

Network Visioning Topic #7

Sustainable Coastal Tourism: A Network-Wide Approach to Address Tourism Development Issues and Impacts Submitted by: S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

Goals and Objectives

- Goal: Develop and implement a strategy for building an effective national Sea Grant presence in tourism – the capacity, skills, and institutional structure to assist communities with tackling coastal tourism issues.
- Objectives:
 - Review priorities in *Sustainable Coastal Tourism Renewing Sea Grant's Role*, a 2012 policy white paper produced by a working group of the Sea Grant Network to determine which recommendations are currently relevant.
 - Define Sea Grant's role, identifying gaps, challenges.
 - Identify priorities and federal, state, and local partners to develop a plan of action for implementing a Sea Grant Coastal Tourism Community of Practice.

Background Information

Tourism plays a significant if not leading role in the economies of our coastal states and communities, with significant contributions to jobs, tax revenues, and quality of life. However, as growth and development along the coast increases, the tourism economy may negatively affect the very resources on which the industry relies.

Many Sea Grant programs around the country are currently working on coastal tourism issues and related anthropogenic impacts on coastal ecosystems, yet there is no unified national strategy. In 2008 several programs began an informal dialog about how to reinvigorate Sea Grant's interest and role in tourism. These early efforts resulted in a network-wide Sustainable Coastal Tourism Roundtable in 2011, where 40 participants representing 17 state Sea Grant programs, the national office, and the US Dept. of Commerce convened to discuss redefining Sea Grant's role in coastal tourism. Subsequently, a policy white paper was developed in 2012 to inform strategic planning.

Connection to National Strategic Plan

Sustainable coastal tourism can contribute to achieving goals set in all focal areas in the current strategic plan (Healthy Coastal Ecosystems, Resilient Communities & Economies, Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development). The goal of sustainable coastal tourism is a significant contributor to environmental stewardship, long-term economic development, and responsible use of our nation's coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes resources (all part of Sea Grant's mission).

Connection to State Strategic Plans

This topic relates to many priorities in the strategic plans of a number of Sea Grant programs and examples of these activities from across the Sea Grant Network include:

- The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium (Consortium) began working on coastal tourism issues in the early 1990s developing a National Coastal Resources Research Institute which supported a project to assess nature-based tourism as an effective tool in coastal rural economic development. The Consortium continues its active involvement in coastal recreation and tourism as advisors to and supporters of the S.C. Nature-Based Tourism Association through the

efforts of the Consortium's Coastal Communities Specialist. Additionally, the Consortium has funded many coastal tourism research proposals in past grant cycles (e.g., examine the potential for the creation of a SC Seafood Trail and the delivery of value-added coastal natural resources interpretative programs to the charter fishing industry).

- Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant has conducted charter fishing market research to gather baseline information on demographics and travel patterns as an aid toward understanding the economic sustainability of this sector of the recreational fishing industry.
- Hawai'i Sea Grant administers the Hanauma Bay Education Program, which promotes conservation and stewardship of Hawaii's marine and coastal resources by providing a unique educational experience to the millions of visitors to the Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve. The program strives to reduce the environmental impact of visitors to the Bay by teaching them appropriate reef etiquette -- reducing the number of visitors that trample coral reefs from approximately fifty percent to less than two percent. These lessons learned remain with visitors as they travel to other shores around the islands and beyond.
- Hawai'i Sea Grant is leading a research effort to study the economic contribution of Waikiki Beach to the local economy. Preliminary research on this topic estimates the economic value of Waikiki Beach to be \$2.3 billion per year. Hawai'i Sea Grant is developing a new research model to further estimate the value of Waikiki's nearshore ecosystem and natural resource value, not just the beach itself.
- Ohio Sea Grant has created a Tourism Leadership Academy aimed at improving tourism industry members' abilities to participate in statewide policy leadership forums and build awareness of the interdisciplinary responsibilities of the industry among future leaders, an online resource of educational resources for industry members, and workshops for coastal businesses.
- Maine Sea Grant holds daylong educational coast seminars focused on providing sea kayak guides, whale watch operators and other nature-based tour operators with interpretive content (e.g., bird identification, marine mammals, ecological change on islands, water quality) and technical information (e.g., rules of the road, leave no trace, access), and more.
- Minnesota Sea Grant is funding tourism research with a focus on climate adaptation, specifically investigating climate readiness in the tourism economy of the Minnesota Lake Superior region. In addition, Minnesota Sea Grant has a number of initiatives related to outdoor recreation resilience. The goal of these programs is to support a deeper understanding of possible connections between climate readiness and outdoor recreation, a key element in the Lake Superior tourism sector.
- Rhode Island Sea Grant (RISG) extension team in partnership with the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association (RIMTA), URI Ocean Engineering and others have designed a marina check list with the goal of providing marinas with guidance to take actions to make their marinas more resilient. These actions range from storing certain items in a more secure location to using different materials when they are replacing their roofs so they don't blow off during a storm. Currently there is a commitment by RIMTA, CRMC, and DEM to re-energize this program and they have asked RISG to provide leadership.
- Rhode Island Sea Grant extension team is currently engaged in a BOEM (Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management) contract to both study the impacts of the Rhode Island Block Island Wind Farm (BIWF) on recreation and tourism both on Block Island and also the Rhode Island mainland. The goal of this project is to develop indicators for the state, community and industry to help them measure the impacts. Given that for many of these communities, recreation and tourism is their main economic driver, not to mention a part of their community character and lifestyle, the Rhode Island regulatory, academic, economic, and municipal leaders are eager to both engage in this effort, as well as continue to apply these indicators in order to measure both

the positive and negative impacts these turbines are having on their communities and state. Currently, there is only speculation on how this sole wind farm is impacting Rhode Island. The team has also encountered a significant amount of interest by other states in the process of developing offshore wind farms including but not limited to New York, Virginia, Maryland, and Hawaii.

