

Sea Grant Association

Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and
Science
Committees on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and
Science
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December 13, 2013

Dear Madam Chair and Ranking Member Shelby:

As President of the Sea Grant Association (SGA), I want to express the appreciation from the 33 state Sea Grant programs for your continued support for the research and education budgets at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and at the NOAA Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR). We believe these programs deserve the Subcommittee's continued support as they enhance NOAA's internal research capabilities, engage the extramural university community in competitive, merit-based research, and provide highly cost-effective program delivery with high economic and societal benefits to a broad array of communities.

The National Sea Grant College Program is an integral part of the OAR portfolio of programs and is an excellent example of a program providing a high return on its federal investment. Sea Grant has a demonstrated ability to leverage federal and non-federal funding for the benefit of its stakeholders and in support of the overall NOAA strategic plan and mission. ***The Sea Grant Association is requesting federal funding of \$72.7 million for the National Sea Grant College Program in FY2014.*** This amount is equal to the Senate's proposed FY2014 appropriation and is \$19.2 million below the authorized level for FY2014. This funding recommendation is consistent with previous direction from the appropriations subcommittee to expand the positive impact of the program through increased funding. The funding request also supports the interest some in NOAA have expressed to expand the reach Sea Grant extension services provide as a model NOAA program.

According to the 2012 Biennial Report¹ of the National Sea Grant Advisory Board, the Sea Grant program delivered the following benefits to the Nation:

- \$170 million in economic benefits;
- 630 businesses created or retained;
- 3800 jobs created or retained;
- 3100 volunteer hours for education, outreach, and extension;
- 1000 undergraduate students supported;
- 150 undergraduate degrees awarded; and
- 200 graduate degrees awarded.

¹http://seagrants.noaa.gov/Portals/0/Documents/who_we_are/leadership/reports/The%20State%20of%20Sea%20Grant%202012_FINAL.pdf

The United States must continue to be more fully responsive to the economic development potential of its coastal resources as well as the environmental challenges faced by its coastal communities.

1. The coastal population of the U.S. increased by nearly 51 million people from 1970 to 2010, with 52% of the Nation's total population living in coastal watersheds.
2. By 2020, the coastal population is expected to grow by another 10% or 15.6 million.
3. In 2009, 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.
4. Recreational coastal fishing contributed about \$73 billion in total economic impact supporting over 320,000 jobs.
5. Our nation's ports, often located in the heart of sensitive coastal ecosystems are an essential driver of the U.S. economy with about \$1.9 trillion worth of imports coming through U.S. ports in 2010 supporting an estimated 13 million jobs.
6. Over 50% of the total energy produced domestically occurs in the coastal states. Coastal areas are providing opportunities for renewable energy development with projects that seek to extract energy from ocean tides, currents, or waves; from the temperature differential found in our oceans; from wind along our coasts; and biofuel production from various species of algae.

Approximately 95% of the federal funding provided to Sea Grant leaves Washington and goes to the state programs where it is used to conduct research, carry out extension and outreach activities, provide education and workforce development opportunities, and deliver valuable services to states that participate in this program. Federal funding through the Sea Grant program has a significant leveraging impact with its total budget double the federal appropriation provided in 2012. The National Sea Grant College program closely aligns with NOAA's national strategic priorities while also serving the needs of citizens and organizations at the state, local, and regional level. To illustrate the value of Sea Grant at the local level, I have attached a list of about 600 organizations from all over the country that support the Sea Grant program because of the information and services it provides to them and their members..

Thank you for the opportunity to present these views and to help paint a picture of the significant roles that the National Sea Grant College Program plays in coastal communities and economies. As the committee and its conferees continue to make tough choices regarding NOAA funding and programs, we hope the conferees will see the investment in the Sea Grant program as a valuable and important part of the NOAA portfolio.

Sincerely,



LaDon Swann
President
Sea Grant Association
Director, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium