

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2007

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Mollohan and Ranking Member Frelinghuysen:

We are writing to urge you to appropriate \$72 million in base funding to the National Sea Grant College Program in Fiscal Year 2008. This recommendation, which is well within the \$103 million level authorized in the National Sea Grant College Program Act Amendments of 2002 (P.L. 107-299), would reverse severe reductions to the program in fiscal years 2006 and 2007 and more importantly, would sustain ongoing research, education and outreach efforts, address emerging needs, and continue assisting NOAA in carrying out its many missions.

For four decades now, the National Sea Grant College Program, as a key component of NOAA's extramural research, education and outreach enterprise, has led the quest for practical solutions by providing research and education on national coastal and Great Lakes issues. Federal dollars appropriated to the Sea Grant program are leveraged and matched by state and private funds. The 32 Sea Grant programs, located in every coastal, Great Lakes and Gulf Coast state, conduct policy-relevant research linked to an extensive outreach and education network. This structure ensures that Sea Grant research is useful to coastal resource managers at the regional, state and local levels, marine-related businesses and industries, and most importantly the general public.

Sea Grant has established long-standing working relationships with a broad spectrum of stakeholders in every coastal state. Because it is science-based and non-regulatory, Sea Grant is viewed as an honest broker among a wide range of constituents. The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy called on Congress in its 2004 report to expand the Sea Grant program in conjunction with a doubling of all ocean and coastal research funding. In January 2007, the Bush Administration released its inter-agency Ocean Research Priorities Plan. Several of the plan's most important priorities dovetail with Sea Grant's strength, experience, and relationships with state and local decision makers and ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resource managers.

Sea Grant Increases Resiliency to Natural Hazards. Coastal areas of the United States comprise only 10 percent of our nation's land mass, yet they are home to over half of all Americans. As witnessed by recent record-breaking storm seasons, coastal communities and the natural resources and infrastructure on which they depend are at increasing risk from hurricanes, tsunamis, coastal storms, shoreline change, and sea level rise. Sea Grant institutions and their

partners pool research, education and outreach capabilities to enhance mitigation, preparedness, planning, education, response, and recovery in coastal communities throughout the nation.

Sea Grant is a dedicated Steward of Natural and Cultural Ocean Resources. Domestic seafood production has not kept pace with consumer demand; the United States imports an ever-increasing amount of seafood consumed domestically. Issues with quality assurance and consistent supplies are increasing. At the same time, the nation's commercial seafood industry is threatened by the loss of coastal access and multiple use conflicts in coastal waters. Sea Grant institutions, through the use of their fisheries extension, address the increasing needs of the nation's seafood industry by utilizing expertise in seafood safety and technology and marine aquaculture.

While the above examples illustrate Sea Grant's connectivity to the Administration's stated priorities, another year of flat-funding is requested by NOAA for Sea Grant in FY 2008. The implications of this hard freeze for the nation's economy, sustainability of natural resources, and national safety and security are significant. With the costs of research and education rising, the flat-funding of Sea Grant at \$55 million over the last few years has forced programs to cut jobs and left countless high-quality research projects unsupported. The Sea Grant network cannot sustain current activities, staff, and operations within this budget scenario.

Please support a funding level of \$72 million for Sea Grant for FY 2008.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Tom Hill

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John Murphy

John Angelle

Madeline J. Bordella

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Aris Van Holler

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