Maine Sea Grant

Strategic Plan 2009-2013

A focus on the needs of Maine's coastal communities

Introduction

Maine's extensive coastline is home to over half a million year-round residents and millions of summer visitors and seasonal residents. Maine's economy remains highly dependent on the local natural resources and related industries that sustain cities, towns, and villages. Competing interests abound, and this crucible of conflict is precisely where Maine Sea Grant applies resources, helping communities understand and manage their natural ecosystems while maintaining multi-use working waterfronts. Through appropriate engagement of community members and application of science, technology, and information, Sea Grant assists communities in their pursuit of economic viability, ecological integrity, and cultural heritage. Maine Sea Grant has become a trusted convener and source of science-based information and educational materials, and an organization that seeks innovative and sustainable ways for the people of Maine to address their challenges.

Measuring Success

Maine Sea Grant will track program success and be evaluated by the performance measures contained in this plan. The annual reporting structure and process are in line with these strategic goals and are adjusted regularly to remain consistent with University of Maine and NOAA reporting requirements. Our goals and objectives for the next four years attempt to focus efforts on achieving measurable success. Therefore, the objectives and measures are concentrated at the community level, and evaluation consists of tracking use and application of Sea Grant products and services by communities. The definition of community is broad, and encompasses municipalities as well as constituent audiences such as fishermen, tourism providers, schools, beach neighborhoods, and natural resource managers. The community scale represents the most significant investments of resources by Maine Sea Grant, and provides an accurate portrayal of how the program is providing benefit to society. However, this plan does not attempt to include all program activities. Rather, it identifies a set of objectives and associated metrics that are measurable and meet state and national standards, but are also flexible and ambitious.

This document is the summary version of the 2009-2013 Strategic and Implementation Plan, which includes projects, activities, and products that contribute to the objectives and performance measures. In general, Sea Grant programs and activities adhere to the tenets listed inside; those interested in the details of how Maine Sea Grant intends to reach the goals described here should refer to the full document, available at www.seagrant.maine.edu.

Strategic Planning Process

The process for revising Maine Sea Grant's strategic and implementation plans involved a review of past and current Sea Grant-funded activities and performance, and engagement of many sectors that utilize and benefit from Sea Grant products and services in Maine. This community engagement was largely accomplished through direct contacts by staff and through the 24-member Policy Advisory Committee (www.seagrant.umaine.edu/contact/pac).

In 2008, the National Sea Grant Office initiated a new Program Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation process, which required that state Sea Grant programs align with national goals and strategies. Maine Sea Grant staff spent a significant amount of time working on the plan, including a two-day retreat in Eastport in May 2009. This strategic plan is in alignment with the National Sea Grant College Program Strategic Plan 2009-2013: Meeting the Challenge and was approved by the National Sea Grant Office in November 2009. Most of the issues that have been identified nationally through NOAA and the National Sea Grant Office resonate well in Maine, and therefore a majority of Maine Sea Grant's future activities fall into four national focus areas: Healthy Coastal Ecosystems, Sustainable Coastal Development, Safe and Sustainable Seafood Supply, and Hazard Resiliency in Coastal Communities.

Healthy Coastal Ecosystems

GOAL: Maine residents and visitors understand and value the interdependence of healthy communities and healthy ecosystems and take action to ensure their long-term sustainability.

Objective HCE-1. Constituent organizations implement principles of ecosystem-based management. Constituent organizations (coastal residents, resource managers, businesses, and industry) have increased access to Sea Grant products and services that support implementation of ecosystem-based planning and management approaches.

Objective HCE-2. Coastal communities work to improve ecosystem health. Communities working to restore degraded ecosystem function and productivity use and benefit from Maine Sea Grant publications, stewardship programs, monitoring, and other activities.

Objective HCE-3. Teachers and classrooms engage in inquiry-based science learning activities that are aligned with state and national science education standards and that contribute to the health of coastal ecosystems in Maine. Maine Sea Grant's K-12 watershed education programming and aquatic nuisance species awareness and prevention materials move beyond pilot-stage and are incorporated into science curricula throughout Maine.

Sustainable Coastal Development

GOAL: Coastal communities have healthy economies that support multi-use waterfronts and a sustainable energy future.

Objective SCD-1. Communities balance the coastal access needs of various stakeholders and employ strategies to reduce conflicts among these stakeholders while preserving or enhancing access for water-dependent industries. Maine Sea Grant's working waterfront and coastal access-related research and outreach provide communities with the tools and information they need to balance coastal access demands.

