Site review team

Review of the

Delaware Sea Grant College Program

April 12-13, 2011

Chair, Federal Program Officer	7/29/2011 **Date**
Co-Chair, National Sea Grant Advisory Board Member	July 25, 2011 **Date**

Sea Grant
National Sea Grant College Program

INTRODUCTION

The Site Review Team (SRT) review of the Delaware Sea Grant (DESG) Program took place on April 12 and 13, 2011.

The SRT members included:

Dorn Carlson (Chair) NOAA/NSGO Delaware Program Officer Silver Spring, MD	Ross Heath (Vice-Chair) Sea Grant Advisory Board Member Seattle, WA
Jeff Gunderson, Director Minnesota Sea Grant Duluth, MN	Pat Montanio, Director NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation Silver Spring, MD
Michael O'Neill, National Program Leader USDA NIFA National Water Program Washington, DC	*James Murray, Deputy Director* *National Sea Grant College Program* *Silver Spring, MD (observer)*
Amy Scaroni *Sea Grant Knauss Fellow* *Silver Spring, MD (observer)*	

Prior to the beginning of the SRT visit, and in conformance with National Sea Grant Office and College Program guidelines, Delaware Sea Grant 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 posted on the websites of DESG and the University of Delaware College of Earth, Ocean, and Environment (CEOE), where DESG resides. It was also posted in UDaily, the University of Delaware's on-line news service, the DESG Twitter and Facebook sites, and in the March 22 issue of *At Sea* (an e-newsletter put out by DESG in cooperation with CEOE).

The SRT Chair received three letters in response to the public notice, all positive: a researcher at the University of South Florida spoke positively about DESG's research, outreach and education programs; an Administrator from the Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control praised DESG's Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships in the area of Water Quality, especially their volunteer monitoring programs; and a representative from Delaware Technical & Community College spoke of how they have been helped by DESG reaching out to them and partnering on their Classic Upward Bound Program.

The SRT review took place at the Otis Smith Laboratory on the Huge R. Sharp Campus of the University of Delaware in Lewes, DE. There was an initial welcome by University of Delaware Provost Tom Apple, and an orientation presentation on program management by Dr. Nancy Targett, the Director of DESG and staff. The remainder of the review was conducted in a panel format, with panels of about four to six partners or stakeholders formed around various "case studies" such as water quality, wind energy, and sustainable seafood. Sometimes some or all of the panelists were present in videoconference, a format that worked well.

Appendix 1 is the site review agenda, showing whom the SRT met with in each of the sessions of the site visit. There was also an opportunity to interact further with some of the DESG staff and panelists in a more informal setting at a dinner at the end of the first day of the review.

The panel format minimized the use of presentations and emphasized open-ended dialog and exchange of questions and answers between the SRT and the panel. The approach, supplemented with the briefing book and other documentation provided, allowed the SRT to gain what we felt was a detailed picture of how DESG operated and interacted with partners and stakeholders.

The site review ended with a debrief by the team to University of Delaware President Patrick Harker, and a more detailed debrief to Dr. Targett and DESG staff. There were no recommendations to report at this debriefing (and there are none in this final report). Some specific findings and suggestions, which are included in this report, were discussed with Dr. Targett and staff.

The report of the SRT follows the guidelines of the Site Review Team Procedures Manual. The SRT reviewed and discussed broad issues related to the Delaware Sea Grant Program's: 1) Organization and Management of the Program; 2) Stakeholder Engagement; and 3) Collaborative Network Activities. Within each of these areas, the SRT report presents the findings and recommendations of the SRT.

I. ORGANIZING AND MANAGING THE PROGRAM

The SRT drew on the documentation in DESG's briefing book, strategic plan, and annual report, and the presentations and discussions with DESG management, University of Delaware Provost Tom Apple and President Patrick Harker to form its findings concerning the organization and management of the program. The SRT found that the DESG program possesses a management organization that allows it to carry on a viable and productive Sea Grant Program, and that it has the backing of its administration at a sufficiently high level to fulfill its multidisciplinary and multifaceted mandate.

