

The following notes are from a webinar titled “How We Are Reaching Traditional and New Audiences during COVID Times” held on November 23, 2020. The webinar was hosted by Tracy Crews and Dave Hansen from Oregon Sea Grant; the chairs of the Education Group and Extension Assembly, respectively.

The goal of the webinar and breakout discussions was to collect as much information as possible about successful programming across the Sea Grant Network. The 80+ attendees came from all of the Sea Grant networks, most (if not all) of the Sea Grant programs, the National Sea Grant Office, and the Sea Grant Advisory Board.

## **Breakout Room Questions**

### **1. How have we maintained our existing stakeholder relationships in light of Covid-19 restrictions?**

- A lot of working groups are meeting right now, especially on regional topics. Most working groups were established prior to COVID but some are meeting more frequently.
- Engaging stakeholders more now in virtual formats due to accessibility and existing travel restriction at many universities.
- Relationships are all about communication, even if just via email or checking up on people.
- Using a mix of social media, traditional extension methods (socially distanced, masked site visits) and phone calls.
- Reverting to use of hand-written notes and printed materials. NCSG often has been asked about moving away from a printed magazine, but people have enjoyed receiving Coast Watch during this pandemic, “like an old friend coming to visit.”
- Stakeholder groups have shifted online, so we are meeting them where they are using whatever webinar software they are most comfortable with (Zoom, WebEx, Google Meetings, etc.)
- Education programs are going virtual like live fish dissections and activities are being used where students can follow along.
- Many programs/webinars are being recorded and posted online so they can be accessed in the future, increasing reach and ROI (i.e. Lake Champlain [Zoom a Scientist](#), Research Seminar Series, etc.)
- Focus on connecting stakeholders with a sense of place, focused on what is around them, in local ecosystems or backyards (Stuck at home, shuck at home videos).
- Continued use of blogs to tell stories.
- Maintaining contact with students can be challenging when programs are usually place-based fieldtrips. Many SG run visitor centers/field sites have been closed since March (Hanauma Bay, Hatfield Marine Science Center, etc.).
- Virtual programs have allowed many SG programs to reach more geographically dispersed audiences (example- [“Hanauma Talks”](#) or [Careers in Science Investigation](#) webinars that are recorded and placed on YouTube).
- Social media expansion, increased reliance on Facebook with more Instagram.
- Often greater participation/larger audiences in governmental and other meetings in virtual format.
- Many fellowship programs were able to continue with a hybrid model, online projects.
- Some SG programs developed webinars to meet emerging need to provide CEUs necessary that were no longer being provided by normal conference attendance.
- Extension already used to communicating in so many different ways; everyone adopted new technologies quickly, but suffered setbacks in trying to work with new stakeholders.
- Communicators challenged in trying to get videos, photos, and interviews with individuals, particularly those that are older and perhaps not as tech savvy or comfortable using Zoom, WebEx, etc.

- Inability to connect in person created challenges to building and maintaining effective interpersonal relationships. Standards or practice for how to work with the community, how to be respectful of place and community when doing research in someone's hinges on personal interaction and not being able to do it in person is difficult. It is hard to do oral history interviews that involve building up trust using Zoom.
- Needs assessments and virtual listening sessions important for how to best reach and serve educators, commercial fishermen, and other stakeholders.
- Relied on phone calls and virtual site visits with marina owners (zoom meetings, talking through online with or without cameras, noting what they would need to see in person down the road).
- Hosting live webinars in lieu of boat shows by partnering with Ohio DNR to use Microsoft Teams Live (which proved to be a challenge for non-governmental agency staff). Important to have a behind-the-scenes production team that vets Q&A.
- WASG ran a webinar for aquaculture industry specifically about COVID resources.
- WASG was able to do site visits during COVID of the 700 shellfish farms/companies in the state, 3 site visits per tidal cycle via cell phone. Staff got samples sent from farmers to analyze at home. Farmers have been trained in sample collection methods. Despite COVID, this allowed them to maintain network of algal bloom monitoring sites.
- WASG has massive attendance at ongoing virtual septic system lectures/workshops, spread via word of mouth. People without reliable internet access are encouraged to join via telephone, but anecdotal evidence shows that attendees may go to great lengths to find internet connectivity anyway. Many are joining via iPads and other tablets.
- VASG working with seafood processing industry to support direct sales. Extension staff can see some in person, other assessments done via photoshoots.
- VASG cannot do usual university recruitment/presentations for research but instead are hosting webinars for fellowship opportunities and virtual meetings to replace in person interfaces with interested students.
- OHSG algal ID course became a virtual workshop. OHSG has had great success with video content increasing attendance/access, given that there is no need to travel and people can join from other regions and countries.
- Indiana-Illinois SG created an online [Weather and Climate Toolkit](#) for educators, and is connecting scientists with students online.
- Hawaii SG added YouTube 'watch parties' to their [Voice of the Sea](#) TV show.
- Delaware SG converted scout oceanography merit badge to an [online badge](#)
- Puerto Rico SG originally had a plan to provide in-person natural disaster preparedness training so they surveyed stakeholders about their ability to continue to a training in an online format (do they have internet access, how many hours/day could they participate, etc.) The results informed the structure for online Spanish-language trainings. Also, this [video](#) shows the PR online coastal viewer.
- Oregon SG connected seafood producers and consumers by creating the [Eat Oregon Seafood](#) web portal: and modified a fisherman's safety at sea training into a virtual/hybrid format.
- National SG Law Center – Workshops had to go virtual, so they explored new whiteboard software to collaborate <https://www.mural.co/> and <https://miro.com/>
- NY Sea Grant: have a "Staying Connected" portal which features links to the [rapid response projects](#), and [research seminar series](#).
- CT Sea Grant tried to keep with traditional audiences (shell fisherman specifically since so many impacted) and other stakeholders, trying to get out and interact with public as much as possible. Ramped up production of magazine as people want to look something other than computer screen so print materials are helpful alternative and are being more widely distributed.
- Electronic newsletters
- Slack online networking platform was a huge success as well as Zoom webinars for large audiences.
- Started using jamboard (electronic post it notes) for teacher trainings.
- MNSG did [teacher at sea](#) via webinar (used to be in-person)

- Increased participation by policy makers (township elected officials and state elected officials) as their ability to join remotely has increased their ability to join meetings now (used to require face-to-face with travel)
- Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant: primary area of work is aquaculture. We had virtual happy hours for stakeholders. Did webinar focused on COVID assistance. Program-wide most of educational outreach is now online (use WebEx and zoom).
- Meet the scientist—worked with “flip grid” video and chat and could meet with individual classrooms and have back and forth interaction.
- GA Sea Grant used flip grid for first time last week. Public programs had to go virtual and recreate the wheel. Fishermen do not have that access to technology—we use shrimpers listserv (e.g. CARES act). We did phone calls—time intensive. We have fish houses next door and would socially distance visits. Stormwater specialist primarily works with local gov’ts did many emails. Some field work shut down too. Communications was there but more emails, phone calls, and zoom meetings.
- Mural is another option that uses sticky notes for collaborating (like jamboard)
- Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant has been using Facebook live.  
NY Sea Grant [virtual coastal site visits](#).
- Growers meetings (aquaculture) switched to Zoom platform. Some like it, some do not. Also utilizing email lists.
- Virtual interviews and happy hours. Pre-taping introductory videos for students. Office hours. Modifying schedules to accommodate different time zones. Also, with national office presentations.
- Inter-island travel difficult but virtual (e.g. Zoom) actually allowed increased frequency of meetings. People adjusted well and probably more quickly than they otherwise would have (without COVID).
- Rapid response resources to keep contact with existing stakeholders – beach safety campaign with COVID safety and beach (e.g. rip currents). For hire industry decals to try to keep people in business. Seafood industry direct marketing help.
- Maintaining contact by phone and getting rapid response grants working with 55 growers to purchase oysters. Working toward a retail form with rapid response grants.
- Virtual meetings and workshops – number of people that sign in is way higher than number that show up but excited about turnout anyway.
- Oregon SG Extension - Texting with fishermen is more effective than emails and calls.
- Michigan Research – funded 15 summer internships and many adapted projects based on location and refocused on data analysis
- Wisconsin – internship very similar but with some fieldwork done through video.
- USC virtual programming with middle schools, making it inclusive with translations into Spanish.
- Alaska Communications – nothing novel, summer camp zoom based with mailing materials, classes online, more video outreach.
- Aquaculture training academy, limited number of people in-person and had most sessions online; but the academy had a few full-group “field days” for demonstrations when the in-person times really mattered.
- Technology training for stakeholders as very much a part of our duties as Extension agents to help people access the world available to them via virtual platform.

## **2. How have we extended services and engage audiences that are not able to or choose not to access the technologies we are using?**

- Local libraries used for distributing print materials
- HISG worked with partners to get COVID funding to support creation of a delivery network with local farmers to deliver fresh food to elders in the community
- Creation of resources for offline industries, like charter boat industry

- For internship research project, had anglers collecting samples and depositing them in community freezers. Developed signs to hang at fish cleaning stations to inform anglers about the program. Some of our educators are working with libraries and tapping into their existing networks. The Wisconsin Water Library (part of our program) can lend materials and activities throughout Wisconsin and items can be delivered to local libraries.
- Mailed out Homeowner's Handbook to maintain connection with volunteers and considering mailing out post cards.
- MS/AL- Delivered handbooks in person, smaller outdoor meetings for those that prefer.
- Fieldtrip groups with additional safety requirements. Instead of traditional school groups there has been a shift to more Homeschool groups and family opportunities.
- Partnering with other outdoor ed programs for children of essential workers. Watershed explorers challenge book distributed through libraries and driven out to families identified by schools.
- Text messaging important way to communicate due to power outages caused by storms.
- People in community who have capability but do not WANT to do zoom. Lots of training for those who want/need it.
- River walker program, continued program outside with social distancing to talk about eating safe seafood.
- MD Sea Grant farmers workshop in person using safety protocols and outdoor spaces.
- WASG talking to news reporters more often. Working with reporter on environmental/social justice beat. Stories getting picked up for print
- WASG reaches out to podcasts, radio stations to run stories that cover their work.
- Stocking Little Free Libraries with marine-related books and resources.
- Camp-in-a-bag – distributed via family pick-up
- DSG's [Coast Day](#) event provided downloadable activities which people can do offline, recordings of live events to allow for asynchronous learning, and they distributed craft kits to libraries so people could engage with content without participating via computer at all.
- [Project 1867](#) allows those who do not participate in online trainings to still engage, by downloading natural disaster info in Spanish, sharing links to videos, etc. PRSG is working with USDA forest service to provide info to stakeholders in the mountains.
- Indiana has cultural groups that do not use technology. We have communicated using mailings and phone calls.
- One of NY Sea Grant's COVID projects is for-hire boating. We mailed posters and decals to stores. We got creative in developing communication products.
- Provided New York State's saltwater and freshwater marine industry for-hire boating sector with a series of posters and decals to encourage public compliance with boating-specific COVID-19 safety precautions: [www.nyseagrant.org/forhire](http://www.nyseagrant.org/forhire)
- Self-paced outdoor activities with signage, pamphlets, QR codes.
- Coastal flood specialist citizen science project w\ iPhone stand to upload people's pictures to track beach erosion, etc.
- [Bio-blitz events](#) on invasive species and other subjects
- Oregon - Texting is trying to address this; phone calls, mail is also been used. Recording and using radio, newspaper columns.
- Wisconsin SG – sending material through the mail, recording and captioning all programs to increase access.

