Site Review of the
Alaska Sea Grant College Program
May 18-19, 2010

[Signatures]

Chair, Federal Program Officer

Date

Co-Chair, National Sea Grant Advisory Board Member

Date

[Seal]
INTRODUCTION

The Site Review Team (SRT) review of the Alaska Sea Grant (AKSG) College Program took place from May 18-19, 2010 in Fairbanks and Anchorage, Alaska.

The SRT members were

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<tr>
<th>Terry Smith (Chair)</th>
<th>G. Ross Heath (Co-Chair)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Program Officer, Alaska Sea Grant</td>
<td>Sea Grant Advisory Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Sea Grant Office</td>
<td>University of Washington</td>
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<tr>
<td>Silver Spring, MD</td>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
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<td>Russell Moll</td>
<td>Rolland Schmitten</td>
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<td>Director, California Sea Grant Program</td>
<td>Sea Grant Advisory Board</td>
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<td>La Jolla, CA</td>
<td>Leavenworth, WA</td>
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<td>D. Robert Lohn</td>
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<td>Consultant</td>
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<td>Vancouver, WA</td>
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Prior to the beginning of the SRT visit, and in conformance with National Sea Grant Office and College Program guidelines, AKSG issued a public notice of the upcoming SRT visit by inviting interested parties to send written comments to the SRT Chair. The public notice was distributed by email and provided also on a webpage devoted to the upcoming visit. Included was a link to the 'Briefing Book' and an 'Addendum to the Briefing Book'. The site also provided links to a number of relevant documents including the Strategic Plan, the Implementation Plan and the most recent Annual Report. In summary, the program directly provided or made available the set of documents called for or implied by the SRT Procedures Manual.

The SRT Chair received three letters in response to the public notice. The documents were all supportive and focused on the extension part of the program. Two of the comments were general in nature and the third highlighted extension efforts in Petersburg, AK. All comment letters were distributed and reviewed by the SRT but are not discussed further in this report.

The SRT review took place in Fairbanks in the Alaska Sea Grant Office adjacent to the University of Alaska Fairbanks (May 18) and in Anchorage at the offices of the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program (extension program; May 19).

During the review, the SRT met with Alaska Sea Grant management staff, officials from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, additional Sea Grant staff and a subset of the Alaska Sea Grant Advisory Committee. Individuals who participated in the two-day meeting are listed in the detailed agenda attached to this report. The Alaska Sea Grant management staff – director, extension leader, education leader and business manager – participated in both days of the meeting.

Generally the agenda was organized to review and discuss broad issues related to: 1) Organization and Management of the Program; 2) Stakeholder Engagement; and 3) Collaborative Network Activities. Within each of these areas, this SRT report presents the findings of the Alaska Sea Grant Site Review
FINDINGS

In overview, the Alaska Site Review Team noted real improvement in the performance of the Alaska Sea Grant program relative to previous reviews/findings. Of special significance is the quality of the communication and extension components of the program. These two parts of the program are both excellent and among the most notable in the entire Sea Grant network. Also noteworthy was the Alaska Sea Grant Advisory Committee, a large, relevant and engaged group representing the many resource interests in the state.

I. ORGANIZING AND MANAGING THE PROGRAM

The program has an excellent management structure and functions well via a strong spirit of cooperation and shared responsibilities. Alaska Sea Grant has made enormous strides since the site visit of 2004 and those efforts are paying great dividends in bringing the program to new heights.

Management Team and Program Structure

• AKSG employs a coordinated management-team approach with appropriate balance of each facet of the program.

• Through an integrated approach by all members of the management team, AKSG has greatly broadened its horizons and developed numerous new collaborations and partnerships.

• Among the many collaborations generated through good management practices is the continual expansion of the interaction between AKSG and its academic home in the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences. This productive relationship is working well and yielding substantial benefit to both the Sea Grant program and University of Alaska.

• The success of the management team approach is evident from the way that team members energize each another as they discuss problems.

• There is some concern that the extension or Marine Advisory Program (MAP) Leader is somewhat overloaded with direct supervision of more than 15 individuals and numerous additional responsibilities.

• An additional task placed on the shoulders of the MAP Leader is serving as right-hand person to the Director as he comes up to speed as a relatively new Sea Grant Director.

• Also of concern is the somewhat unclear nature of the chain of command into which the MAP Leader fits, in that she reports both to the Sea Grant director and to the same dean as the Sea
Grant director.

**Suggestion:** The Alaska Management Team structure is working very well and producing excellent results. Nonetheless, care should be taken to remove some of the work burden from one of the management team member’s shoulders and, at the same time, clear up the current ambiguity over supervision lines. While these workload and supervision issues appear to be minor concerns, addressing them now is preferable to waiting until a problem does arise.

