



Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association Strategic Plan

2021-2024

PURPOSE

SECOORA is one of 11 Regional Associations established nationwide through the NOAA led Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS). IOOS coordinates the multi-agency, cooperative effort to routinely collect real-time data and manage historical information based on a continuously operating network of buoys, ships, satellites, underwater vehicles, and other platforms. These data are needed for many purposes, including rapid detection and prediction of changes in our nation's ocean and coastal waters.

SECOORA participating members contribute to IOOS implementation. This region has long been active in ocean data management and communication (DMAC) activities, high frequency coastal current radar research, locally run buoy-based research systems, estuarine nutrient enrichment and harmful algal bloom research, high resolution coupled ocean-atmosphere modeling and wave research, and inundation models.

Many SECOORA member projects are being conducted on a small, or pilot, scale and need to be expanded region-wide. For instance, expanding the buoy network to meet the recommended spacing of 100 km intervals in the South Atlantic Bight would require 20 more buoys, which cost approximately \$200,000 dollars each (U.S. Weather Research Program). This is \$1.5 million more than SECOORA's entire FY16 IOOS funding. Similarly, tracking pathogens on our extensive beachfront is ongoing at a local scale, but needs regional expansion to improve the protection of public health.

SECOORA developed this strategic plan based on the needs of the region, the capabilities of the membership, and the ability to make significant progress in specific areas. It describes SECOORA's vision, mission, regional priorities, strategic goals, and core strategies.

The SECOORA Strategic Plan is directed to:

- SECOORA members, to articulate priorities and provide guideposts for future activities;
- Regional stakeholders and potential members, to demonstrate capabilities and describe connections to identified stakeholder needs;
- Decision-makers, including elected officials, to explain why funding is needed and what will be accomplished.

INTRODUCTION

The ocean and coastal waters of the southeastern United States help drive local weather and regional climate conditions, support ecologically and economically significant ecosystems (which include important fisheries), and provide tourism, boating, and other recreational opportunities. In 2019 the ocean economy sectors contributed over \$48 billion to the southeastern region's gross domestic product, provided over 725,167 jobs, and \$22.4 billion in wages. The main economic driver for the southeast region is coastal tourism and recreation (NOAA ENOW Explorer, 2022).

Many SECOORA members have been observing and sharing coastal and oceanographic data and information for over a decade. This information improves marine weather and harmful algae bloom forecasts, beach swimming advisories, understanding of rip currents, search and rescue operations, and inundation modeling. SECOORA integrates existing widely scattered ocean and coastal information and data over North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Currently over 4000 datasets are accessible through the SECOORA data portal at <http://portal.secoora.org> and other outlets.

However, ocean observing in the southeast is at a critical juncture. Buoys and other platforms that provide necessary data are suffering from lack of maintenance and some are being completely removed from service. This loss of critical infrastructure, as well as skilled labor to maintain and operate the systems, erodes the region's ability to efficiently capitalize on past investments. With additional funding and leveraged resources, SECOORA can sustain and build upon existing regional assets to make a significantly greater contribution.



SECOORA works with stakeholders within the four southeastern states to observe North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Pictured is the SECOORA Region.



Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan includes engaging students and the public in ocean observing. SECOORA is investing in fellowships to train the next generation. This is in addition to participating in local science festivals such as the Charleston STEM Festival in South Carolina.



MEETING NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

NATIONAL

The Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observing System Act was signed into law on March 30, 2009. Congress and the Administration recognize the importance of observing to accomplishing critical national objectives of national security, maritime safety, economic prosperity, and environmental sustainability. The Act provides a renewed impetus and a requirement to fully realize the vision of an integrated observing system. This system must be driven by the needs of stakeholders and be able to provide sustained real-time data and information. Benefits accrue to such diverse issues as climate change, coastal inundation, ocean acidification, renewable offshore energy, ecosystem-based management, marine transportation, and marine search and rescue.

SECOORA's priority themes align with those of the NOAA led U.S. IOOS. SECOORA will continue efforts to ensure a strong and sustained IOOS. In partnership with NOAA, the IOOS program office, and other federal programs and offices, SECOORA will address critical national priorities. Engagement will be fostered with additional national programs including the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Department of Homeland Security, and FEMA.