### 3. How are we addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

- Checked-ins with [BIPOC](#) researchers and collaborators are particularly important right now.
- MISG makes sure all recorded content is accurately captioned.
- Woods Hole has educational webinars recorded, posted on YouTube, translated into Spanish.

- Newly formed DEI working groups; commitment to participating in university workshops; DEI updates to strategic plan and integration into the biennial RFP; SG advisory council will be working on DEI in next meeting.
- Internal working group; environmental justice mapping tool, suggestions for how extension can approach EJ; trainings; DEI being incorporated into RFP.
- Informal program-wide, monthly discussions on JEDI.
- DEI Committee is very active; DEI internal audit to help make decisions and plan for future; updates to strategic plan and RFP; looking at ways to be more strategic in recruiting so we have diverse pools of candidates; we have been encouraged to participate in DEI related workshops, trainings, etc. that have been offered by the university. Being remote from our main office and campus, I have been able to participate more in the DEI trainings, which in the past were held in person over 100 miles from my office.
- Among the efforts for the NC DEI committee, we have focused on RFP phrasing to encourage broader participation from underserved communities and research focusing on topics of importance to those communities.
- MD-group to work on DEI by areas (employee training, fellowships, etc.) presented to senior staff, now being implemented (staff handbook, parties, holiday calendar, etc.). Larger university committee for DEI push as well.
- Being flexible-reaching stakeholders in whatever format they prefer, expanding social media efforts to be more inclusive.
- NOAA Live example: trying to provide opportunity for students to see themselves in the diverse faces of the NOAA presenters.
- Create a hub around research in underserved communities, focus groups and phone conversations.
- Many of us are taking the time to do internal work – reading, staff trainings, so that we are better able to reach out to underserved communities when we are able to meet in person, attend meetings to learn about the community.
- Outward Facing DEI:
  - PRSG – providing Spanish language materials for external audiences,
  - Oregon SG – reaching underserved communities in seafood community that communicate in languages other than English, such as Russian/Ukrainian/Spanish languages
  - IISG - podcast host deliberately expanding topics and speakers to include better representation
  - PRSG: Finding collaborators to provide sign language for online programming to meet the needs of deaf communities
  - Oregon SG – ADA accessible website, PDFs, closed captioning on videos
  - Oregon SG- Funding awards encourage awardees to conduct outreach to audiences they have not reached out to before.
- Inward Facing DEI
  - Started DEI committee at Wisconsin SG, lunch meetings every other week, learning opportunities, planning on an equity audit for WSG (hire consultant)
  - Hawaii SG – once a month open forum led by different network person on whatever DEI topic, they think is valuable, open to everyone in organization.
  - JEDI council for OSG and extension
- VA Sea Grant hired third party evaluator of images, websites, content, intentionally seeking out applicants from places we do not get applicants, more diverse in departments we are seeking applicants.
- CT Sea Grant doing a DEI review. Devoted fall/winter issue of newsletter to diversity.
- NY Sea Grant put together a small committee to put together a DEI statement and are putting together resources; NYSG put together its [DEI statement](#) and we're currently working on related resources
- MN Sea Grant working on a workplan and DEI statement. Closed captioning. Staff professional development in DEI in-house through MN.

- VA SG: <https://inclusiveva.org/programs/>
- National Sea Grant Advisory Board: reaching out to stakeholders in non-traditional ways such as through churches to promote hurricane preparedness as Pastor is a trusted source. Develop a relationship with the church to reach people who are non-traditional audiences.
- Committee reinvigorated on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Environmental Justice tool for communities to help focus programming. Also, research fellowships (e.g. Knauss) build a better database of contacts for distributing the opportunity. Great Lakes educator reaching underserved classrooms in K-12
- Funded 7 projects to increase diversity in marine sciences. E.g. students of color in research opportunities. Bringing in diverse speakers, etc.
- Giving staff space to breath and talk with each other about troubling items.
- Alaska – very diverse state with large native population so the issues are not new to SG but the program is not that diverse, but it is more challenging with C-19, one new thing is to acknowledge the land that we are situated on.