



National Sea Grant Law Center

Advisory Service Guidelines

The National Sea Grant Law Center Advisory Service is a legal research service provided free of charge to the national Sea Grant Network and its constituents. The Law Center is prohibited from providing legal advice or becoming involved in litigation. The information provided by Law Center attorneys and law students is intended for informational purposes only. Entities requesting legal information should always seek independent, professional legal advice prior to taking action.

Subject Matter of Requests:

- Advisory requests should involve an identifiable legal research question. Law Center attorneys will work with the requesting entity to frame the question. If you are unsure of an identifiable legal question related to your issue, please reach out to us for assistance with framing the question. The Law Center attorneys are happy to help!
- The Law Center is prohibited from providing research that will solely benefit private entities. Individuals or companies with questions should contact their state Sea Grant office for assistance. NSGLC attorneys will work with Sea Grant personnel to develop legal research questions that will benefit the public generally.
- In the event a request is outside the Law Center's areas of expertise (e.g., copyright, labor law), the Law Center will identify alternative information sources. Upon request, the Law Center will initiate first contact and follow-up if necessary.
- The Law Center will accept questions relating to all regulatory levels: local ordinances; state, federal, and Tribal law; or international agreements and treaties. Information may be requested on legislation pending before state and federal legislatures.
- Examples of identified legal research questions include:
 - What are the liability concerns for commercial fishermen from taking apprentices out on their boats?
 - What arguments were put forth by the parties in litigation over the National Park Service's regulation of personal watercraft in Gulf Islands National Seashore?
 - What is the potential liability of shellfish farmers for personal injury and animal entanglement?
 - How many states have plastic bag bans?
 - What legal recourse do shellfish farmers have for harvest closures caused by sewage spills?
 - What are the legal consequences of a species being listed as endangered?



Submission of Advisory Requests:

To submit an advisory request, please send an email to **Stephanie Otts**, Director of the National Sea Grant Law Center, at: sshowalt@olemiss.edu.

- Advisory request submissions should include a brief summary of the legal question and relevant background related to the request. There is no required format for the submission of a request.
- Advisory requests may be submitted by anyone working for a Sea Grant program, including research, extension, education, and communication staff. Staff members should discuss their request with their director prior to submission, and cc their director on the initial email communication.
- Advisory requests may be submitted by individuals working for federal and state agencies. Submissions from individuals working in NOAA line offices require clearance by NOAA General Counsel. The Law Center staff will facilitate the clearance process following receipt of the request.
- Advisory requests may be submitted by nonprofit organizations and associations. Requests will be accepted based on Law Center staff expertise and availability.
- Members of the general public are encouraged to submit legal questions through their local Sea Grant office or extension agent. Individuals unfamiliar with Sea Grant and their local agents should contact the Law Center for assistance or search the National Sea Grant website at <https://seagrants.noaa.gov/> for the appropriate state Sea Grant College Program.
- When appropriate, requests from certain states and regions will be directed to other members of the Sea Grant Legal Network. For instance, requests from the Gulf of Mexico region may be directed to the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Legal Program or the Louisiana Sea Grant Law and Policy Program. Requests from Rhode Island or Georgia will be directed to the Rhode Island or Georgia Sea Grant Legal Program.

Response Time:

- Response time will depend on the complexity of the research question and staff availability. The standard response time for an advisory request is one month.
 - Expedited responses are available, based on staff availability, if the Law Center is notified of the urgency of the organization's request at the time of submission.
 - If it becomes apparent that additional research time is required, the requesting



organization will be notified and a new deadline negotiated.

Cost:

- As mentioned above, the Advisory Service is a legal research service provided free of charge to the national Sea Grant Network. There is no cost associated with standard advisory requests that can be completed within the response time stated above.
- Large or complex requests, such as multi-state surveys, may exceed the capacity of the Law Center to handle through the Advisory Service. In such cases, the Law Center is happy to work with the requesting entity to develop grant proposals or funding requests to secure the necessary resources to complete the research.

Legal Research Results:

- Legal Research results can be provided in a variety of formats, including response letters, memoranda of law, fact sheets, white papers, conference/workshop presentations, and newsletter articles. Law Center staff will work with the requesting program to determine the appropriate format.
- The Law Center encourages the dissemination of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes legal research to the Sea Grant community. Advisory request products will be posted on the Law Center's website.

Last updated November 2023.