

**External Task Force**  
**Report to University of Alaska Fairbanks Chancellor**  
**on**  
**Placement of Alaska Sea Grant within the University**  
**Responding to NOAA Sea Grant Site Review Recommendations**

**January 30, 2020**

**Task Force Members:**

Chair: Faye Gallant, Interim Executive Officer, University of Alaska Fairbanks<sup>1</sup>  
Dr. Barb Amarok, Director, Northwest Campus, University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Dr. Russell Callender, Director, Washington Sea Grant  
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Dr. Kaja Brix, Arctic Program Director, NOAA Fisheries, Alaska  
Dr. Anupma Prakash, Provost, University of Alaska Fairbanks, *Ex-Officio*

**Introduction**

The Alaska Sea Grant Task Force was constituted by the Chancellor of the University of Alaska Fairbanks on October 23, 2019 to respond to recent National Sea Grant Site Review recommendations (Site Review report May 31, 2019 to UAF Administrators). The Task Force was charged to

- Examine the organizational placement of the Alaska Sea Grant within the University
- Review program structure and internal organization
- Align the program priorities with university, state, and national ones

The external Site Review Report specifically recommended that the Alaska Sea Grant<sup>2</sup> (AKSG) work with University of Alaska leadership to examine the placement of AKSG within the university and request “they [the University] consider elevating [AKSG] above the college level in order to better achieve AKSG’s statewide mission, minimize conflicts of interest, and ensure that the level of university support meets the National Sea Grant “standards of excellence”.” The Site Review report also included other recommendations to the University. The Task Force responded to the three above-stated charges from the Chancellor.

The overarching consideration of this Task Force was how best to maintain and increase the value provided by the Alaska Sea Grant program and its staff to the statewide university system and the state of Alaska. We also took into consideration the people of the Alaska Sea Grant and the Marine Advisory Program and the full function of their professional responsibilities. We believe “service” should be a highly regarded value to the university. We understand the university’s current fiscal constraints, but want to stress that the university recognize the value

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<sup>1</sup> Faye Gallant was Chair until her departure from UAF, end of December 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Alaska Sea Grant, used broadly, refers to Alaska Sea Grant and the Marine Advisory Program together, despite that they currently exist as separate entities.

of Alaska Sea Grant to the entire state and not reduce the Alaska Sea Grant budget disproportionately compared to other university programs.

Consistent with the nearly half century of Alaska Sea Grant successes, the continued support of the Legislature, and of NOAA National Sea Grant program, the Task Force strongly recommends the University maintain a level of financial and structural support that enables Alaska Sea Grant's contribution to an enhanced profile of the University within the State of Alaska and the ability to serve the people of Alaska.

Alaska Sea Grant has a 49-year history of working with individuals, communities, industry, tribes, agencies, scientists, and K–12 teachers and students, responding to critical concerns of coastal Alaskans. As a small program in a large, resource-dependent state, Alaska Sea Grant's role is to know and interact with these stakeholders and to foster partnerships to gain science-based understanding of issues, resulting in actions that solve problems and create opportunities to move the state forward. Alaska Sea Grant is a trusted and crucial link connecting far-flung Alaskans concerned about coastal community resilience and marine conservation.

Service to the community should be a highly regarded strategic priority of the University system. The Task Force strongly believes a fully functional and effective Alaska Sea Grant/MAP program significantly benefits the University through strengthening connections with local communities who have strong ties to Alaska's coastal and marine economies and who can advocate for enhanced University funding.

### **Recommendations:**

**Required Critical Elements:** The Task Force strongly believes that regardless of the placement of Sea Grant within the University System, the following tenets are critical to ensure the success of Alaska Sea Grant in serving both community and university needs:

- As a multidisciplinary, multi-faceted program, Alaska Sea Grant should be an autonomous, stand-alone program that serves the entire state-wide university system, local communities and stakeholders of Alaska. Any restructuring should ensure that those attributes are maintained.
- MAP and Sea Grant should be combined as a unified Alaska Sea Grant program under the Sea Grant Director.
- The AK Sea Grant Director should be ensured the necessary flexibility, autonomy and independence to manage a unified Sea Grant Program.
- The Sea Grant Director should be at a level equivalent in stature and responsibilities to College Deans and/or Institute directors. The designation and position description for the Alaska Sea Grant Director should reflect this level of responsibility.
- Alaska Sea Grant should be placed in a position to enhance/increase its ability to create partnerships across multiple colleges/programs/institutes within not only the University

of Alaska Fairbanks, but also University of Alaska Anchorage and University of Alaska Southeast.

