORK?

Partnerships

The SCCD extension community recognizes that partnerships are the best way to maximize and leverage the resources we have, and to build capacity within our group.

Nationally, our most prominent partner has been the U.S. EPA through the Office of Smart Growth. Additionally, almost all state Sea Grant programs are affiliated with the national NEMO network. These national partnerships can serve as a model for developing further national, state and local partnerships.

The Sea Grant SCCD extension network recognizes its role in the NOAA coastal community, and will contribute to the growing NOAA partnership for addressing coastal development issues. SG-SCCD has a unique niche within NOAA. Our network's colleagues are embedded in coastal communities where we serve as trusted conveners integrating science-based information to help guide decision making concerning coastal development issues. This contribution is strengthened by interaction with our NOAA partners (e.g. Coastal Services Center, Office of Coastal Resource Management, the National Estuarine Research Reserve system, etc.).

Building new partnerships at all levels is a key task for the evolving SCCD extension program.

Resources

The National Sea Grant Office provides funding to all of the Sea Grant programs to implement SCCD activities. This national funding has served as seed money to start SCCD programs in most states. Important though this funding is, the state Sea Grant programs cannot meet the growing demand for community development assistance without increased national funding for state and regional programs.

Many state programs have been very successful in leveraging new resources and funds through partnerships with state and local agencies. In addition, state and local programs vie for competitive funding from both national and state funding sources. Many programs secure funding as well from private foundations. A more entrepreneurial approach to competitive short and medium-term funding will be necessary to grow our program.

Sea Grant should also consider, through national or regional alliances, seeking funding for innovative programming from large national funders. Although our SCCD network is only in its formative stages, we have enough expertise on the ground that we could ramp up to some very significant programs very quickly with the right amount of funding.

TRAINING ISSUES – HOW DO WE BUILD CAPACITY?

The SCCD extension community is tackling many new issues not hitherto addressed by Sea Grant. Training is thus essential for enabling the network to meet the emerging challenges. We possess significant relevant capacity in facilitation and program design, communication/translation skills, and planning and policy development. Further training is needed in advanced facilitation, community and land use planning, technical planning tools, economic development, conservation design, land use regulation, zoning, low impact development, coastal development, and Smart Growth, among others.

Sources of training include: NOAA's Coastal Services Center, EPA's Smart Growth boot camp, and the National NEMO Network, which offers occasional trainings in a variety of land use-related topics. Additional partners might include the American Planning Association, the National Charrette Institute, and the U.S. Green Building Council (LEED), among others.

A subcommittee will be formed to explore training opportunities, including a resuscitation of the EPA Smart Growth boot camp.

RESEARCH ISSUES: HOW DO WE ADVANCE A RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE COASTAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AGENDA?

A coherent research agenda for coastal sustainability has yet to emerge at the national Sea Grant level. The SCCD extension network cannot effectively provide coastal citizens the tools they need to chart a path to sustainability without a responsive research mechanism in place. The lack of a robust relationship between the extension and research components of Sea Grant hinders the development of a research agenda that effectively addresses coastal citizens' needs. It was agreed that our SCCD Extension colleagues must contribute directly to forging relationships with researchers who can produce rigorous, fundable proposals that meet clearly defined SCCD research needs.

Some of the proposed solutions include making outreach a requirement for Sea Grant research funding and pairing outreach educators to related research projects. SCCD educators should become more involved in the research process, by recruiting researchers and identifying proposal reviewers at both state and national levels. SCCD faculty should also partner as co-PIs with full-time research faculty to develop relevant applied research projects.

ORGANIZATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE COASTAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EXTENSION NETWORK

Name

The network chose to realign the group's name with the newly minted Sustainable Coastal Development Focus Area, but did not want to jettison the "community" aspect of our work, which was universally recognized as a critical part of our identity and mission.

Structure

The SCCD extension network is now an officially recognized extension committee operating under the aegis of the Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Program leaders, and as such now has standing in the national Sea Grant community. The SCCD group meeting in Washington chose to have a leadership committee formed by representatives elected by each Sea Grant region, with the executive committee organized internally by the regional representatives. An additional voting member would be elected from the ranks of extension program leaders as a direct liaison to the Assembly. *Ex officio* members of the SCCD executive committee would include the Extension Leader in the NSGO and the Coastal Communities program leader (a new hire) at the NSGO (both of these non-voting).

The following slate forms the initial elected leadership body of the national SCCD network:

Mid Atlantic - Vicky Carrasco (MD)
South Atlantic - Lisa Schiavinato (NC)
Gulf of Mexico - John Jacob (TX)
Pacific - Peter Rappa (HI)
Great Lakes - Jesse Schomberg (MN)
Northeast - Kristen Whiting -Grant (ME)
Assembly Liaison - Jim Falk (DE)