SUMMARY

The 2008 Louisiana Sea Grant Survey

Conducted By

The Public Policy Research Lab
Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs
Manship School of Mass Communication
*Sponsored by Louisiana Sea Grant

About the Survey

The Louisiana Sea Grant Survey was designed to tap public awareness and support of Louisiana Sea Grant and its efforts to serve Louisiana's coastal communities. Respondents were randomly selected from the following parishes: Lafourche, Terrebonne, St. Mary, Iberia, Vermillion, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Orleans, St. Martin, Lafayette, Cameron, Calcasieu, St. John the Baptist, St. Charles, Jefferson, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Livingston. Each of these parishes is located in the coastal zone and includes Louisiana Sea Grant personnel (area agents and specialists).

The Public Policy Research Lab conducted the survey between July 17 and August 12, 2008. Calls were conducted from noon until 9 p.m. Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and noon to 8 p.m. on Sunday. Telephone numbers were selected using random digit dialing. Numbers where callers received no answer were called 10 times before being removed from the pool of eligible numbers. When possible, a message was left briefly describing the survey along with a toll free number for the Public Policy Research Lab. Three attempts at refusal conversion were made no sooner than 72 hours after the initial refusal. Final results are based on 628 completed interviews.

The survey has a sampling error of +/- 3.9 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. This means that if we replicated the survey twenty times, only once will the answers differ by more than 3.9 percentage points over the answers in this report. The margin of error will be larger for subgroups. Other types of errors can also affect survey results, including question wording, question order, and errors in the interviewing process. The cooperation rate is 33 percent, meaning that 33 percent of calls in which a potential respondent was contacted yielded a completed interview. Differences in response rates among different segments of the population may result in biased estimates of public opinion. To account for these differences, data are often weighted by demographic characteristics where sample estimates do not closely mirror census-based population estimates. The results presented in this report are weighted to provide the most accurate estimate of population preferences possible. Weighted frequencies for basic demographics are presented in comparison to Census estimates in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics and Census Estimates of Selected Demographics

		Weight Survey Percentage	Census Percentage*
Gender	Male	48.4%	48.4%
	Female	51.6%	51.6%
Race	White/Caucasian	69.9%	69.4%
	Black/African American	23.2%	26.0%
	Other	6.8%	4.6%
Education	Less than HS	23.7%	20.9%
	HS	34.5%	34.1%
	Some College	23.9%	24.0%
	College Degree	17.9%	20.9%
Family Income	Under $10,000	12.8%	10.4%
	$10,000 - $49,999	52.3%	47.6%
	$50,000-$74,999	16.1%	18.3%
	$75,000-$99,999	8.1%	10.5%
	$100,000 or more	10.7%	13.3%

*Census Percentage is based on data from the American Community Survey and the U.S. Census.

Summary of Findings

Awareness of Louisiana Sea Grant: Respondents in the coastal region were generally not very aware of Louisiana Sea Grant: only 3.1 percent of respondents said they were very familiar with Louisiana Sea Grant and 6.7 percent said they were somewhat familiar. In contrast, over two-thirds of respondents (69.3 percent) said they were "not at all" familiar. Similarly, only 8.1 percent of respondents said they had seen, heard, or read anything about Louisiana Sea Grant in the past year. Interestingly, however, a substantial, 40.4 percent of respondents reported having read or seen Lagniappe, the newsletter put out by Louisiana Sea Grant Extension. The apparent contradiction might reflect several possible explanations. First, respondents might be overstating their awareness of Lagniappe or confusing it with some other publication. However, only 9.1 percent of respondents reported having ever read or heard of Coastal Clips and 3.1 percent reported having visited the Louisiana Sea Grant web site. Alternatively, respondents may recognize Lagniappe but may not make the connection to Louisiana Sea Grant. Respondents with family members working in the commercial fishing industry and members of environmental groups were more likely to report having seen or ready Lagniappe.