The experienced leadership of Nancy Targett and Jim Falk, the drive of the relatively new Ron Ohrel, with the strong support of the Provost and President of the University of Delaware have created an energetic and innovative Sea Grant Program that is deeply embedded in coastal management issues throughout the state. The program leadership seems strong, proactive and participatory.

We were impressed by the recognition of DESG's contributions by University officials and the program's constituents, and by multiple comments that the state of coastal management in Delaware is much improved by DESG's research and engagement activities. Because of the Director's dual responsibilities as Dean of the College of Earth, Ocean and Environment and head of the Delaware Sea Grant College (DESG) Program, the management of the DESG is somewhat more decentralized than most Sea Grant programs, but this model works well in Delaware and has not limited the breadth or impact of the program. In fact, the close relation of the leadership of the Sea Grant program to the College facilitates leveraging and joint funding of activities and results in economies of management that benefit both parties. The

management cost of DESG (8% of its budget) is low for any state program, and the Sea Grant cost for the Director is also kept low (0.2 FTE) without sacrificing strong leadership.

The strong reputation of DESG is reflected in the diversity of its funding from sources other than Sea Grant, including significant NOAA funding from a broad range of offices, such as the Coastal Services Center, the National Estuarine Research Reserves, the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, NOAA Fisheries, the Geodetic Survey Office, and the Centers for Coastal Ocean Science. We suggest considering another potentially fruitful NOAA partner that could match the Program's goals and skills: the NOAA Education Office, which could provide chances to connect with NOAA's education goals and resources, including potential grant funding opportunities.

DESG's core support from the state is invested in personnel, ensuring that it consistently meets the required match of Sea Grant funds without requiring individual researchers to contribute to the match.

The procedures followed in developing and managing the solicitation for research proposals and the review and selection of these proposals is in full compliance with NSGO requirements. The inclusion of representatives from many sectors of coastal Delaware in the development of the RFP and assessment of preliminary proposals helps the DESG management team ensure that the proposals ultimately funded are consistent with the strategic plan and are of central interest to the State.

The SRT found there was good integration and connection among the Program's research, extension and education activities. The Program's use of its Program Development (PD) funds to stimulate new approaches is appropriate and effective. We suggest the Program might find it beneficial to more rigorously track the outcomes from these PD investments. DESG might also consider taking advantage of its relationship with CEOE to find ways of providing more grad students in the department with exposure to Sea Grant activities, including extension activities.

The SRT congratulates the DESG program on the breadth and quality of its program, and its forward-thinking response to new opportunities in areas such as renewable energy and sustainable coastal development.

II. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

DESG appears to engage actively and productively with a broad range of Delaware constituents. The program is, no doubt, helped in this by the small size and relatively low population of the state (less than a million residents), but this is also due to the respect and credibility the Program has built up from past beneficial interactions with these constituents.

During the site visit, the SRT had the opportunity to have frank and open-ended discussions with stakeholders from a number of constituencies: elected officials at the city and state level, resource managers from state agencies, industry leaders, educators, representatives from local interest groups and private citizens (stakeholder participants in the site visit are listed in the appendix). When asked to identify their primary audience, DE SG suggested it is probably coastal municipalities and resource management agencies.

The SRT had the opportunity to interact with some members of the Advisory Council and found they were well informed about the Program and took their advisory roles very seriously. We commend the Program's recent efforts to streamline the Advisory Council and limit participation to those willing to play an active role in advising the Program.

The topical discussion sessions showed a common pattern to DESG's stakeholder engagement: the Program not only proactively engaged with constituents in the topic area, but also helped constituents from varied backgrounds effectively engage with each other. DESG helped each participant contribute effectively to the shared endeavor, and where a given element or expertise was lacking, if DESG could provide it, they did.

For example, during the Water Quality panel of stakeholders, the Team spoke with a volunteer citizen scientist who credited DESG with giving him the quality assurance framework, training and tools he needed to conduct water monitoring with sufficient rigor to be of real use. Another example came from a representative of the Division of Watershed Stewardship of Delaware Dept of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) who told of how the contributions of the volunteers and of DESG were "absolutely invaluable" to the success of their water programs.

