Sea Grant Communication Strategy

December 28, 2016

This document is intended to be a living document, updated annually or as needed. It is meant to provide a framework for achieving the outlined goals as well as to push the communications operation of Sea Grant towards excellence.

Chapters:

Chapter 1: National communication by Sea Grant

Purpose: To convey the value and impact of the National Sea Grant College Program and to strengthen and enhance the efforts of Sea Grant through partnerships

Audiences:
1. Partners and collaborators at national, regional and local levels
   a. Colleagues and peers within NOAA and in other federal agencies
   b. Communities that currently or potentially benefit from Sea Grant's work
   c. Non-profit organizations with complementary missions
   d. Academic institutions and the scientific community, both affiliated and non-affiliated with Sea Grant
   e. Public sector professional groups (i.e. American Planning Association, Int'l County Management Association)
2. Government leadership in executive and legislative branches, including NOAA and Department of Commerce leadership

Messages:
Messages will be crafted for specific target audiences and platforms and centered on some or all of the following:
1. Sea Grant's mission: Sea Grant's mission is to enhance the practical use and conservation of coastal, marine and Great Lakes resources in order to create a sustainable economy and environment.
2. Sea Grant's vision: Sea Grant envisions thriving coastal ecosystems and communities that are supported by an engaged public and informed decision-makers. (Draft vision statement presented to strategic planning steering committee.)
3. Sea Grant's three-part approach to accomplishing its mission: research, extension and education
4. Sea Grant's four strategic focus areas
   a. Healthy Coastal Ecosystems
   b. Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture
   c. Resilient Communities and Economies
   d. Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development

Communication Goal One: Increase Sea Grant brand and mission awareness.

Metric: Sea Grant is known by name to most people within NOAA, the Executive Branch, Congress, and relevant partners.

Approaches:
- Social media platforms targeted to various Sea Grant audiences
  o Measure: level of change in social media reach
- E-newsletters and other mass email messages

- o Measure: Level of interaction with messages as well as change in number of people receiving and opening messages
- Hot Items, Secretary Reports, Cabinet Reports, Weekly leadership highlights
  - o Measure: Change in number of stories included and frequency of inclusion in reports and highlights
- Fact sheets and other print products
  - o Measure: Change in distribution of such documents measured in downloads, handouts at outreach events, and deliveries during in-person meetings; qualitative feedback on usefulness of products
- Development and circulation of web stories and products
  - o Measure: web analytics, page views
- Development and display of descriptive posters and infographics in national Sea Grant office
  - o Measure: qualitative feedback on impact of displays

Communication Goal two: Audiences take action to partner with Sea Grant to achieve activities related to mission and strategic focus areas.

Metric: Sea Grant extension is known by all audiences as an effective approach for "putting science to work for America's coastal communities".

Approaches:
- Announcements of funding opportunities, partnership programs
  - o Measure: web analytics and page views, change in number of applications received for funding competitions
- Feature articles in products/websites of other entities and programs
  - o Measure: number of articles placed, activity (page views, social media impressions) related to articles
- Web stories on Sea Grant's website highlighting partnership efforts
  - o Measure: number of articles placed, activity (page views, social media impressions) related to articles
- Targeted outreach events at professional conferences (Decisions on which conferences to attend will be based on specific audiences and messages outlined in this plan.)
  - o Measure: number of individuals reached at events, qualitative assessments of any follow-up activities from events
- Outreach and recruitment for Knauss and other fellowship programs
  - o Measure: number and diversity of applications received (diversity to be measured by new institutions participating, demographics of applicant pool)

Communication Goal three: Exposure of Sea Grant's research and extension efforts is increased.

Metric: Sea Grant research is highlighted on a frequent basis and in a timely manner.

Approaches:
- Web stories featuring Sea Grant research and extension
  - Measure: number of articles placed, activity (page views, social media impressions) related to articles, ability to get other programs to link to articles on their websites
- Hot Items, Secretary Reports, Cabinet Reports, Weekly leadership highlights
  - Measure: Change in number of stories included and frequency of inclusion in reports and highlights
- Development and sharing of informative infographics, visualizations, etc
  - Measure: Since these will often be included with other efforts (i.e. web stories or in-person presentations), a qualitative assessment of impact of message, presentation or story they accompany
- In-person presentations by national Sea Grant office staff
  - Measure: qualitative feedback on impact and effectiveness of presentation

Support tools
In order to carry out the approaches outlined here and work towards achieving goals, several tools are required. They include
- Photo organization and sharing
- Video organization and sharing
- Graphic design software

Capacity
Successful implementation of this plan requires adequate staff and training capacity.
- Two or more dedicated staff
- Ongoing and frequent professional development for staff

Chapter 2. Coordination of Communication with Sea Grant Network

Purpose: To support and coordinate the communication efforts of the 33 Sea Grant programs throughout the Network

Audiences: Sea Grant Communicators and Communication Staff, Sea Grant Directors, broader Sea Grant Network

Goal one: The Sea Grant Network uses best practices to communicate with each other and externally and presents itself in a professional manner that conveys excellence and unification across the Network.

> *Metric*: The NSGO facilitates and provides platforms for Sea Grant Communicators to have professional development opportunities and exposure to new tools and practices by their peers.