SECOORA is a member of the IOOS Association (IA), working with ten other Regional Associations (RAs) to assure the needs and positions of on-the-ground users in the regions are adequately reflected in national policy and priority setting. We actively engage with our neighboring RAs in the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, and on the East Coast. These collaborations across regions help ensure efficient pooling of expertise and resources, limit redundancy, and improve effective transfer of knowledge.

Ongoing work of IA articulates the regional response to the need for accurate and timely information for coastal areas in the United States. The 11 RAs are demonstrating how five years of sustained funding would be used to meet the nation's critical need for observing information to:

- adapt to climate change
- respond to coastal hazards
- conserve ecosystems
- ensure safe and efficient marine operations

REGIONAL

As part of this strategic planning process, SECOORA reviewed stakeholder needs assessments of the southeast region. Themes that regularly appear in these assessments include climate change and its impacts on habitats and sea level, marine weather and operations, and ecosystem management including fisheries and water quality.



📷 | Pictured are the eleven IOOS Regional Associations.

SECOORA FOCUS AREAS

Connecting Stakeholders to Data

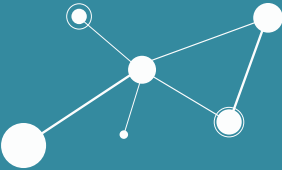
SECOORA's previous and ongoing regional observing efforts in the southeast focus on delivering information and products to inform harmful algae bloom predictions, inundation modeling, marine weather forecasts, and analysis of circulation and temperature anomalies. SECOORA works in the following four theme areas to address needs identified by regional stakeholders.



Marine Operations



Coastal Hazards and Climate Variability



Ecosystems, Water Quality, and Living Marine Resources

PRIORITIZING DECISIONS

SECOORA will continue to work in the southeast region to address stakeholder needs within our three focus areas. SECOORA will use the Strategic Plan to guide operations and prioritize decision.

The 2021-2024 SECOORA Strategic Plan is an update to the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan. The 2021-2024 Strategic Plan was developed in coordination with a Strategic Planning Committee and the SECOORA Board of Directors. The Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Directors on March 29, 2021 and presented to the Membership in May 2021. This strategy document will guide SECOORA through June 30, 2024.



📷 | December 2015 SECOORA Board Members worked together for two days to draft the Strategic Plan.

SECOORA 2021 - 2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

SECOORA's mission is to observe, understand, and increase awareness of our coastal ocean; supporting community, economic, and ecosystem resilience through strong and diverse partnerships.

3 YEAR VISION

SECOORA is the recognized regional leader, valued partner, and the trusted source for coastal ocean information.

CORE VALUES

We believe in...



Scientific integrity, technical excellence, and innovation



Diverse, inclusive, and supportive participation in all activities



Active stewardship of coastal ocean ecosystems



Accessible useful information for addressing societal needs



Leadership in coastal ocean science partnerships



Science based discovery and decision-making

STRATEGIC GOALS

1 Increase exposure and broaden usage of SECOORA's information and products

Strategies:

- Outreach to and engage with students
- Investigate and implement ways for information to reach specific communities
- Broaden awareness and usage of coastal ocean observing activities
- Ensure an effective congressional outreach strategy
- Enhance tracking and usage of specific products

3 Expand partnerships - including members and stakeholders

Strategies:

- Incubate affiliate networks which support regional priorities that align with SECOORA's mission
- Enable more diverse representation and participation
- Continue pursuing funding opportunities beyond core IOOS funding

2 Utilize a prioritized science-justified ocean observing system plan to guide and inform decision making and implementation

Strategies:

- Increase engagement and clarify charge of the science committee
- Conduct regular analysis of SECOORA supported data sets
- Advance new technologies and optimize use of current technologies throughout the region
- Develop specific strategies to add detail where needed to the RCOOS Plan

