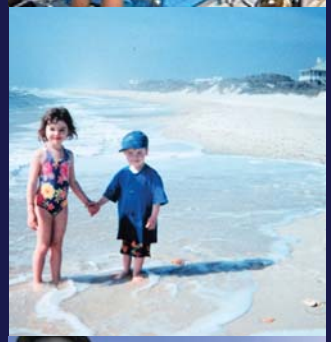
Executive Summary

National Ocean Service

Social Science Plan



Vision

Strengthen program planning and management, decision making, and performance measures throughout the agency to improve NOAA integration of physical and social sciences within NOS, across NOAA, and with outside organizations.

Goals

- *Enhance NOAA's ability to monitor, understand, evaluate, and communicate socioeconomic benefits of NOAA/NOS information, services, and products.*
- *Provide more accurate and comprehensive decision-support tools for ecosystem management by integrating social science, natural science, and monitoring results.*
- *Improve models and methods for assessing the impact of human and natural disturbances to coastal and ocean resources and infrastructure.*
- *Increase the relevancy of NOAA efforts by improving understanding of the needs, knowledge, perceptions, and values of NOAA partners and constituents.*

Guiding Principle

Help NOAA/NOS achieve its Mission Goals.

Purpose

The purpose of the National Ocean Service (NOS) Social Science Plan is to initiate a coordinated effort to build social science capacity in NOS, in order to help NOAA/NOS achieve its Mission Goals. The social science plan vision statement represents a one-NOAA (shared by all NOAA Line Offices) vision on the role of the social sciences in the agency. This vision is based on a one-NOAA definition of the social sciences and consistent criteria for determining who is a social scientist within the agency. This one-NOAA approach to the social sciences will support the vision of integrating efforts across NOAA and will allow NOAA to track progress on building social science capacity within the agency.

Social Science: *The process of describing, explaining, and predicting human behavior and institutional structure and change in interaction with their environments. Includes the fields of economics, anthropology, sociology, geography, political science, social psychology, and history.*

The social science goals are based on areas within the NOAA Strategic Plan where social science could contribute. These goals are designed to provide a general framework for NOS social science and, because of their close connection to the NOAA Strategic Plan, achievement of the social science goals should help NOAA to achieve its Mission Goals.

The guiding principle of this plan is quite simple, and was the key screening criterion for any recommendation included in this plan. In working with NOS Program Offices and NOAA Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution System (PPBES) Programs, the Social Science Team (SST) had to convince NOAA/NOS Leadership that a recommended social science project would help NOAA achieve its Mission Goals in order for the project to be included in the plan. Thus, this plan does not represent a "wish list" of projects developed by social scientists, but rather a comprehensive set of recommendations as to how NOS social science can help NOAA succeed.

The plan is organized following the four Mission Goals identified in the NOAA Strategic Plan (e.g., Ecosystems, Climate, Weather and Water, and Commerce and Transportation) and following the NOS Strategic Plan, using the PPBES Programs as organizing themes. NOS currently contributes to three of NOAA's Mission Goals, including Ecosystems, Weather and Water, and Commerce and Transportation. This Social Science Plan only addresses eight of NOAA's 40 PPBES Programs, plus elements in the Mission Support Goal (see inset box). Mission Support includes the NOS Partnership Program, which is designed to foster integration across different elements of NOS.

Goal Teams/PPBES Programs[1]

- *Ecosystems*
  - *Coastal & Marine Resource Management*
  - *Habitat*
  - *Corals*
  - *Ecosystem Research*
- *Weather & Water*
  - *Coasts, Estuaries, and Oceans*
- *Commerce & Transportation*
  - *Geodesy*
  - *Marine Transportation Systems*
  - *Emergency Response*
- *Mission Support*
  - *NOS Partnership Program*

1. There are four Goal Teams (plus Mission Support) and 40 PPBES Programs in NOAA. NOS has activities in three of the Goal Teams, plus Mission Support (Climate not included in NOS). The NOS Social Science Plan has recommendations for the eight PPBES Programs listed above, plus the NOS Partnership Program.