A representative from the Delaware Inland Bays NEP told of a situation that occurred several years ago when a Tributary Action Team (TAT) was working a eutrophication issue with a largely agrarian community. DESG extension agent Joe Farrell helped develop a public engagement model that, in the words of the TAT representative, "taught the public how to engage the state, and taught the state how to engage the public. It now serves as a model for public engagement in the state."

Testimonials of the role played by DESG in successful endeavors were repeated in stakeholder discussion panels around the themes of sustainable coastal development (where, for example, players as diverse as lifeguards, emergency medical responders, municipal officials and NOAA modelers and scientists, worked together with DESG's help to develop an effective program to warn vacationers of surf hazards), environmental stewardship (including impressive citizen steward initiatives such as the water quality monitors already mentioned, and oyster gardeners), seafood safety awareness and wind energy.

Many of the stakeholders who participated were from the Lewes area, prompting a question from the Team whether perhaps DESG's engagement efforts might be Lewes-centric. DESG responded with examples of similar engagement across the state, and said that the stakeholders were selected in part to minimize the distance they would have to travel to participate, so were heavy with representatives near the site of the review (Lewes).

One of the common themes the SRT heard from many constituents during the site visit was that DESG could be effective and responsive because Delaware is a small state where "everybody knows everybody". This seemed to be more than a mere aphorism. DESG does not appear to make as much use of some more formal ways of gathering stakeholder input as some other programs do to identify new issues and changing priorities. This is balanced by a heavier reliance on the extensive personal networks which seemed to exist not just between DESG leadership and key constituents, but between all DESG staff and all constituents. Such a reliance

on personal networks would be risky in an environment where the loss of a few key individuals within DESG or the constituent community might disrupt or destroy the integrity of the networks, but in Delaware and in DESG, the networks seem effective and robust.

We offer one note of caution, though: while we did not see any evidence of any constituency that was not well integrated into these personal networks, if one existed it would be hard to know about it. More formal mechanisms for seeking broad stakeholder input might identify such a disenfranchised constituency, or provide assurance that none exists. We suggest that affirmative checks to assure that all constituents are being reached by DESG could be integrated without much effort, for example, into the early stages of the Program's next strategic planning cycle.

It is clear that DESG enjoys the respect and support of the coastal populace, the University, and local and state government. We suspect that few people outside the program are fully aware of the extent of DESG's contributions to addressing the coastal issues that have faced and continue to face the State.

DESG has addressed the difficulty faced by virtually every Sea Grant program in achieving recognition of its impacts by preparing a four-page brochure entitled ***Delaware Sea Grant College Program – 35 Years of Excellence***. The SRT applauded this effort, but feels that it was too modest. “Impact” is a strong word, and we suggest that the impressive contributions presented in the brochure, and others not reported there, could be couched in equally strong terms without diminishing their accuracy.

For example, the brochure says that water quality data collected by DESG's citizen monitoring programs "support" DNREC's water programs. DESG's contribution is much more significant than mere support, however; in written comments on the citizen monitoring program John Schneider, an Administrator from the Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control (DNREC), said "DNREC could not possibly satisfy its programmatic responsibilities without the help of Delaware Sea Grant."

III. COLLABORATIVE NETWORK/NOAA ACTIVITIES

DESG plays an energetic role in the Sea Grant network nationally and regionally, and actively participates with NOAA and other agencies on issues of mutual interest. The Program's goals and objectives are well aligned with the National Sea Grant Plan and with NOAA mission and goals.

DESG Leadership plays active roles in regional and national Sea Grant issues. Director Targett has served on the leadership board of the Sea Grant Association and is co-PI for the mid-Atlantic Regional Research and Information Planning project. DESG, with its partner Programs in Maryland and Virginia, was a pioneer in implementing truly regional research project competitions, an activity that has now been repeated by many Sea Grant Programs across the country.

Associate Director and Marine Advisory Service Director Jim Falk is chair of the Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant Extension Leaders group, and the incoming chair of the national Assembly of Sea Grant

Extension Leaders, as well as an active member of the Sustainable Coastal Development Focus Team and Executive Committee Member of the Sustainable Coastal Community Development Extension Network. Even new members of the leadership team are encouraged to take on regional or national Sea Grant leadership roles. The relatively new Marine Public Education Director Ron Ohrel is the mid-Atlantic representative to the national Sea Grant Educators network.