Table 2: Percent of Respondents Who Read or Heard About Lagniappe by Selected Demographics			
		Have you ever read or heard of Lagniappe, the newsletter put out by Louisiana Sea Grant Extension?	
		Yes	No
		Row N %	Row N %
Over the last 12 months, have you or any members of your immediate family been involved in the commercial fishing or seafood industry?	Yes	50.2%	49.8%
	No	39.2%	60.8%
Over the past 12 months, have you or any members of immediate family been involved in other commercial marine industries, such as shipping or offshore oil and gas?	Yes	40.8%	59.2%
	No	40.2%	59.8%
Are you a member of any conservation or environmental organizations?	Yes	49.1%	50.9%
	No	40.1%	59.9%
Are you a member of any commercial or recreational fishing or boating associations?	Yes	43.5%	56.5%
	No	40.0%	60.0%
Race	White/Caucasian	41.6%	58.4%
	Black/African American	38.2%	61.8%
	Other	35.3%	64.7%
Education	Less than HS	44.5%	55.5%
	HS	41.0%	59.0%
	Some College	39.8%	60.2%
	College Degree	35.0%	65.0%
Distance from the Coast	Less than 30 miles	38.8%	61.2%
	30-60 miles	43.7%	56.3%
	More than 60 miles	40.5%	59.5%
Gender	Male	40.1%	59.9%
	Female	40.6%	59.4%

Information Seeking on Issues Related to the Gulf Coast: Despite relatively low levels of awareness, approximately a third of respondents (31.0 percent), indicated that they had looked for information on wetlands restoration, fisheries management, coastal hazards, seafood products safety, marine pollution, or other issues related to the Gulf Coast. In terms of demographics, more educated and Caucasian respondents were more likely to say they had looked for information on issues related to the Gulf Coast. Respondents with family members employed in commercial fishing or seafood industry, and respondents who belong to environment or conservation groups or boating and fishing associations were also more likely to have looked for information related to issues related to the Gulf Coast.

Table 3: Percent of Respondents Who Reported Looking for Information on Gulf Coast Issues by Selected Demographics

		Over the past year or so, did you look for any information on wetlands restoration, fisheries management, coastal hazards, seafood products safety, marine pollution, or other issues related to the Gulf Coast?	
		Yes	No
		Row N %	Row N %
Over the last 12 months, have you or any members of your immediate family been involved in the commercial fishing or seafood industry?	Yes	42.9%	57.1%
	No	29.9%	70.1%
Over the past 12 months, have you or any members of immediate family been involved in other commercial marine industries, such as shipping or offshore oil and gas?	Yes	35.5%	64.5%
	No	30.3%	69.7%
Are you a member of any conservation or environmental organizations?	Yes	62.2%	37.8%
	No	29.6%	70.4%
Are you a member of any commercial or recreational fishing or boating associations?	Yes	47.7%	52.3%
	No	30.5%	69.5%
Race	White/Caucasian	35.6%	64.4%
	Black/African American	18.7%	81.3%
	Other	25.4%	74.6%
Education	Less than HS	19.8%	80.2%
	HS	25.5%	74.5%
	Some College	37.4%	62.6%
	College Degree	50.4%	49.6%
Distance from the Coast	Less than 30 miles	29.6%	70.4%
	30-60 miles	34.7%	65.3%
	More than 60 miles	32.4%	67.6%
Gender	Male	32.0%	68.0%
	Female	30.0%	70.0%

Sources of Information: When it comes to learning about issues related to the Gulf Coast, respondents who reported looking for information on coastal issues reported getting most of their information through newspapers (51.8 percent) and the internet (35.3). Television finished third at 27.2 percent, presumably because it provides less coverage of these issues. Other sources of information, including the Louisiana Sea Grant Website and Educational Materials, were less likely to be cited as sources of information. Given the importance of the internet, however, it is possible that respondents are utilizing information without recognizing the source of the information.

Table 4: Sources of Information About Gulf Coast Issues

	Selected
	Row N %
Louisiana Sea Grant Website or Education Materials	2.0%
Parish Extension Agent	1.3%
Other Government Website	1.7%
Internet	35.3%
Newspapers	51.8%
Television	27.2%
Books	5.5%
Environmental or Conservation Groups	2.8%
Marine Industries	1.6%

The most interesting differences across sources emerged in internet usage. These are displayed in Table 5. Respondents with family members working in the commercial fishing and seafood industries or commercial marine industries, who are members of fishing and boating associations, who live closer to the coast, and less educated respondents were less likely to use the internet to look for information on coastal issues. Also (not shown in the table), 18.2 percent of respondents who reported that they were members of environmental and conservation groups reported using the Louisiana Sea Grant Website and Education materials.

