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“Windows on the Sea” Southern Association of Marine Laboratories: The First 25 Years

JOHN W. TUNNELL, JR.

The Southern Association of Marine Laboratories (SAML) was formed in 1985 for the purpose of uniting marine labs across the southeast and bringing more attention to marine labs and science research in the southeast. Today, there are 60 members, ranging geographically from coastal Maryland through Texas to Bermuda and Panama. SAML is a regional organization within the National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML), along with two other regions, the Northeastern Association of Marine and Great Lakes Laboratories (NEAMGLL) and the Western Association of Marine Laboratories (WAML). NAML currently has almost 100 total members. SAML meetings are held annually each spring. In addition, a NAML biennial meeting is held in the fall of odd-numbered years, and a NAML winter meeting is held in Washington, DC, each year.

Objectives.—The objectives of SAML are as follows:

- To promote cooperation and effectiveness of member institutions in their work on marine and coastal resources
- To promote the wise use and conservation of marine and coastal resources
- To promote the importance of marine research and education to the economy and to society
- To promote research initiatives related to marine and estuarine resources
- To provide a forum for resolving problems common to marine laboratories in the region

History.—John Costlow from Duke University might be credited with the idea of joining southern labs together into an organization. According to founding member Kumar Mahadevan, John called together about 25 folks from southern marine labs to a National Science Foundation (NSF)-sponsored meeting in spring 1985 to look at the quality and needs of marine research facilities. At the meeting, John went into his usual rant and rave about the federal government not investing in small labs, and that labs should organize at the national level and pressure NSF to put more funding into coastal labs and not just the big oceanographic labs and

ships. A subsequent report, submitted to NSF after that meeting and distributed to the science community, described the deficiencies in labs and proposed an infrastructure for a competitive funding program to address the issue. A program was later funded, but at a miniscule level compared to what was needed, and it still exists today.

Don Boesch, Harold Howse, Bob Jones, Kumar Mahadevan, Paul Sandifer, and Ken Tenore were all at the Costlow meeting and decided they should get together and form a marine laboratory organization for the South. Don Boesch was particularly passionate with his statistics of how little money the South got in comparison with the Northeast and West Coast. Harold Howse offered to have the first organizational meeting. All marine lab directors from North Carolina through Texas were invited.

The first organizational meeting for SAML was held 5–6 Dec. 1985, at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Ocean Springs, MS, and was hosted by Director Harold Howse. The meeting was attended by 14 scientists from 11 marine labs and was chaired by Paul Sandifer. Positive discussions about the need and purpose for such an organization led to the development of articles of organization and bylaws during spring 1986. The first official SAML meeting was at the Gulf Coast Research Lab in May 1986. Harold Howse was the nominating committee's sole nominee for president of the group. There were 20 regular and two associate members present at this inaugural meeting.

SAML meetings occurred two times per year between 1986 and 1998; since 1999, they have been held annually (in spring). Meetings are held at member laboratories, generally alternating between the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, so members get to see as many different labs as possible. Typically, meetings include an evening reception, followed by a day and a half of meetings dealing with “internal” and “external” issues of operating a marine laboratory. A tour of the local facilities is also included during the annual meetings. Internal issues include ideas and discussions to help member directors better deal with the day-to-day operations of a marine lab; external issues deal with broader, current state and national topics regarding

TABLE 1. History of SAML meeting locations between 1985 and 2010, including meeting dates and local hosts.

Location of SAML meetings	Dates	Local host
Gulf Coast Research Lab Ocean Springs, MS	5–6 Dec. 1985	Harold Howse
Gulf Coast Research Lab Ocean Springs, MS	2 May 1986	Harold Howse
South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department Charleston, SC	Oct. 1986	Paul Sandifer
Mote Marine Laboratory Sarasota, FL	May 1987	Kumar Mahadevan
Department of Marine Science University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez, PR	Oct. 1987	John Kubaryk
Institute of Marine Science University of Georgia Sapelo Island, GA	April 1988	Jim Alberts
Marine Science Institute University of Texas Port Aransas, TX	11 Oct. 1988	Bob Jones
Belle W. Baruch Institute University of South Carolina Georgetown, SC	18–20 April 1989	Roger Jones
Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium Chauvin, LA	31 Oct.–2 Nov. 1989	Paul Sammarco
Bermuda Biological Station for Research Bermuda	7–9 May 1990	Tony Knap
Senate Hart Office Building Washington, D.C.	18–20 Sept. 1990	Kumar Mahadevan
Duke University Marine Lab Beaufort, NC	8–10 April 1991	Joe Ramus
Chesapeake Biological Laboratory University of Maryland Solomons, MD	9–11 Oct. 1991	Ken Tenore
Dauphin Island Sea Lab Dauphin Island, AL	31 March–2 April 1992	Judy Stout
Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Fort Pierce, FL	30 Sept.–2 Oct. 1992	Rick Herman
University of Texas—Marine Biomedical Institute and Texas A&M University at Galveston Galveston, TX	2–3 April 1993	Roger Hanlon and David Schmidly
(in conjunction with NAML) Hatfield Marine Science Center Oregon State University Newport, OR	29–31 Oct. 1993	John Vernberg
Whitney Laboratory University of Florida St. Augustine, FL	5–7 May 1994	Michael Greenberg
Gulf Breeze Environmental Research Lab Pensacola, FL	15–16 Oct. 1994	Bob Menzer
Belle W. Baruch Institute Georgetown, SC	27–28 April 1995	John Vernberg
Mote Marine Laboratory Sarasota, FL	24–27 Oct. 1995	Kumar Mahadevan

