The Challenge

America’s coasts are highly desirable places to live, with growing populations. However, at this interface between land and water, coastal dynamics are constantly in flux, bringing a unique set of challenges:

- **Climate Change.** Coastal residents are increasingly threatened by hurricanes, typhoons and tsunamis, as well as chronic challenges, including coastal inundation (due to rising sea levels and land subsidence) and increasing storm intensity.
- **COVID–19.** The global COVID–19 pandemic has highlighted and compounded economic and social challenges at many levels, particularly for disadvantaged communities.
- **Racial Equity.** Historically underserved and underrepresented communities, particularly Black, Indigenous and people of color, are disproportionately impacted by weather and climate impacts.
- **Economic Recovery.** Loss of jobs and market–related impacts have been acutely felt in coastal communities.

The increasing physical and economic damages, and the associated social justice implications and community devastation, are testing governments at all levels. There are many unanswered questions regarding our level of preparedness to deal with and respond to major episodic and chronic weather and climate threats along our coasts. As populations in many coastal areas continue to grow, residents will urgently and increasingly need reliable and useful information to inform their decision-making.

THE VISION

Coastal communities are more resilient to weather and climate hazards with Sea Grant support through coastal research, education, engagement, and outreach that informs and helps improve planning and risk assessment, disaster preparedness and recovery, resilience design and project implementation, and by addressing long–standing economic and social inequities that cause some communities to be more vulnerable to the impacts of hazards.

“Sea Grant funding and partnerships have been instrumental in advancing resilience conversations and studies across our region.”

TARA M. MCCUE, AICP, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, EAST CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL, FLORIDA
Sea Grant has a long history of working closely with coastal communities to provide information they need to make key decisions and take critical actions to become more resilient. As coastal risks increase, so must our efforts to address them.

The Sea Grant Association is grateful for the support Congress provides to the National Sea Grant College Program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Public Law 116–221, the “National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act of 2020,” authorizes $6 million for each of the next five years for Sea Grant activities focused on coastal resilience. Building on this strong foundation, a substantial contribution of new funds will enable Sea Grant’s 34 university-based programs to increase our national resilience work and effective, consistent, science and engineering-based approach for all of our coastal communities.

### SEA GRANT’S RESILIENT COASTS INITIATIVE

Sea Grant currently lacks sufficient human capacity and resources to meet the increasing need for technical information, assistance, facilitation and engagement for supporting coastal communities. The types of constituencies Sea Grant will better serve with this initiative are diverse and includes state/local planners and governments, engineers, church leaders, developers, fisheries coalitions, citizen community groups, tribes, land/property owners, businesses, non-profit organizations, and economically disadvantaged groups.

New funding of approximately $25M per year would support the National Sea Grant College Program resilience work in two major areas:

1. **Capacity building ($10M):** These funds will support recruitment of additional resilience Extension, communication or education staff in each state Sea Grant program and support a state-based national Sea Grant resilience coordinator.

2. **Research, engagement, decision support, implementation ($15M):** These funds will be directly allocated to state Sea Grant programs to support research, training, technical assistance, and coordination to help address community resilience needs at the state and local levels.

### Essential Partnerships

The immense challenges facing our coastal communities are much too large for any one organization to be able to solve alone. Partnerships at every level – local, state, federal, tribal, and non-governmental – are essential to supporting the vision of resilient communities. Sea Grant is well-known for its capacity to build and sustain partnerships, particularly with our fellow NOAA-supported programs, including Coastal Zone Management Programs, National Estuarine Research Reserves, Integrated Ocean Observing System Regional Associations, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, National Marine Sanctuaries, Climate Program Office, and the Office of Habitat Conservation. Together, these programs provide a comprehensive suite of services needed to make our coasts more resilient.

With increased investment and robust collaborations, Sea Grant can more effectively support ongoing and new critical coastal research, education, engagement, and outreach to inform resilience efforts for our coastal communities. Through knowledge, understanding, preparation and partnerships, these communities can be more resilient.

“...the sea rise planning we did with Washington Sea Grant elevated the conversation around resilience and sustainability – and reset our plans for an entire park...”

**MARTY STUMP, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT, METRO PARKS TACOMA, WASHINGTON**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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