As mentioned above, the DESG's key stakeholders include coastal municipalities and resource management agencies. Given the overlapping missions of these stakeholders with the Sea Grant Program, is it not surprising that the state and municipal stakeholders the SRT heard from could also comment on DESG's effectiveness as a program partner. Comments about the extent and value of DESG's partnership with municipal and state partners were universally positive.

An impressive example of this type was the partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to link Coast Day with "Boast the Coast". Another impressive partnership was with the local newspaper. DESG provided Sea Grant information in lieu of empty news space, that benefitted the paper, the readership and the Program.

IV. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS and SUGGESTIONS

Findings

- Delaware Sea Grant is doing the right things, and doing them well. Both the state and the nation are benefitting from DESG's work, the Program is trusted and respected by its constituents and partners, and it has the backing of its administration at a sufficiently high level in the University.

- DESG is making effective use of the funding it receives from NOAA and the state, leveraging resources from other sources, providing research that is needed and used by the community, and integrating its research, education and outreach to provide tangible benefits to its constituency.

- The leadership of the Program is strong and proactive, with duties appropriately shared among the leadership team. The Director's position within the University allows some enviable opportunities for leveraging administrative costs. The Advisory Council is well engaged and effectively used.

- DESG seems very well plugged in to its constituent communities. The "everybody knows everybody" approach to networking and information sharing might not work everywhere, but it appears to work well at DESG.

Recommendations (items the Program must consider)

- none

Suggestions (ideas the Program may want to consider)

- The Program might consider expanding or rotating the individuals or constituencies on the Advisory Council as new issues emerge. An additional member from a non-coastal, non-tourism-driven city might serve the Advisory Council well.

- The Program might be able to take advantage of its relationship with CEOE to find ways of providing grad students in the department with exposure to Sea Grant activities, including extension activities.

- The Program may benefit from more rigorously tracking the outcomes from Program Development investments.

- We suggest the Program consider conducting affirmative checks to assure that all constituents are being reached by DESG, for example, during the early stages of the Program's next strategic planning cycle.

- The SRT applauded the brochure entitled ***Delaware Sea Grant College Program – 35 Years of Excellence***, but felt that the Program should consider whether it is being too modest when stating its contributions.

- Given the Program's good relations with businesses in the state, it might be possible to have industry partners contribute more financially to targeted activities (e.g., seafood safety).

- There might be opportunities for fruitful engagement with the NOAA Education Office to connect with NOAA's education goals and resources, including potential grant funding opportunities.

- The SRT suggests the Program continue working on gaining and attracting human dimension, socioeconomic research and work.

- Perhaps related to the above suggestion, the Program may want to consider making a research investment in developing better indicators of impacts and outcomes (such as behavior changes). As these are developed, they could help inform the strategic plan to better emphasize outcomes over activities.

- The Program might be in an ideal position to lead in the development of a regional (or broader) community of practice in long term volunteer monitoring, given the quality of its relations with its own volunteers and the productivity of its efforts with state agencies and the National Estuary Program.

Delaware Sea Grant College Program

AGENDA
Delaware Sea Grant Site Review
April 12–13, 2011

Tuesday, April 12 – UD Hugh R. Sharp Campus, Lewes (Otis Smith Lab)

7:30 a.m. **Continental Breakfast**

8:00 a.m. **Introduction and Purpose of the Visit:** James D. Murray, National Sea Grant Office and Site Review Team

8:15 a.m. **Program Organization and Management**

- ***Welcome:*** Tom Apple, University of Delaware Provost (via video link)
- ***Overview and Organization:*** Nancy Targett, DESG Director and College of Earth, Ocean, and Environment Dean
- ***DESG Finances:*** Lisa Ridenour, DESG Fiscal Officer
- ***Marine Advisory Service:*** Jim Falk, Marine Advisory Service Director and DESG Associate Director
- ***Communication and Education:*** Ron Ohrel, DESG Marine Public Education Director
- ***Delaware Sea Grant Advisory Council:*** Nancy Targett, DESG Director; Jim Falk, DESG Associate Director; Jerry Esposito, DESG Advisory Council Chair and Tidewater Utilities President