Objective SCD-2. New communities engage in community–based visioning, in order to assess assets and opportunities for future planning. Maine Sea Grant engages new communities in visioning, resource inventories, analysis of development policies, and education of community leaders and citizens.

Objective SCD-3. Sustainable tourism products and opportunities benefit coastal Maine residents, communities, businesses, and visitors. Sea Grant collaborates with communities, industry, and stakeholders to develop nature-based tourism information and foster visitor opportunities that lead to sustainable tourism practices.

Objective SCD-4. Communities evaluate and implement alternative energy strategies based on new technologies. Maine Sea Grant outreach and energy-related studies assist communities as they evaluate environmental and economic impacts of alternative energy technologies (wave, thermal, current, wind, solar).

Tenets: How We Work

- Maine Sea Grant provides formal and informal learning opportunities to engage stakeholders in marine and coastal issues.
- Maine Sea Grant provides support to help facilitate effective participation of stakeholders in natural resource management, and to integrate science and multiple perspectives into the dialogues that lead to new management strategies.
- Maine Sea Grant provides high-quality scientific information that is used to understand, develop, and implement policies for sustainable uses of coastal natural resources.

Safe and Sustainable Seafood Supply

GOAL: Wild harvest and culture fisheries and the communities that depend on them are economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

Objective SSS-1. New communities engage in diadromous species research. Maine Sea Grant engages communities and fishermen in research, outreach, and education about the role of diadromous fishes in marine ecosystems.

Objective SSS-2. Seafood producers use practices that improve quality, profitability, and sustainability. Seafood producers and aquaculturists are knowledgeable and employ improved fishing and aquaculture techniques that increase seafood availability, sustainability, and profitability.

Hazard Resiliency in Coastal Communities

GOAL: Maine communities and decisionmakers understand the threats, risks, and opportunities that may result from coastal hazards, including climate change-related hazards, and utilize effective adaptation strategies in enhancing and maintaining resiliency.

Objective HZ-1. Coastal property owners and municipal officials implement sustainable coastal development practices. Coastal communities have an awareness of and access to data, innovative adaptive tools, and techniques to minimize hazard risks; some communities have identified and begun to implement strategies to achieve sustainability and resiliency.

Objective HZ-2. Teachers in Maine engage students in learning about climate change and coastal hazard resiliency. K-12 teachers in Maine use Maine Sea Grant products and programs to engage students in learning about climate change, and to support their efforts to fulfill curriculum requirements and meet state and national science education standards.

Crosscutting Objectives:

Sea Grant activities result in changes in legislation, policy, or management.

Sea Grant activities result in patents, companies, or jobs funded or created.

Supporting Marine Science for Maine People for Over 30 Years

The Maine Sea Grant College Program is a state-federal partnership based at the University of Maine and sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the State of Maine. Part of a network of Sea Grant programs throughout the coastal and Great Lakes states, Maine Sea Grant supports marine and coastal scientific research, education, and outreach. In partnership with University of Maine Cooperative Extension, members of the Marine Extension Team focus on issues of concern to Maine's coastal communities, extending current knowledge and expertise to stakeholders while helping to ensure that Sea Grant supports research that is relevant to those who depend on Maine's coastal natural resources.

Informing Strategic Research

The majority of Maine Sea Grant funding sponsors research at the University of Maine and other research and education institutions in Maine and the Northeast. Whenever possible, the granting process strives to link the scientific capacity of Maine to the strategic goals of the program. Funding is directed to support the best possible science that helps to inform decision-making needs in each of the four focus areas, as described in this strategic plan, and/or addresses state, regional, and national priorities that are revised in each biennial request for proposals (the next funding cycles initiate in 2011 and 2013).

Beyond the Planning Horizon

Maine Sea Grant must remain nimble and retain the capacity to respond to new and emerging issues. Within the next four-year planning horizon, ocean wind and tidal energy, marine spatial planning, and climate change are likely to create demand for Sea Grant products and services. Likewise, recent changes in commercial fisheries management may require staff to adapt projects and programs to meet the needs of local communities affected by new policies. Therefore, management will be flexible and adaptive while program staff and key advisors pay attention to new challenges and needs. The desire to be strategic yet responsive is not unique to this organization, and the proposed strategic and implementation plan structure is a living document. It is a guide and a commitment to achieving the societal benefits commensurate with investment, but Maine Sea Grant is poised to adapt as new priorities arise.

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