



NH Sea Grant Cited For Highest Performance By National Review Panel

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DURHAM, N.H. – During the past five years, NH Sea Grant (NHSG) staff and volunteers have held 2,340 marine-related seminars, workshops and training sessions that have attracted some 67,000 participants. This high level of involvement and a general excellence in all of its research, extension and education programs earned the University of New Hampshire-based program a rating of “highest performance” from a national panel of marine experts during a program review in September.

A component of the National Sea Grant College Program, NHSG is a federal/state partnership that supports marine research, extension and education efforts designed to promote the understanding, wise use and stewardship of our coastal resources. It has been part of the University’s marine scene since 1968. There is a Sea Grant program in each of the nation’s coastal and Great Lake states and in Puerto Rico, and each program is reviewed every five years.

“The universal acclamation of all components of our program by an esteemed external review panel is testament to the hard work, entrepreneurial approach and excellence of each and every member of our staff,” stated Jonathan Pennock, director of NH Sea Grant.

The UNH Marine Docent Program, the Great Bay Coast Watch and the University’s Ocean Projects Course were among the NHSG-sponsored efforts cited as particularly noteworthy by the panel. The Docent Program provides marine education programming throughout the region through the efforts of some 150 volunteer teachers while the Coast Watch checks water quality at 21 sites around the Great Bay Estuary using a network of volunteer monitors. The yearlong Ocean Projects Course, also known as TECH 797, pits multidisciplinary teams of UNH undergraduates against real world marine problems and then gives the teams the opportunity to defend their findings before a jury of experts.

According to John Pike, Dean of UNH Cooperative Extension, the outstanding Sea Grant programs recognized by the review are the result of the staff's commitment to addressing the marine and coastal informational needs of the citizens of New Hampshire. He explains that the Sea Grant Extension staff members "have a long history of developing creative and effective research-based outreach programs designed to assist their various clientele with making decisions regarding the state's valuable marine resources."

Pike notes that the 20-year collaboration between UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Sea Grant has significantly enhanced both programs. "The ability of the UNH Land and Sea Grant components to fully integrate their outreach programs has again been recognized as a

national model. We are delighted that our approach has gained such critical acclaim."

On the research side, the review panel noted NHSG's significant contributions to fisheries, aquaculture and coastal ecosystems. The program funds marine researchers at the state's academic institutions. Recent research efforts have included studies on integrating finfish and seaweed aquaculture to limit nutrient loading in coastal waters, improving the health and management of the region's oyster resources, and examining the impacts invasive species are having on Gulf of Maine ecosystems.

"In addition to recruiting and sustaining an incredibly dedicated team of volunteers and educators, the NH Sea Grant program has partnered very effectively with a number of high-impact research programs supported by federal agencies," according to John Aber, UNH Vice President for Research and Public Service. "These partnerships, especially with NOAA, have multiplied Sea Grant funding six-fold. Striving for this level of excellence in the integration of research with outreach is a major goal of the Sea Grant program and a core value of the University of New Hampshire."

In its final report on its evaluation of NHSG, the review team gave the program a grade of "highest performance," which is the highest grade possible, in each of the 14 sub-elements of the Sea Grant review process. These include leadership, engagement with appropriate user communities, institutional setting, strategic planning process, and impact on society, the economy and the environment.

For more information on NH Sea Grant, visit the program's web site (www.seagrant.unh.edu) or contact NHSG Director Jonathan Pennock (jonathan.pennock@unh.edu, 603-862-7007).