

Network Visioning Topic #6

Supporting Resilient Coastal Economies through Impactful Aquaculture Communications Submitted by: S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

Goals and Objectives

- Create nationwide consistency in how Sea Grant communicates about its aquaculture efforts and to leverage external partnerships to extend our message while maintaining the Sea Grant brand in partners' products.
- Develop a long-term strategy for communicating Sea Grant aquaculture successes to different audiences (including legislators, producers and consumers) to increase resilience in aquaculture operations.
- Maximize the return on investment for Sea Grant and maximize profit for aquaculture producers.
- Foster communication throughout the Sea Grant aquaculture network and between various NOAA offices with a mandate for further developing US aquaculture.
- Increase seafood consumption and confidence in farmed seafood, increase aquaculture production, and reduce user conflicts.
- Create template documents to be used to disseminate current and forthcoming results and impacts of Sea Grant aquaculture projects on a national level.
- Develop a 'Communications Strategy' document to outline the group's efforts and vision for 2018-2028 and beyond.

Background Information

- Sea Grant investments in aquaculture will further advance commerce, permitting and policy, production systems, and seafood safety and quality. Facilitating advancements in aquaculture is all for naught if increased production does not coincide with increased consumption of farmed seafood and consumer confidence in farmed seafood.
- Effective communication about Sea Grant aquaculture projects will assist the network in achieving its vision for more U.S. jobs, increased aquaculture production, and increased seafood consumption and confidence in farmed seafood (10-year NOAA Sea Grant Aquaculture Vision, 2016).
- Consistent messaging and leveraging partnerships to communicate Sea Grant aquaculture impacts will increase consumer confidence in farmed seafood and help educate other waterway users which will support increased production efforts throughout the nation.
- This effort directly addresses national and state strategic goals and objectives to support sustainable domestic seafood production. It also addresses goals of increasing scientific literacy among coastal citizens.

Enhancing Sea Grant's Unique Niche

The Sea Grant Association, in consultation with Sea Grant staff throughout the nation, recently (March 2016) published the *10-Year NOAA Sea Grant Aquaculture Vision* document, which seeks to foster:

- Increased production, paired with Sea Grant efforts to maximize producers' profit, augments existing aquaculture businesses and creates additional entrepreneurial opportunities in our coastal communities.
- Improving the profitability of our nation's seafood producers improves coastal economies which equips communities to be adaptive, innovative, and responsive to a wide variety of challenges.

- This effort will be directly supportive of the goals of the 10-year vision document and allow for effective communication of project results from forthcoming Sea Grant investments in aquaculture research and extension.

Incorporating Research, Extension, and Education

- Sea Grant's aquaculture extension specialists are excellent brokers of research findings and technological advancements. There are examples across the country of how the research and use of information has led to significant impacts for producers.
- Consumer skepticism about farmed seafood products including user conflicts, and/or inconsistent messaging from a variety of sources is damaging to individuals and organizations strategically focused on increasing production but can be countered with sound science.
- In advance of an in-person meeting, participants will mine recent past impact statements and current research projects to identify common areas we are working in; separating areas that are easy to message/communicate from those viewed as more difficult to communicate.
- Various program elements (research, extension, education, and communications) will be invited to participate in this activity. Effectively communicating about aquaculture to a wide variety of audiences will require us to use the expertise of all of these sectors.

Roles of the Consortium, Other Programs, NSGO

- Julie Davis and Rick DeVoe, South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium, will coordinate this vision process. They will develop a detailed work plan that tasks all participant programs with work appropriate to the communications strategy.
- Each participating Sea Grant program is expected to allocate funding to attend a full day meeting. Based on participant feedback this may be held in conjunction with another national level meeting (i.e. Aquaculture America, Sea Grant Week, etc). We strongly encourage participating Sea Grant programs to involve various program elements in this effort (i.e. communications, research and extension). In the case where the meeting is held in conjunction with a larger conference, each program will need to allocate funding for registration for that meeting.
- In advance of an in-person meeting, each participating Sea grant program is expected to allocate staff time to mining recent past aquaculture projects and communications products.
- Each participating Sea Grant program is expected to furnish the in-person meeting with hard copies (50) of recent aquaculture communications materials.
- Following the in-person meeting, each participating Sea grant program is expected to allocate time to writing and reviewing a draft Sea Grant Aquaculture Communications Strategy document.

General Resources

- A full-day in-person work session will be conducted in conjunction with a national meeting such as Aquaculture America or Sea Grant week, where we will identify target audiences, coming to consensus on media format appropriate to reach each audience, and identifying items appropriate for a national communications focus versus those better communicated on a state-by-state basis.
- Following the in-person meeting template and sample documents/media will be prepared and reviewed by the network.
- A 'Communications Strategy' document will be prepared to outline the group's efforts and vision for the 2018-2028 period and beyond. The Strategy will be written by the participating Sea Grant programs and submitted by the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium.

- We propose to engage the broader aquaculture communications community, including:
 - Sea Grant communications team,
 - Other NOAA offices leading aquaculture programs (i.e. NOAA Aquaculture office, NOAA office of education), and
 - Outside organizations with nationwide reach in public aquaculture education (i.e. aquariums, NGOs)
 - Visionaries/experts in coastal issues that will impact aquaculture development and who can provide global perspective to aquaculture development trajectories.

General Budget

- Total: \$11,000
- The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium will allocate funds for venue rental and supplies (\$3000), travel for at least 3 outside organizations/experts to attend the in-person meeting (\$4500), production of template media (\$1000), and printing of a draft Aquaculture Communication Strategy document (\$500). Funds will be allocated to support travel of at least one program specialist to the in-person meeting (\$2000).
- Expectations of each participating Sea Grant program are outlined above and each program should budget accordingly.

Timeline

- September 2017-January 2018: participants will mine recent past impact statements and current research projects to identify common areas we are working in.
- Feb-March 2018: In-person meeting
- March- May 2018: Template documents/media will be prepared and reviewed by the network.
- June-August 2018: Complete final strategy and templates.
- August 2018: Final project report and draft 'Sea Grant Aquaculture Communication Strategy'.