

National Sea Grant Review Panel Special Meeting Teleconference Call

**Monday, August 27, 2007
11:00-1:00 p.m. EDST**

Panel Members Present: Nathaniel E. Robinson (Chair), William Stubblefield (Vice Chair), Robin Alden, Peter Bell, Ross Heath, Manuel Hernandez-Avila, Frank Kudrna, Jerry Schubel, Jeffrey Stephan, Judith Weis, John Woeste

Panel Members Absent: John Byrne, Robert Duce, Geraldine Knatz, Richard West

Ex-Officio Panel Member Present: Leon Cammen (NSGCP Director)

Ex-Officio Panel Member Absent: Paul Anderson (SGA President)

FACA Designated Federal Official Present: James Murray (Deputy NSGCP Director,)

Other Attendees (NSGO Staff): James Hurley, Melissa Pearson

CALL TO ORDER (Nat Robinson, Chairman)

- Opening of Meeting
- Roll Call – determination that a quorum was present
- Approval of Meeting Agenda and Proposed Meeting Procedure (by consensus)
- Review of Purpose of Special Meeting
 - Panel to present views on the role of the Panel in program evaluations.
 - Called special meeting to solicit input prior to Frank Kudrna representing the Panel at the RIT meeting.
 - Additional comments offered by Jim Murray: The RIT meeting to be held this week (August 28-30) is the culmination of 6 month effort by the RIT committee (which consists of 2 SGA representatives - Paul Anderson and John Kramer, and 2 NSGO representatives – Nikola Garber and James Murray.) The RIT is meeting to review work products generated by the 3 RIT subcommittees, and will prepare a draft report on program planning and assessment by September 16, 2007.

CONSIDERATION; REPORT OF PANEL'S NRC REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE (Kudrna)

The following introductory overview provided by Frank Kudrna, Subcommittee Chairman:

- The NRC Review Subcommittee was charged with looking at the Panel's future overall role, the role of the Panel in future program evaluations, and the status of competition within the Sea Grant Program.
- The subcommittee considered a number of source documents during its review including Dick West's draft report and the preliminary recommendations for implementing the NRC Report as adopted by the Panel during its February meeting. During the Panel's action taken in February, the Panel asked that its preliminary response to the NRC Report not be finalized until after the RIT report was released.
- The Panel's adoption of its NRC Review Full Committee's Report (preliminary NRC implementing strategies adopted by the Panel in February) will be considered by the

Panel at our San Diego meeting. That Panel's advice will be forwarded to the NSGO Director and NOAA officials.

- The Panel's NRC Review Committee, with additional involvement from Panel Chairman Robinson and Dick West, will meet in Milwaukee, WI on September 24-25 to finalize the NRC Report recommendations and regarding the RIT Report, will determine a recommended course of action to present to the Panel in San Diego.

MAIN MOTION – Accept the report of the Panel's NRC Review Subcommittee as amended (Kudrna, 2nd-Schubel).

DISCUSSION - Subcommittee's Report considered section-by-section:

- The three sections of the Panel report and each subsection were discussed sequentially.
- In the following summary, amendments to the report's language will be shown using italics to indicate inserted language, and strikethrough to indicated deleted language.

Section 1: The Panel's Future Overall Role

- Panel member West led the effort to review the Panel's future role. The four recommendations (1A-1D) from this effort were reviewed. West's full report will be presented during the September 29-30, 2007, Fall Semiannual Meeting.
- The Panel discussed the specific wording of the four subsections (A-D) and amended subsection C to read as follows:

AMENDMENT – Change the language of recommendations C to read:

“Consistent with our FACA authority, promote the NSGCP by developing and implementing a Sea Grant promotion strategy.”

Section 2: The Panel's Role in Future Program Evaluations

- This review began with the items adopted at the Panel meeting in February.

2A: Panel response to NRC Recommendation 12

- Discussion of the need to make it clear that it is individual Panel members (rather than the Panel itself) who would be involved in program evaluation. The responsibility for final program evaluations would continue to be conducted by the NSGO Director, as provided by the Sea Grant legislation.

AMENDMENT – By consensus, the report language was amended to the text shown below, and to indicate that the response is language adopted by the Panel at its February 2007 meeting, and *amended* during this August 27, 2007 meeting:

“We do not concur with this recommendation. We believe that the premise of this recommendation is invalid and based on an inaccurate argument. We believe that the direct involvement of members of the National Sea Grant Review Panel in the review process enhances the evaluation of the Sea Grant Programs and provides valuable understanding. Further, Panel members' knowledge and understanding is essential for the Panel to fulfill their statutory responsibility to advise the Secretary of Commerce, the NOAA Administrator, and the Director of the NSGCP. Additionally,

we recommend that the NSGRP work with the NSGO to involve the NSGRP in addressing issues that have broad significance to the overall NSGCP.”

2B: The NSGRP provides high level program assessment objectivity and in a most cost effective manner

- Whether to raise the issue of the administrative cap was discussed. Also concern was expressed over the issue of presuming that a raise in the administrative cap is unlikely to occur.

AMENDMENT – By consensus, the report language was amended to the text shown below:

“The NSGO has severe resource limitations under its present ~~and likely continued~~ 5% administrative cap. ~~Although the Panel supports an increase in the administrative cap from 5% to 7%, the likelihood is, this increase probably will not become a reality.~~ Therefore, the NSGRP and the NSGO must consider the cost effectiveness of various forms of evaluation models while not compromising the integrity or basic purpose of the evaluation. The NSGRP offers a cost effective method of providing excellent program reviews.”