4 Broaden participation of historically underrepresented groups at all levels in our activities

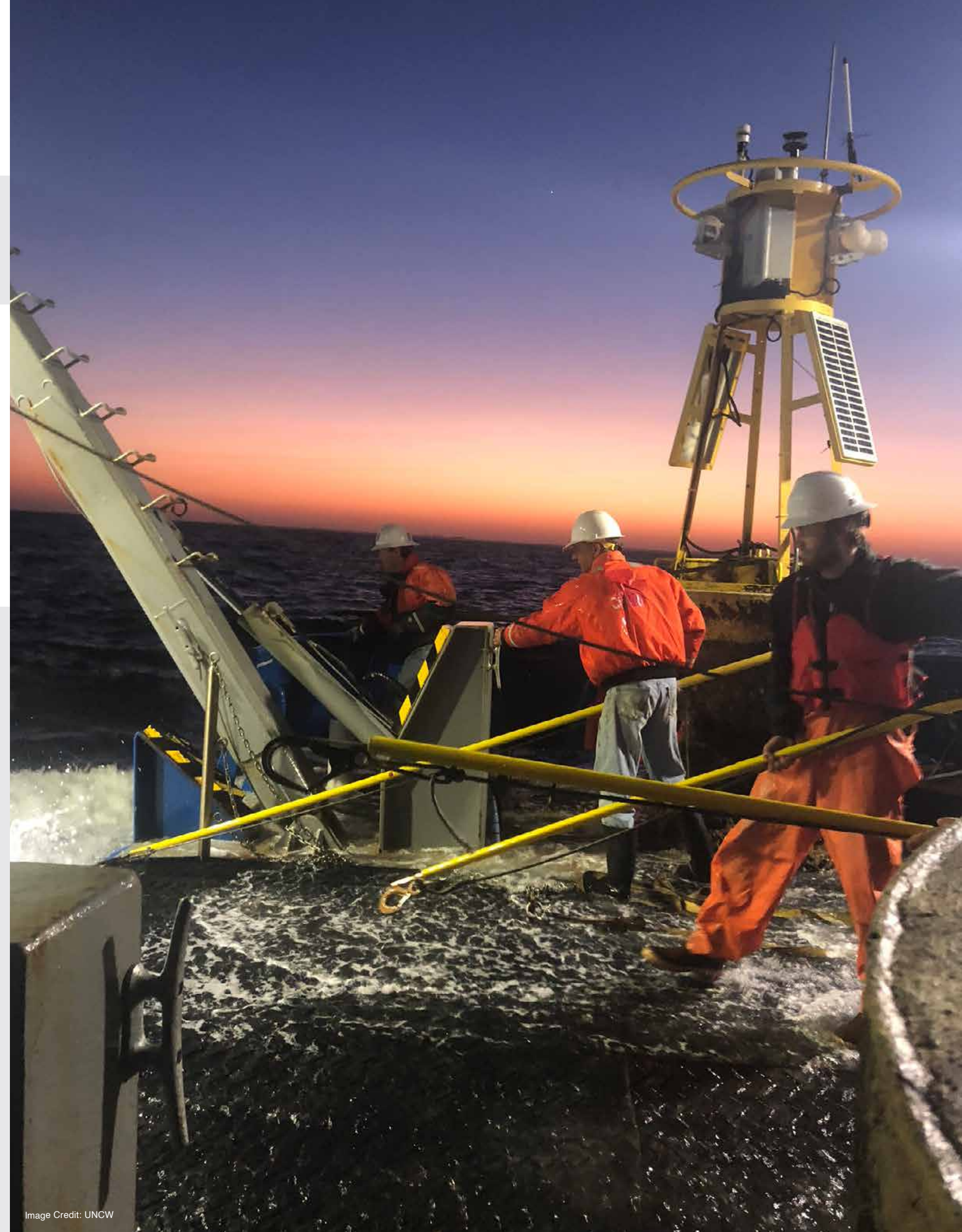
Strategies:

- Increase diversity of SECOORA leadership, management, and staff
- Partner with effective DEI programs
- Seek external funding to support participation by historically underrepresented groups
- Increase opportunities for historically underrepresented individuals and businesses to work with SECOORA

5 Improve SECOORA's organizational capabilities

Strategies:

- Ensure SECOORA's governance structure enables us to achieve our vision
- Manage effective implementation of all grants
- Obtain organizational and technical infrastructure support
- Build staff awareness and capacities around supporting diversity, inclusion, and equity





SECOORA

www.secoora.org

SECOORA's website is dedicated to providing the information you need to increase your understanding of the southeast's coastal ocean.