Influencing Sea Grant's Future Direction and Unique Niche

"As a major driver of economic growth and development the role of tourism cannot be ignored, and it is an important factor when considering issues related to the sustainability of our nation's coastal and ocean resources" (Policy White Paper 2012). Sea Grant has traditionally been a leader in the field of coastal tourism and it represents an important part of ongoing efforts with activities in all strategic planning focus areas of many state Sea Grant programs. The topic also further connects across broad cross-cutting themes and priority focus areas of many of the national and state Sea Grant programs.

Incorporating Research, Extension, and Education

The intent is to provide guidance on current needs and issues that Sea Grant research, extension, and/or education efforts can address individually and in collaboration. While a number of tourism efforts are underway across the Sea Grant network, there doesn't seem to be a mechanism in place for state Sea Grant programs to share what they're doing with one another. This initiative will provide an opportunity to share case studies and examples of successful efforts related to the goals and objectives of this proposal.

Roles of the Consortium, Other Programs, NSGO

Leadership of this proposed visioning project will be jointly shared by Georgia Sea Grant and the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium. Our leadership roles would include providing coordination and oversight of all aspects of the project (e.g., developing a steering committee, organizing/hosting working group conference calls and in-person meetings, administering a survey instrument, writing reports, etc.) Participants from other programs will be expected to serve on the steering committee, attend meetings (both web/conference call and in-person), as well as contribute to the writing of the final report and development of any resource products that may result from this visioning process. Participating programs will also be expected to provide travel support for staff involved in this effort to one in-person meeting in a location to be determined. This meeting may be in conjunction with another national event if feasible (e.g., Social Coast Forum, Working Waterfronts and Waterways Symposium) or a stand-alone meeting in Georgia or South Carolina (e.g., Savannah, Charleston). Staff participation from the NSGO in these meetings would also be desired and requested.

General Resources

Individuals from more than 10 programs have expressed an interest in participating in a tourism-focused visioning initiative, so to maximize participation and minimize costs we will use conference call and web-based meeting options in conjunction with in-person meeting(s) where feasible. Initially, participants will review and comment on the content of the 2012 policy paper. Based on the comments and identified gaps, we can then organize a series of web-based meetings to begin crafting new/revised content and developing a visioning plan to implement priorities. We will then coordinate an in-person meeting to finalize the plan. That meeting will also be an opportunity to share ongoing sustainable tourism efforts.

If feasible, we plan to leverage existing conference/meeting events (e.g., Working Waterfronts & Waterways Symposium, Social Coast Forum, Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals)

for an in-person meeting. Over the course of the project timeline between 6-10 web-based or conference call meetings will take place, culminating in an in-person meeting. An estimated registration fee of \$100 per registrant would likely be required to help cover costs associated with an in-person meeting, such as room and equipment rental, as well as food and beverage needs.

Final Report

The co-leads from both the Consortium and Georgia Sea Grant with assistance from steering committee members, and identified experts/partners (TBD) will be responsible for writing the final report with input from all participants involved in this visioning initiative.

Time Input and Expertise

Organizing and coordinating this initiative will take a substantial amount of time and effort. Both lead programs are working to develop additional coastal tourism-related activities and many of the participant programs already have time dedicated to tourism-related efforts as well.

Partners of Interest

As in most Sea Grant activities, the group will reach out to experts and constituents to refine their program outputs. These topical experts/partners will be determined based on need by the steering committee as the project gets underway.

Travel or Honorarium for External Experts and Stakeholders

Possibly, but we do not know at this time. It will be up to participants to develop a budget and sources of funding for these activities. However, we have allocated a significant portion of the budget available to external expert travel.

Resources to be Provided

The lead programs can provide distance meeting capabilities (e.g., Go-To-Meeting, Zoom). Participants can share communications and editing expertise.

Facilitation

Facilitation will be helpful for the in-person meeting; however, we anticipate enlisting internal expertise for this role or the group will ask for assistance from trained facilitators at the University of Georgia and/or NOAA Office for Coastal Management.

Dedicated Funds

The Consortium does not intend to dedicate any additional funds to this effort other than what is provided through the budget allocation of \$11,000, with the possibility of providing some staff assistance with the visioning exercise. Georgia Sea Grant will provide time and travel support for a staff person.

Timeline

- September 2017: Initial call with all interested programs; identify working group members; identify/prioritize tasks and timelines.
- October 2017 – June 2018: Regular working group meetings (conference/web call; e.g., Go-to-Meeting) will be held to identify and prioritize visioning plan themes and components, collaboratively develop the visioning plan, review project materials, discuss/assess progress regarding task completion, as well as to plan for our in-person meeting.

- March – May 2018: Schedule and convene in-person meeting, possibly in conjunction with a related national conference of mutual interest.
- June – August 2018: Draft final implementation plan/strategies and final report; distribute to the visioning group members and external partners for comment and review.
- August 2018: Revise final report and submit to national office.