Summary of Social Science Capacity

In FY 2004, NOS had 11 permanent full-time equivalent (FTE) social scientists on staff, at a cost of approximately $1.0 million (see Table E1). A recent trend has been to hire contract personnel and treat them like staff; in FY 2004, NOS had seven social scientists hired as contract personnel, at a cost of $0.5 million. In FY 2004, social science investments were made by NOS in four NOAA Programs, for a total NOS investment of approximately $1.1 million. NOS also received $0.4 million from outside sources, for a $1.5 million investment in project costs and a total FY 2004 social science investment of approximately $2.6 million. All investments in FY 2004 were made in the Ecosystems Mission Goal, with the largest amount of funding going to the Coastal and Marine Resources Program (CMRP).

In FY 2005, NOS made a significant increase in its social science investment. Social science investments expanded into the Commerce and Transportation Mission Goal, including the Geodesy and Marine Transportation Systems Programs. One permanent social scientist and two contract personnel were added as NOS staff and the total investment in social sciences doubled, bringing the direct NOS contribution to social science from $2.6 million in FY 2004 to over $5.2 million in FY 2005. Including outside sources, the total investment in NOS social science increased from $3.0 million to almost $5.9 million. Since FY 2005 is almost over, these costs reflect known costs.

In the main body of Volume I of the NOS Social Science Plan, broader plan details are presented for each of the eight NOAA Programs for which social science recommendations are made. Descriptions are provided on the roles that each NOS Program Office plays in each of the NOAA PPBES Programs. Volume II to this plan includes details on each proposed social science project.

Conclusion

One of the biggest challenges facing NOS in the near future is the integration of various NOAA/NOS social science components. Gathering information for the NOS Social Science Plan and examining the social science issues and needs required the application of social science across NOS offices and NOAA programs and the SST became increasingly aware of the level of diversity that exists across NOS social science activities. Although the mission of NOS can be succinctly stated, it is also true that the various elements within NOS are varied so that any cross-cutting element, such as social science, must be fundamentally organized to obtain a basic level of coordination. The diversity of social science within NOS is also due to the history of how social science has been conducted in NOS. In the past, the need for social science had never been examined from an NOS-wide perspective, but was implemented according to individual office needs. This led to redundancies and similar social science activities occurring in different ways, according to the specific needs of an office.

The Social Science Plan represents the first step toward a coordinated social science effort. However, it must be kept in mind that coordination cannot take place over the course of planning and writing a report. The Social Science Plan must be used as a reference point for future social science planning in order to ensure that redundancies in social science activities taking place across NOS are eliminated and coordination is maximized. This plan is a snap shot of current and future social science activities and, in order to ensure an efficient, coordinated, and integrated NOS social science element, evaluation of social science within NOS must continue on an ongoing basis. If NOS continues to evaluate and adapt social science activities, the SST believes this effort will sustain the NOS commitment of helping NOAA serve the nation as a global leader in integrated management of the ocean.

PPBES Program	FY '04		FY '05	
	$	NOS $	$	NOS $
Ecosystems: CMRP	860	425	2,336	1,740
Ecosystems: Corals	320	320	564	544
Ecosystems: Ecosystem Research	336	336	697	697
Ecosystems: Habitat Restoration	50	50	69	69
Commerce & Transportation: Geodesy	0	0	135	135
Commerce & Transportation: Emergency Response	0	0	0	0
Commerce & Transportation: Marine Transportation Systems	0	0	350	350
Weather & Water: Coasts, Estuaries & Oceans	0	0	0	0
Total Project Costs (Non-Personnel)	**1,566**	**1,131**	**4,151**	**3,534**
NOAA FTE Costs	1,002	1,002	1,114	1,114
Number of NOAA FTEs	11	11	12	12
NOAA Contract Personnel Costs	506	506	612	612
Number of NOAA Contract Personnel	7	7	9	9
Total Costs	**3,073**	**2,638**	**5,877**	**5,261**

Table E1. Summary of social science capacity for fiscal years 2004 and 2005 for the eight PPBES Programs referenced in the NOS Social Science Plan. Dollar values expressed in thousands of dollars.