TABLE 1. Continued.

Location of SAML meetings	Dates	Local host
Skidaway Institute of Oceanography Savannah, GA	8–10 March 1996	Herb Windom
Center for Coastal Studies Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi Corpus Christi, TX	25–27 Oct. 1996	Wes Tunnell
Florida State University Tallahassee, FL	8–9 March 1997	Nancy Marcus
(in conjunction with NAML) Chesapeake Biological Lab Solomons, MD	11–14 Sept. 1997	Ken Tenore
Virginia Institute of Marine Science Williamsburg, VA	3–5 April 1998	John Milliman
University of Southern Mississippi Institute of Marine Sciences Biloxi, MS	4–6 Dec. 1998	Jay Grimes
Horn Point Environmental Laboratory and Oxford Laboratories Oxford, MD	9–11 April 1999	Steve Jordan
(in conjunction with NAML) Great Lakes Water Institute University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI	23–26 Sept. 1999	Art Brooks
Florida Marine Research Institute St. Petersburg, FL	31 March–2 April 2000	Ken Haddad
The Marine Center at Fort Johnson Charleston, SC	6–8 April 2001	Bob Van Dolah
Mote Marine Laboratory Sarasota, FL	17–19 May 2002	Kumar Mahadevan
Duke University Marine Laboratory Beaufort, NC	30 April–2 May 2003	Mike Orbach
Galveston Laboratory National Marine Fisheries Service Galveston, TX	12–14 May 2004	Roger Zimmerman
Center for Marine Sciences University of North Carolina, Wilmington Wilmington, NC	11–13 May 2005	Dan Baden
“20th Anniversary Meeting” Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies, Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi, TX	11–13 April 2006	Wes Tunnell
Skidaway Institute of Oceanography and Savannah State University, Savannah, GA	25–27 April 2007	Jim Sanders and Matt Gilligan
Pritzker Marine Biology Research Center, New College of Florida and Mote Marine Laboratory Sarasota, FL	26–27 March 2008	Sandra Gilchrist and Kumar Mahadevan
Estuarine Research Center, Morgan State University, St. Leonard, MD and Smithsonian Environmental Research Center Edgewater, MD	27–28 March 2009	Kelly Clark and Tuck Hines
US Environmental Protection Agency Gulf Ecology Division Gulf Breeze, FL	12–14 April 2010	Steve Jordon

TABLE 2. Gulf of Mexico members of SAML.

Center for Coastal and Marine Studies Lamar University Beaumont, TX
Center for Coastal Studies Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi Corpus Christi, TX
Coastal and Marine Laboratory Florida State University St. Teresa, FL
Coastal Fisheries Branch Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Austin, TX
Coastal Studies Laboratory University of Texas—Pan American South Padre Island, TX
Conrad Blucher Institute for Surveying and Science Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi Corpus Christi, TX
Dauphin Island Sea Lab Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium Dauphin Island, AL
Florida Marine Research Institute Department of Environmental Protection St. Petersburg, FL
Galbraith Marine Science Laboratory Eckerd College St. Petersburg, FL
Geochemical and Environmental Research Group Texas A&M University College Station, TX
Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi Corpus Christi, TX
Keys Marine Laboratory Florida Institute of Oceanography St. Petersburg, FL
Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) Chauvin, LA
Marine Laboratory Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation Sanibel, FL
Marine Science Institute University of Texas Port Aransas, TX
Mote Marine Laboratory Sarasota, FL
National Institute for Undersea Science and Technology University of Mississippi Abbeville, MS
National Marine Fisheries Service—Galveston Laboratory National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Galveston, TX

TABLE 2. Continued.