2C: Guiding Evaluation Principles

- Discussion that the Panel feels onsite visits are crucial for the program evaluation process. However the language of this recommendation is not intended to presume the form this visit will take prior to reviewing the results of the RIT.
- Clarification was made. The committee was only addressing the question of whether onsite visits should occur, and whether the Panel should be involved in these visits. The question of who should have lead responsibility for the onsite evaluations (whether it should be the Panel) was raised. The Panel agreed this was an important issue, but one that should be held until release of the RIT report, and brought to the table again at the San Diego meeting in September.
- Discussion that the subcommittee’s report includes the language “rating and ranking” not because the subcommittee support ranking, but because both “rating and ranking” is currently required by congress.
- Suggestion that the recommendation clarify the definition of the word ‘goal’ in bullet #2.

AMENDMENTS – By consensus, the report language was amended to the text shown below:

- Insure that Federal Sea Grant funds are a good investment of public funds, including an evaluation system that measures program performance and is cost effective.
- Insure competition (rating and ranking*) during the program review cycle.
- Achieve *vigorous evaluation and program improvement* goals within current fiscal limitations.
- In addition to Technical Evaluations Panels, onsite ~~visits by~~ program evaluations ~~teams~~ should be included in any overall evaluation process and for consistency,

should include an NSGRP member, and the same NSGO representative for each onsite visit

* - *as currently required by congress*

2D: Rationale

- Discussion of whether to use the “rate and rank” terms in this section of the report was raised again.
- Panel discussion focused on the need for onsite reviews, and not just a DC based paper document review, in evaluating programs.
- Discussion of the level at which onsite reviews are capable of making a meaningful distinction between programs that are separated by only one or two decimal places.
- Further discussion (2D, second paragraph) that the issue is whether the focus is on assessing program performance or just on the numbers (“rate and rank” as mandated by Congress.)

AMENDMENT TO 2-D – By consensus, the 2nd paragraph, second sentence of the report language was amended to the text shown below:

“Further, onsite visits are necessary ~~in order to “rate and rank programs,”~~ *for meaningful and effective evaluations* as required by Congress, and to allow discussions with Advisory Committees, stakeholders, and University leadership.”

Section 3: Competition within the National Sea Grant College Program

- Discussion that the emphasis on competition is a continuing concern expressed by OMB. This section of the subcommittee’s report does not provide specific recommendations on competition within Sea Grant, but rather recommends that the Panel *should* be looking at how competition will occur
- This item is separate from the response to the NRC recommendations. This issue was first raised at the end of the 1st cycle review, and is one of the 3 carried over recommendations from the Panel-approved Evaluation Committee Report.
- Agreement that this is an important issue that the Panel should address at the September meeting in San Diego.
- Clarification (Murray) that the RIT materials provided to date are intended to give the overarching concepts the RIT is working with, and are intended for an audience that has been intimately involved in the RIT process. The final report of the RIT to be distributed 9/16/07, will include background and rationale information, and will provide a response to all of the NRC 24 recommendations. However, the RIT process will not be able to fully address this issue (competition) as it is busy fully responding to the NRC report. Additionally, the RIT felt that the issue of competition within Sea Grant could best be addressed once the new planning and evaluation processes are determined. The RIT also feels that a team of peers can paper documentation (for instance briefing book materials’ for purposes of comparative ranking of programs.

AMENDMENT – By consensus, the report language for recommendation 3-C was amended as shown below to indicate that the response is language adopted by the

Panel at its February 2007 meeting, and *amended* during the August 27, 2007 meeting:

“The National Sea Grant Office, in consultation with the NSGRP *and* SGA, should review its procedures for Recompetition, Recertification, Decertification and Redesignation of Sea Grant Programs.”

MAIN MOTION AS AMENDED – Chairman Robinson reiterated that a motion (made by Kudrna) and seconded by Schubel was already on the table. Action on the amended main motion, all Ayes.

MOTION PASSED – Report unanimously adopted as amended.

On behalf of the Panel, Chairman Robinson thanked Frank Kudrna for representing the Panel at the upcoming RIT meeting.

UPDATE / STATUS REPORT: PREPARATION FOR THE SAN DIEGO MEETING

- The logistics for the upcoming Sea Grant meeting in San Diego were discussed.
- A Draft Agenda for the Panel meeting at this event is nearing completion, and will be distributed to the Panel for review once completed. Chairman Robinson gave a brief overview of what is being planned for the Panel’s 2-day San Diego meeting.

WRAP-UP / ADJOURNMENT

- NSGO Director, Leon Cammen, expressed appreciation for the Panel efforts on this matter, and feels that what is underway is very encouraging. Cammen also expressed the following ideas:
 - There appears to be conflict between the use of onsite and paper reviews, neither method is perfect. He encourage the Panel to take a look at this apparent conflict.
 - Hopefully, a process can exist where the onsite review and paper review will compliment and enhance one another, such that they are not unduly duplicating review efforts, but are contributing to one another to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of program evaluation.
 - The issue of competition within Sea Grant (recompetition, recertification, decertification and redesignation) is a perfect issue for the Panel to address. The question then is how the results of the evaluation process that is settled upon will be used to address these issues.
- Chairman Robinson thanked Leon for his observation and assured him that his observations will be considered.
- Robinson thanked the Panel members for their participation, reiterated the Panel’s appreciation to Kudrna and his subcommittee members, and wished everybody a safe Labor Day holiday and adjourned the meeting.