10:45 a.m. **Break**

11:00 a.m. **Stakeholder Engagement/Partnerships: Water Quality Issues in Delaware's Coastal Bays and Estuary**

- ***Discussion with Stakeholders/Partners:***
  - Ed Lewandowski, Center for the Inland Bays
  - Kathy Bunting-Howarth, Formerly with DNREC Division of Water Resources*
  - A.G. Robbins, Delaware Inland Bay Monitoring Program
  - Jennifer Adkins, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary*

12:15 p.m. **Lunch**

1:30 p.m. **Stakeholder Engagement/Partnerships: Sustainable Coastal Communities and Hazard Resilience**

- ***Discussion with Stakeholders/Partners:***
  - Bill McGowan, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension
  - Mike Rawl, Greater Lewes Foundation
  - Victor Letonoff, City of Lewes
  - John Carey, Hawai'i Sea Grant
  - Barbara Vaughan, City of Lewes
  - Missy Stults, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability*
  - Todd Fritchman, Dewey Beach Patrol
  - Dr. Paul Cowan, Beebe Medical Center

2:45 p.m. **Stakeholder Engagement/Partnerships: Supporting Decisions for Improved Coastal Resource Management**

- ***Discussion with Stakeholders/Partners:***
  - Lyle Jones, DNREC Watershed Assessment Section
  - Rick Reynolds, DuPont Fluoroproducts
  - Al Allenspach, Oyster Gardening Program
  - Buzz Henifin, Oyster Gardening Program
  - E.J. Chalabala, Center for the Inland Bays
  - Gulnihal Ozbay, Delaware State University*
  - Ryan Brown, Delaware Technical and Community College

3:45 p.m. **Break**

4:00 p.m. **Collaborating within the Sea Grant Network: Partnering with Industry to Improve Safety Standards and Help Consumers Understand the Benefits of Seafood**

- ***Discussion with Sea Grant Partners:***
  - Pamela Tom, California Sea Grant*
  - Steve Otwell, Florida Sea Grant*
  - Lori Pivarnik, Rhode Island Sea Grant*
  - Tom Rippen, Maryland Sea Grant*

5:00 p.m. **Discussion and Questions for DESG Management Team**

5:15 p.m. **Site Review Team Executive Session**

6:15 p.m. **Adjourn**

6:45 p.m. **Dinner with Site Review Team and Invited Guests**

Wednesday, April 13 – UD Hugh R. Sharp Campus, Lewes (Otis Smith Lab)

7:30 a.m. **Breakfast and Site Review Team Executive Session**

9:00 a.m. **Regional Networks and Collaborations with NOAA**

- ***Discussion with NOAA Stakeholders/Partners:***
  - Mark Suddleson, NOAA HAB Program*
  - Elizabeth Turner, NOAA CSCOR*
  - Libby Jewett, NOAA CHRP*
  - Gary Szatkowski, NOAA National Weather Service*
  - Reggie Harrell, Northeastern Regional Aquaculture Center*

10:00 a.m. **Stakeholder Engagement/Partnerships: Marine Renewable Energy**

- ***Discussion with Stakeholders/Partners:***
  - Gary Simpson, Delaware State Senate
  - Jim Ford, City of Lewes
  - Miguel Gonzalez-Posada, Gamesa Technology, Inc.*
  - Alan Weber, National Biodiesel Board*

11:00 a.m. **DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara* and Deputy Secretary David Small***

11:15 a.m. **Working Executive Session**

12:00 p.m. **Working Lunch and Afternoon Working Executive Session (DESG Management Team available for discussion and debriefing at the request of the Site Review Team)**

3:00 p.m. **Debriefing:** University of Delaware President Pat Harker, University of Delaware Provost Tom Apple via video link (Newark/Lewes), and Site Review Team

4:00 p.m. **Site Review Team Members Depart**

*An asterisk * designates that the individual will be joining the discussion by phone.*