> *Approaches*:
> - Host and facilitate monthly webinars as space for sharing successes and challenges and to provide professional development opportunities
> - Ensure new communicators have resources needed to actively participate and benefit from the communicators' network
> - Provide frequent updates to communicators' network about opportunities and requests for showcasing their programs' work
> - Support the communicators' network chair
> - Provide and/or facilitate trainings and/or discussions at annual meetings of Sea Grant communicators

Goal two: Sea Grant programs receive national attention for localized mission-based efforts.

> *Metric*: The NSGO provides relevant and timely opportunities for Sea Grant programs to gain added exposure and value to the communication work they do.

> *Approaches:*
> - Provide structure, reminders and opportunities via the feature web stories calendar
> - Provide added exposure to local program efforts on social media
> - Provide exposure in the Sea Grant Monthly e-newsletter
> - Work with communicators throughout the Sea Grant network to identify stories for all approaches named in chapter one of this plan.

Chapter 3. Social Media

Social media is now a regular part of any communication operation. Many social media platforms exist, and all have different formats and audiences. Selecting the best social media tools for Sea Grant includes a number of factors including which platforms are approved by the Department of Commerce, which ones are best suited for our audiences and messages and staff capacity.

For several years, Sea Grant has actively maintained Twitter and Facebook accounts. (See the 2016 summary document for an overview of how the reach of these two accounts has grown over the last few years.) We also have a You Tube account, though it has not actively been maintained.

Some of the platforms in Sea Grant's social media portfolio cater more or less to one gender. For example, Twitter and LinkedIn have a higher percentage of male users while Instagram and Pinterest have a higher percent of female users (according to this article by Pew Research Center as well as many other articles).

Social media will continue to be a central and growing strategy to accomplish Sea Grant's communication goals. Ongoing efforts should be made to make direct connections between various the messages shared via all social media platforms and Sea Grant's communication goals.

For most organizations, including NOAA and the Department of Commerce, there are specific best practices and even policies dictating acceptable use of social media. All social media activities conducted by Sea Grant are in accordance with both Department of Commerce Social Media Policy and the NOAA Social Media Handbook.

Sea Grant does not currently have a specific comment policy for its social media account. Best practices for social media comments in government are used. Resources include the National Marine Fisheries Service's comment policy.

The following pages provide an overview of social media Sea Grant is currently using or planning to use in the near future. Descriptions of the platform and its audiences are included as well as a current snapshot of Sea Grant's status with the various platforms and how using the various platforms helps Sea Grant meet its communication goals, audiences and messages.

Platform	Description	Audience	Priority, Status of National Sea Grant account	Strategic focus area, notes on use
Twitter	Most popular micro-blogging site in U.S.	Mostly working professionals, media, non-profit organizations; younger adults	High Priority, Active since 2008	Reaches many Sea Grant network and partner audiences, strong existing following, could greatly expand with targeted effort; ELWD strategic focus area
Facebook	Most popular social media platform in U.S.	Broad: 72% of adult internet users/62% of entire adult population	High, Active since ---	Reaches network and partner audiences, contributes to ELWD by reaching interested public, could greatly enhance impact on this platform with targeted effort
Flicker	Popular photo sharing site; Flickr is a photo sharing community. It allows others to use public domain or creative commons photos for a variety of purposes.		Medium, Active since 2016	Many Sea Grant programs already utilize this platform, great source for Sea Grant program photos; all strategic focus area (This is more of a sharing tool to be used to strengthen messages shared via other platforms and formats.)
LinkedIn	LinkedIn is an effective social media tool for connecting professionals who work with or are interested in Sea Grant. It is also an effective means to quickly and easily share training, fellowship, and job opportunities offered by Sea Grant programs with a large audience		Medium	Good choice for advertising jobs, fellowships and funding opportunities; Workforce Development strategic focus area
Instagram	Instagram is an effective social media tool for engaging a variety of public audiences through captivating visual representations of Sea Grant's work. Having an Instagram account will allow us to address both our Environmental Literacy focus area as well		Approved, not active	Popular primarily among young adults; Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development strategic focus area

	as the national office function of raising awareness about Sea Grant.			
Pinterest	One of the top content areas for Pinterest is recipes. Sea Grant programs directly connect fishermen, chefs, and consumers to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. This platform will allow us to showcase these projects and the recipes associated with them.		Approved, not active	Seafood recipes, scenic coastal areas; Sustainable seafood and aquaculture strategic focus area
You Tube	Well known platform for posting and sharing videos	see this article on You Tube demographics	Active since	Sea Grant's You Tube account is underutilized; consider capacity/impact balance for devoting more resources to this, potentially all strategic focus areas
Storify	The Sea Grant Network is dispersed across 33 programs and even more university partners. Communicating about the value of Sea Grant's collective work and raising awareness about the national effort can sometimes be challenging. The use of digital story collection tools, such as Storify, will allow us to bring together many stories connected by a common theme to showcase messages about Sea Grant while maintaining the localized approach used by Sea Grant programs around the country.		Approved, not active	Story collection tool; potentially all strategic focus areas

Chapter 4. Sea Grant Style Guide

For use by NSGO staff and FYI reference for Sea Grant communicators' network

This section to include:

- Logo use (reference Alaska Sea Grant)
- Writing guidance (AP with a few nuances)
- Messaging
- Acronyms, nick names, etc
- Metrics usage
- Visual templates