SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS AND KEY POINTS FROM THE SEA GRANT ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP RETREAT

September 18-19, 2008

Portland, Maine

SUMMARY

The Sea Grant Association leadership and key players from throughout the network, including the National Sea Grant Office, the National Sea Grant Review Panel, and the Network Advisory Committee, convened in Portland, Maine for a two day retreat on September 18-19, 2008. The purpose of the retreat was to develop a strategy for short and long term Sea Grant advocacy in light of the many shifts that are happening with the program, with the development of the national strategic plan and performance assessment process, and on the national stage, with a new Administration and Congress on the horizon. The overarching goal of the retreat was to develop a multi-pronged approach to the external relations activities by identifying and discussing the necessary audiences, messages, and approaches that will help the program to grow.

Below are major action items that were identified at the retreat, followed by a brief synopsis of the discussion on the identification of key audiences and messages. Minutes of the retreat are appended to the end of this document.

Short Term Action Items:

- ERC and Lewis-Burke will draft a transition document to the next Administration.
- ERC and Lewis-Burke will draft a strategy for the 2010 appropriations request for discussion at the fall SGA meeting.
- Lewis-Burke will work with the ERC in developing short and longer term advocacy plans. The plans will include a calendar identifying opportune moments for delegates to engage in grassroots activities and a menu of activities in which to engage, such as meetings in state congressional offices, meetings in Washington, hosting events on campus, Dear Colleague letters, etc. The plan will also provide guidance on how specific initiatives and/or the four focus areas may be used in advocacy efforts. This plan will be presented to the delegates at the November meeting for discussion and endorsement.

Longer Term/Ongoing Action Items:

- ERC, PMC and Lewis-Burke will come up with ways in which to engage the entire network (extension, education, communications and research coordinators) in its advocacy activities.
- The SGA leadership and Lewis-Burke will identify ways to promote Sea Grant with the various levels in NOAA.
- The SGA leadership will look at how to retool the ERC and PMC given this new environment.

Identification of Key Audiences and Messages
Messages and tactics differ across the various audiences. It is important to gain an understanding of the audiences we are looking to engage and to be thoughtful of the issues, questions, and initiatives that concern them.

(1) ***The Administration (NOAA, Commerce and OMB)***—The Administration consists of audiences at various levels: NOAA, the Department of Commerce, and OMB. In addition, there are distinct audiences within NOAA itself. The first level is made up of the program offices, such as NSGO and its sister programs. This is where the major budgeting and priority decisions are made in NOAA. The next level consists of the NOAA leadership. This includes Dr. Spinrad (OAR) and the other line offices as well as the NOAA administrator and other front office officials. In order to successfully influence the Administration, Sea Grant has to be seen as an asset to NOAA at all levels. The program needs to be thinking about what it can do to help make OAR successful and address NOAA's mission, while also showing that Sea Grant can and will engage with other NOAA programs. In addition, the new National Sea Grant Strategic Plan should be promoted as a tool that more closely links Sea Grant to NOAA's mission and goals, while remaining true to the principles that make Sea Grant unique.

A few key messages for the Administration are below:

- Successes must be looped back to the federal/national benefit. It is not a compelling message that Sea Grant findings and tech transfer only benefit states or localities.
- The message that annual appropriations have not kept pace with Sea Grant's authorization levels is not compelling to OMB. Instead, the program needs to talk about the demand for Sea Grant resources and how it has been successful.
- Anecdotes are not helpful to OMB.
- A short elevator message is needed that explains that Sea Grant is part of NOAA, it supports NOAA's mission, and it is a focused national program.
- The program should be able to clearly articulate how it can grow with more resources and how it can be innovative and address the important issues of today, such as climate change.
- Sea Grant is unique in that it is already on the ground, it's credible and responsive, and it has an extensive network. No other part of NOAA can say that.
- Sea Grant is the right tool for an important job. The "job" has to be what is on the Administration's mind at that point and time, be it the economy (jobs), climate change or energy.
- The Review Panel (advisory board) should be utilized as a credible advocate for Sea Grant within the Administration. It should have a role to play in the Sea Grant budget making process.

(2) ***Congress (Individual Members and Committees)—***

- The authorization and appropriations committees in the Congress are similar audiences as OMB in that they want to understand what Sea Grant is doing to meet the Congressional mandate for the program and whether the federal investment is being well-managed and well-spent.
- The parochial side of Congress—the individual Members—wants to know how the state programs are addressing the constituents' needs.
- Though the anecdotes may need to be slightly different depending on the Congressional audience, every message should have a local and national angle. This will make

champions of the individual Members while at the same time equipping them with a national message that they can carry to the relevant committees.

- Stakeholders are an important tool for advocacy on Capitol Hill. It is often better for stakeholders to engage Members of Congress than Sea Grant directors since they have no direct vested interest. Third party validation is important for the program.

The below chart provides additional information regarding possible messages and tactics across the different audiences. Please note that the chart also identifies stakeholders as a key audience. While stakeholders were discussed at the retreat, the conversation focused primarily on how best to use stakeholders in advocacy with the Administration and Congress.

	Executive Branch (Commerce, NOAA, OMB)	Congress	Stakeholders
What do they want to hear?	• NOAA performance metrics • Measure objectives • Outcomes • PART process	• Highly visible issues • Constituent needs • Emerging priority issues	• Tangible deliverables • Practical solutions
What we need to say	• National Network • Contribution to NOAA's mission goals • National impact statements • Accountability and performances • Complimentary and not duplicative	• Issue status • Need for science and information • Need for public engagement	• Societal benefits • Change behaviors • Science-based solutions • New technologies • New methods for natural resource mgmt
Language/jargon	• Goals • Objectives • Benchmarks • ORPP • JSOST	• Testimonials • Success stories • "Human" stories • Outcomes and impacts	• Solutions • Information • Economic opportunities • Ecological sustainability
Opportunities to convey the message	• Direct interactions • Visits to local programs • Topical briefings • Annual reporting	• Hill visits • Topical briefings • State office visits • Local events • Publications	• Publications • Advisory committees • Programming • Testimony • Media
Responsibilities	1. NSGO 2. NSGRP 3. SGA	1. SGA 2. NSGRP 3. NSGO	1. SGA 2. Networks 3. NSGO