**Suggestion:** Enhancing efforts to build the pool of candidates for Knauss Fellowships is important for enlarging the program’s national impact. These fellows serve as a pool of talented potential employees with both Washington DC experience and strong academic backgrounds.

**Strategic and Implementation Plans**

- AKSG has organized and prepared a very good Strategic Plan that works well for the program and meshes nicely with the National Sea Grant Strategic Plan.

- AKSG has organized and prepared a very good Implementation Plan that works well for the program and meshes nicely with the National Sea Grant Implementation Plan.

- While the strategic priorities of AKSG were most evident, the implementation of those priorities was not as clear during the site visit. Most other Sea Grant programs in the national network have this same issue.

**Suggestion:** As AKSG takes steps to achieve their strategic objectives they should consistently bear in mind how those steps will be translated into action. Among the components of Alaska Sea Grant the communications program seems to enjoy the best success in this regard.

**Research Priorities and Objectives**

The research proposal review and selection process meets or exceeds national standards and yields good outcomes.

- Much of the burden of work in the research proposal process appears to fall on the shoulders of the Alaska Sea Grant Director, although conversation at the end of the site visit indicated that the Program Manager provides important assistance in these tasks.

- Strategic planning in the research portion of Alaska Sea Grant was not quite as evident as strategic planning in other parts of the program.

**Suggestion:** AKSG may wish to spend some effort on better integrating its program-wide strategic priorities into decisions in the research portion of the program. Also AKSG should consider spreading some of the tasks associated with recruiting researchers, research proposal review, and selection and project monitoring among a few staff rather than concentrate this in the Director’s position.
II. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement is excellent, with good input, both top-down (Advisory Committee) and bottom-up (MAP agents).

Sea Grant Advisory Committee

- Although the Advisory Committee is relatively large, it appears to be interested, engaged, and strongly supportive. It is very well led.

- The members of the committee are high-level representatives from a broad cross-section of stakeholders.

- The committee reflects a careful selection and recruiting effort, which needs to be continued as future members are chosen.

- Part of the success of the committee appears to result from a highly focused agenda and limited number of meetings (1-2 per year). Members give priority to meetings. Meetings have a high level of attendance and are viewed as important and likely to result in significant actions.

*Suggestion:* The board should adopt basic bylaws defining the length of terms for members and the procedure for reappointment of existing members and appointment of new members. This should not be interpreted as a suggestion that existing members should be displaced or that there should be a limitation on the number of terms served by a member. However, a regular schedule for reviewing and renewing appointments helps assure that the membership continues to be composed of those who are really interested in serving on the board.

Marine Advisory Program (MAP) Agents

- MAP agents are well respected and have effective engagement with local communities.

- The MAP program is highly responsive to local needs and interests.

- The program allows individual MAP agents to become “specialists” in certain topics and share this knowledge with other communities.

- MAP agents have a high level of interest and energy. They are excellent at seizing opportunities for information exchange and partnerships.

- The program and university have made special efforts to maximize communication between the far-flung field agents (many of whom are in locations accessible only by sea or air) and MAP’s head office.

*Suggestion:* When additional funding can be identified, the MAP program needs to be expanded to meet the Program's desire to move into climate and Arctic issues and to serve communities.
(particularly indigenous communities) along the north coast of the state. In addition, MAP expertise in coastal and offshore petroleum exploration, extraction, and site rehabilitation would open up new opportunities for collaboration with this important Alaskan industry.

**Suggestion:** The stakeholder input received from the MAP program and the Sea Grant Advisory Committee needs to be regularly integrated with the Alaska Sea Grant research agenda, and with a longer-term vision for Alaska Sea Grant. In programs such as this one, with high levels of stakeholder engagement, there is always a tension between responding to the urgent needs identified by the stakeholders and giving attention to those longer-term issues where the crisis is not immediate and solutions may require extended effort over time; but the resolution of the issue will, nonetheless, be important to Alaska. AKSG is aware of the need for this integration and it appears to be happening informally. However, AKSG should consider establishing a more explicit process for assuring that the challenge of issue integration, and the need for sustained attention to longer-term issues are being considered and addressed on a regular basis.

Web presence and database

- The program has a well-designed web presence and a sophisticated paperless records system and database, much of which has been locally developed.

- These are powerful communications tools and valuable sources of information for the public.

**Suggestion:** The program should consider increasing the opportunity for public access to Sea Grant material by making more of information in the database available and searchable online. Ideally, relevant information in the database should be accessible via commonly-used external web search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing.

### III. COLLABORATIVE NETWORK/NOAA ACTIVITIES

AKSG does an excellent job in planning and coordinating work with industry, coastal communities, and Federal agencies.

