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Seacoast Science Center Announces Expansion of Facility and new initiative to Enhance Marine Environmental Education

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UNH News Bureau

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RYE, N.H. -- Seacoast Science Center Executive Director Wendy Lull announced today that Sen. Judd Gregg has secured \$1.3 million to expand the Center and develop new programs in undersea mapping. The announcement came at an event at the center, which is located in Odiorne Point State Park in Rye, N.H.

A \$1 million construction grant will fund renovations to the existing center which was opened in 1992, along with additional exhibit, curatorial and office space.

A separate \$300,000 grant will fund development of exhibits and educational programs linked to the NOAA-UNH Joint Hydrographic Center at the University of New Hampshire. The Joint Hydrographic Center is focused on research and education in ocean mapping and hydrographic sciences.

The funds will be provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, commonly known as NOAA. Gregg and Lull were joined at the event by Theodore Lillestollen, NOAA Deputy Assistant Administrator; Donald Sundberg, UNH Vice President for Research and Public Service; and George Bald, Commissioner of the N.H. Department of Resources and Economic Development.

UNH, along with Cooperative Extension and Sea Grant, had an instrumental role in the center's creation, and is a vital partner, along with the Audubon Society of N.H., the Friends of Odiorne Point State Park and the Seacoast Science Center, and the N.H. Division of Parks.

Donald Sundberg, UNH Vice President for Research and Public Service, thanked both NOAA and Gregg for their support of the center and of UNH's educational outreach mission.

"We are grateful that Sen. Gregg has continued to secure funding that will help us bring to the public the excitement of ongoing UNH research," said Sundberg, adding that Gregg was responsible for securing NOAA funding in 1997 for exhibits relating to UNH's Open Ocean Aquaculture Project. "The Seacoast Science Center is an extraordinary laboratory that the university can utilize to deliver environmental education to the public."

Lull unveiled a preliminary floorplan of the renovations. She called today's announcement "extraordinarily important for the Seacoast Science Center and for the 100,000 visitors who come each year. Senator Gregg has been a friend of this program since it began, and has always been a friend of our estuaries and coastal environment, as well as environmental education."

Commenting on the success of the Seacoast Science Center and its future mission, Gregg noted that "as Governor I was present for the opening of the center in 1992. It has succeeded beyond our best hopes, providing an opportunity for tens of thousands of school children each year to experience the wonder of New Hampshire's rocky coast in an informal educational setting. Now it is time to improve those facilities and programs as part of our commitment to protecting our natural environment."

The Seacoast Science Center, built in 1992, is a year-round environmental education facility in Rye, N.H. Its mission is to instill an understanding of the coastal habitats and human interactions with those habitats through programs and exhibits.

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