

Strategic Discussion: Decadal Thinking about Sea Grant -- Looking Back/Looking Forward (Ross Heath)

This session will look at Sea Grant's 36-year history and 10 to 20-year future from a long-term perspective, utilizing a SWOT (strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats) analysis to identify issues that should be considered during the development of a joint NSGO-SGA-NSGRP strategy to promote the future success of the Sea Grant Program within NOAA.

Sea Grant 1971-2021

A 50-year retrospective and prospective view

1. Purpose of the Session

Identify issues to be fleshed out by NSGRP subgroups or become the subject of white papers to be prepared by individual NSGRP members. These documents will serve as inputs to the development of a joint NSGO-SGA-NSGRP strategy to promote the future success of the Sea Grant Program

2. Emphasize Institutional Roles

- As we discuss responses to each item, we need to identify the roles of the key players:
 - NSGRP
 - SGA
 - NSGO
 - NOAA

3. The Past

Not, we hope, the most reliable key to the future!

4. History of appropriations (2007 dollars using a CPI deflator)

5. History of appropriations (2007 dollars using a CPI+2% deflator)

6. The Future

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

7. Strengths

- Long record of productive coastal activities around the country
- Strong and diverse constituent base
- Strong federal relations tradition
- Effective internal communications (SGA)
- Most programs have strong state and (to some extent) local support

8. Weaknesses (1 of 2)

- Perceived as “Creature of Congress;” Administration not a consistent proponent
- Support from NOAA / DOC / OMB intermittent and ambivalent
- Not fully integrated into NOAA mission
- Viewed as “them” rather than “us” by some in NOAA

9. Weaknesses (2 of 2)

- Bureaucratic location
 - Research is not the strongest NOAA line
 - NOAA is still not a good fit in DOC
 - DOC is not a strong cabinet department
- Lucid case for national relevance of Sea Grant is still needed
- Programmatic coordination across state boundaries is still patchy

10. Opportunities

- Sea Grant maps well on to Ocean Commission priorities
- Sea Grant was ahead of the ball on regional planning
- Environmental issues will continue to grow in importance
- Demand for effective outreach is growing in federal programs

12. Threats (1 of 2)

- Budgets aimed at deficit reduction are likely to lead to severe pruning of federal programs in the next 10 to 20 years
- Critical 2-year window for implementation of Ocean Commission recommendations has closed
- No clear political proponent for regional programs (“Washington politics is local or national”)

13. Threats (2 of 2)

- Concerns about local-program autonomy and split loyalty (due to competing pressures from state and federal funders) could weaken NOAA's commitment to Sea Grant
- Sea Grant could be the loser in the assignment of responsibility (and funding) for coastal environmental issues