- Two components of the program that make major contributions to effective collaboration are the Marine Advisory Program (MAP) and the Advisory Committee. Both do an excellent job.

- An important recent collaborative success that impressed the panel was the legislative initiative for funds for the MAP program. It was a successful example of an initiative that worked from the ground up: starting with MAP leadership and proceeding to the AK SG Director, the Dean, Provost, Chancellor, System leadership and Advisory Committee, then to the constituents and, finally, to the legislature.

- A component within AKSG that stands out is the communication/publications programs. It is especially noteworthy that the publications section generates significant revenue at a time when other Sea Grant programs are cutting back on this activity. The leadership of this program is especially strong.
**Suggestion:** The annual report list 359 collaborations between AK SG and industry, communities, local, state, and federal agencies, and academic communities. While this is a powerful example of collaboration, it would be even more meaningful to illustrate collaborations via vignettes throughout the list.

**Suggestion:** The linkages between Alaska Sea Grant and federal agencies are very strong. The linkages to state agencies (beyond Fish and Game) seem less so, and would be worth exploring further.

**Suggestion:** While maintaining its fine efforts in collaborating with industry, communities, and the Federal agencies, Alaska Sea Grant should become involved in more intra-Sea Grant collaborations across the network. Excellent opportunities exist for building on Alaska’s program strengths in climate change, marine mammals, and paperless management.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The management, outreach and collaboration/partnership aspects of the Alaska Sea Grant College Program, which were the subjects of this site review, are outstanding. The improvements since the 2004 PAT review are truly impressive.

The level of communication between the AKSG program and the University of Alaska, and the University’s awareness and support of the program are exemplary. By having Sea Grant report to the dean of the College of Fisheries and Ocean Science, the program is assured of a knowledgeable overseer and advocate with expert knowledge of the field – a situation which does not always prevail where Sea Grant programs report to higher levels in the university.

The review heard and observed many positive features of the AKSG Program during our short visit. A sampling (by no means exhaustive) includes the stunning range and quality of publications, the impressive scale and engagement of the MAP program, the role of the active and influential Advisory Committee, the strong level of constituent support, the number of collaborations, the key role that the program is playing in NOAA’s Alaska Regional Collaboration Team, and the effective use of paperless communication and management/database systems.

This is an energized Program that knows where it is going. Great praise is due to the members of the program and to their external supporters for building AKSG to its present level of excellence.
Tuesday May 18

0800  Pick up at hotel
0815  Breakfast at Alaska Sea Grant offices
0900  Overview: David Christie
      Working in AK, Program status and structure, focus areas
0930  Program management:
      Funding: Michele Frandsen
      Research and student support: David Christie
      Marine Advisory Program: Paula Cullenberg
1030  BREAK
1045  Stakeholder Engagement:
      Education services: Kurt Byers
      Questions and discussion
1130  ASG in SFOS and the state:
      Denis Wiesenburg, Outgoing SFOS Dean, Mike Castellini,
      Interim Dean
      Questions and discussion with review team
1200  LUNCH with Deans and Provost
1300  ASG's role in UAF's Outreach and Engagement Strategy:
      Provost Susan Henrichs
      Questions and discussion with review team
1330  Review team-led discussion, regroup, questions
1500  BREAK
1545  Paperless Management: Dave Partee, Carol Kaynor
      Collaborative Network Activities (Part I)
      Overview: David Christie
      NOAA Regional Collaboration Team, AKCRRAB, other NOAA partnerships
1600  BP-ASG student partnership:
      Sean Willison (ADF&G, UAF student)
      Questions and discussion
1700  Adjourn for early dinner
1945  Arrive airport for 2045 departure to Anchorage (arr 2140)
2215  Arrive Capt Cook Hotel
Wednesday May 19

0745 Breakfast Meeting -- Site Review Team only

0845 Meet in hotel lobby. Walk to MAP office (1 block)

0900 Stakeholder Engagement
   Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program:
   Paula Cullenberg, Associate Director and MAP Program Leader
   Faculty and stakeholder presentations

1030 BREAK

1045 Collaborative Network Activities (Part II)
   Advisory Committee members join the group.
   ASG in Alaska and the role of the ASG Advisory Committee:
   Jeff Stephan (Manager, United Fishermen's Marketing
   Association. Advisory Committee Chair)
   NOAA in Alaska -- role of ASG: Amy Holman (NOAA Regional
   Collaboration Team Coordinator)
   Informal comments, questions and discussion

1200 LUNCH with Advisory Committee members, Amy Holman

1300 Committee write-up time

1600 Exit meeting with Dean and Provost (remote)

1630 Exit interview with program management team

1700 Meeting ends

1800 DINNER - restaurant, Airport transfers as needed