- The Alaska Sea Grant Director should have authority for evaluating staff and MAP faculty, backfilling positions and adding new hires with consultation with the Vice Chancellor for Research or Provost (depending on ultimate placement of Sea Grant within the University).

### **Evaluation of CFOS placement**

The Task Force examined the Site Review concerns and the structural constraints associated with the placement of AK Sea Grant and MAP within University of Alaska Fairbanks College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences (CFOS). The Task Force believes that to satisfy the critical elements we have identified, Sea Grant and MAP must be placed at a higher level within the University structure and incorporate a new merged Sea Grant/MAP structure. We did not see how the critical elements could be satisfied with the existing placement of Sea Grant and MAP within the CFOS structure.

In addition to the considerations of the Task Force, the 2019 Site Review Team and previous Site Reviews have provided their own assessments and concerns with placement of Alaska Sea Grant and MAP in CFOS. The Task Force also recognizes the findings of the 2019 Site Review Report that states that “There is also significant concern that there is a mismatch of mission and metrics between CFOS and AKSG such that actions that are helpful and necessary to sustain CFOS (obtaining tuition and indirect cost recovery), will further undercut the ability of AKSG to fulfill its statewide mission (stakeholder assistance that leads to economic impact).”

### **Recommended placement of Alaska Sea Grant/MAP**

The Task Force recommends that Alaska Sea Grant and MAP be constituted as an independent entity under the Provost or the Vice Chancellor for Research to meet the critical elements described above. The Task Force recommends that the MAP faculty and the Alaska Sea Grant staff report to the Alaska Sea Grant Director as the Director of this new unit. The recommendations address the need for greater cohesion of the Alaska Sea Grant functional elements.

### Placement under Provost

- If under the Provost, Alaska Sea Grant Director should be at a position level comparable to other schools/colleges/institutions (e.g., CFOS, College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Extension, School of Management, College of Engineering and Mines, Director of International Programs & Initiatives). The existing unit criteria for MAP faculty should allow for placement of Sea Grant/MAP in an autonomous unit with faculty and staff evaluated solely by the Sea Grant Director.

Under the Provost’s office the AK Sea Grant Program/MAP would be at “a sufficiently high level to fulfill its multidisciplinary and multifaceted mandate,” per the recommendation of the site review team. This placement would also provide the greatest opportunities for broad

collaboration, partnerships and potential new funding sources among the similar mission-minded entities within UAF and across the entire university system.

Placement under Vice-Chancellor for Research

- If under the Vice Chancellor for Research it should be comparable to the Research Units such as the Geophysical Institute, the International Arctic Research Center, Institute for Arctic Biology, Alaska Center for Energy and Power, EPSCoR, Center for One Health Research, under the purview of the Vice Chancellor for Research. The existing unit criteria for MAP faculty should allow for placement of Sea Grant/MAP in an autonomous unit with faculty and staff evaluated solely by the Sea Grant Director.

**Budget Considerations**

The Task Force recognizes the current fiscal challenges of the University. However, we also strongly believe that the University must demonstrate continued fiscal support for Sea Grant. If Sea Grant moves to the purview of the Vice Chancellor for Research or Provost, the University must maintain continued state and university support at least equivalent to what Sea Grant and MAP collectively currently receive for the transition. The university should demonstrate support for Sea Grant by ensuring that any further financial cuts are proportionate to other fiscal reductions within the University. Avoiding disproportionate budget reductions to Sea Grant is consistent with recommendations from the last two external site reviews of Alaska Sea Grant.

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