Pritzker Marine Biology Research Center New College of Florida Sarasota, FL
Texas Institute of Oceanography Texas A&M University—Galveston Galveston, TX
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Gulf Ecology Division Gulf Breeze, FL
Vester Field Station Florida Gulf Coast University Bonita Springs, FL

marine research and education. To date (summer 2010), meetings have been held at 31 different laboratories (Table 1).

Membership grew from 20 laboratories in the spring of 1986 to a high of 65 laboratories during 2001. During the difficult economic times of the early 2000s, membership dropped to 41 labs in 2003. Currently, there are 60 SAML members. Categorically, there are 41 academic labs (37 state, 4 private), 10 federal, 3 state, and 6 private labs. Florida has the most labs with 21, followed by Texas (9), South Carolina (7), and Maryland and North Carolina (6 each). Twenty-two SAML labs are located on the Gulf Coast (Table 2).

Presidents of SAML served a 1-yr term from 1986 to 1997, and 2-yr terms thenceforth. There have been 18 presidents of SAML (Table 3).

The idea for SAML, and some inspiration at its founding meeting, came from the Association of (Island) Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean (AMLIC). This organization, which is the oldest of its type in the New World, was founded in 1958 by Tom Goreau, then at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica (John Ogden, pers. comm.). The West Indies Laboratory of Fairleigh Dickenson University was a charter member of SAML, but it was completely destroyed by Hurricane Hugo in Sept. 1989. Although some SAML labs have been threatened or hit by hurricanes, the West Indies Lab is the only one that was permanently lost due to a storm.

The geographical range of SAML was extended northward early in its history when then-Director Ken Tenore of the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory (CBL) asked if some “impoverished northern labs” could be included in this fledgling organization. So, the Mason–Dixon Line was decided upon for our northern boundary, and CBL became our northernmost member.

Significant accomplishments of SAML since its inception include the following:

TABLE 3. History of SAML presidents and membership, 1985–2010.

Year	SAML President	No. Regular Members	No. Associate Members	Historical Comments
1985				First organized meeting was held at Gulf Coast Research Lab (Harold Howse, director); Paul Sandifer chaired meeting, which outlined official name, purpose, etc.
1986	Harold Howse, Gulf Coast Research Lab	20	2	First official SAML meeting.
1987	Paul Sandifer, South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department	24	2	
1988	Jim Alberts, Institute of Marine Sciences, University of Georgia			
1989	Bob Jones, Marine Science Institute, University of Texas			NAML formed, three regions, PAML (WAML), NEAML (NEAMGLL), SAML
1990	Kumar Mahadevan, Mote Marine Laboratory	38	2	First legislative meeting and congressional reception held in Washington, DC, in Sept.
1991	Tom McIlwain, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory			
1992	Tony Knap, Bermuda Biological Station			
1993	John Vernberg, Belle Baruch Institute, University of South Carolina	44	2	
1994	Judy Stout, Dauphin Island Sea Lab			
1995	Ken Tenore, Chesapeake Biological Lab, University of Maryland			
1996	Herb Windom, Skidaway Institute of Oceanography			
1997	Nancy Marcus, Marine Laboratory, Florida State University	48	5	
1998–99	Madilyn Fletcher, Belle W. Baruch Institute, University of South Carolina			
2000–01	Wes Tunnell, Center for Coastal Studies, Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi	56	9	
2002–03	Bob Van Dolah, Marine Resources Division, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources	40	1	
2004–05	Jim Sanders, Skidaway Institute of Oceanography			
2006–07	Mike Orbach, Duke University Marine Laboratory	52	3	
2008–09	Wes Tunnell, Center for Coastal Studies and Harte Research Institute, Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi	54	6	
2010–11	Shirley Pomponi, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, Florida Atlantic University			

- Promotion of strong interaction among member laboratories
- Inspiration for the formation of NAML, WAML, and NEAMGLL
- Initiatives in minority education in marine sciences
- Initiation of Laboratory Network (LABNET)
- Contribution to NAML initiatives, e.g., congressional staffer forums
- Twenty-four years of consistent and effective meetings for members
- Strong participation in the new and highly active NAML policy committee, dealing with national issues on coasts, oceans, and the Great Lakes
- Providing numerous scholarship awards to graduate students for best presentations at national meetings, such as the meetings of the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation and American Fisheries Society.

On a personal note, I have frequently stated to our members that SAML is my favorite profes-

sional organization. There is no peer pressure at our meetings, and a great camaraderie develops among the lab directors as we learn together how to run our labs better or cry on each other's shoulders about similar lab problems. SAML is a small, close-knit organization that has greatly enhanced marine lab operations, as well as the research and education that is offered at them. Most marine lab directors had an early and formative educational experience at a marine lab, either with a summer class or research project during graduate school, and all agree that they serve the academic community as "windows on the sea."

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