Table 5: Use of the Internet as Source of Information on Gulf Coast Issues by Selected Demographics

		Internet	
		Not Selected	Selected
		Row N %	Row N %
Over the last 12 months, have you or any members of your immediate family been involved in the commercial fishing or seafood industry?	Yes	87.0%	13.0%
	No	61.2%	38.8%
Over the past 12 months, have you or any members of immediate family been involved in other commercial marine industries, such as shipping or offshore oil and gas?	Yes	70.4%	29.6%
	No	63.1%	36.9%
Are you a member of any conservation or environmental organizations?	Yes	54.1%	45.9%
	No	66.0%	34.0%
Are you a member of any commercial or recreational fishing or boating associations?	Yes	81.3%	18.7%
	No	63.4%	36.6%
Race	White/Caucasian	66.4%	33.6%
	Black/African American	67.2%	32.8%
	Other	33.3%	66.7%
Education	Less than HS	79.9%	20.1%
	HS	85.0%	15.0%
	Some College	46.5%	53.5%
	College Degree	54.1%	45.9%
Distance from the Coast	Less than 30 miles	72.4%	27.6%
	30-60 miles	56.3%	43.7%
	More than 60 miles	62.4%	37.6%
Gender	Male	66.1%	33.9%
	Female	63.2%	36.8%

Trust in Sources of Information: When it comes to sources of information, respondents do not express a great deal of trust in the news media or government sources. Note from the earlier analysis newspapers are the most frequently mentioned source of information. Only 11.5 percent of respondents said they placed a great deal of trust in government sources, while 16.7 percent said they placed a great deal of trust in news and media reports. Over a quarter of respondents (26.3 percent) said they placed "no trust at all" in government sources. Scientists – and specifically LSU scientists and educators – enjoy a much higher level of trust. Forty-eight percent of respondents said they had a great deal of trust in scientists while 57.2 percent said they had a great deal of trust specifically in LSU scientists and educators. Forty-five percent of respondents said they expressed a great deal of trust in fishing groups, and 31.1 percent said they had a great deal of trust in environmental or conservation groups.

Table 6: When it comes to providing information on coastal issues, how much trust would you say you have in the following sources of information - a great deal of trust, a moderate amount of trust, little trust, or no trust at all?

	A great deal of trust	Moderate amount of trust	Little trust	No trust at all
	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %
LSU scientists and educators	57.2%	29.0%	10.2%	3.6%
News and Media Reports	16.7%	43.5%	23.5%	16.3%
Government sources	11.5%	39.6%	22.5%	26.3%
Environmental and conservation groups	31.1%	40.4%	18.7%	9.9%
Fishermen and Fishing Groups	44.8%	34.8%	11.9%	8.5%
Scientists	48.0%	33.1%	9.8%	9.1%

Self-Reported Information and Interest Levels: There is notable gap between self-reported information and interest levels in coastal policy issues. Only 8.8 percent of respondents say that they consider themselves very informed about coastal issues but 36.9 percent say they are interested in these topics. Similarly, approximately 35.2 percent of respondents say they are not very well informed, while only 13.4 percent say they are not very interested. The gap grows even larger when respondents are asked about how important these issues are personally to them and their family. 79.8 percent of respondents said these issues were very important to them and their family.

Self-reported information levels tend to reflect group memberships. Respondents with family members working in the commercial fishing and seafood industries, members of environmental groups, and members of fishing or boating associations reported being more informed. Fifteen percent of respondents with family members working in the commercial fishing industries reported being very informed, as did 39.2 percent of respondents who were members of environmental or conservations groups and 16.6 percent of respondents were who members of fishing or boating associations. In addition, respondents who live closer to the coast and males were also more likely to report being very informed. Interesting there is also racial

differences in self-reported information levels, but it is primarily in terms of a larger number of white/Caucasian respondents reporting that they were somewhat informed about coastal issues.

Self-reported interest follows similar patterns. Respondents with family members working in the commercial seafood industries and members of environmental or conservation groups were more likely to report that they were very interested in coastal issues. We also see higher reported interest among males and white/Caucasian respondents.

When we look at the importance of these issues to the respondent in their families, we some variations across groups but they are generally not statistically significant. Regardless of demographics or group memberships, substantial majorities of respondents see coastal issues as important to them and their families.

Figure 1: Self-Reported Information, Interest, and Personal Importance of Coastal Issues

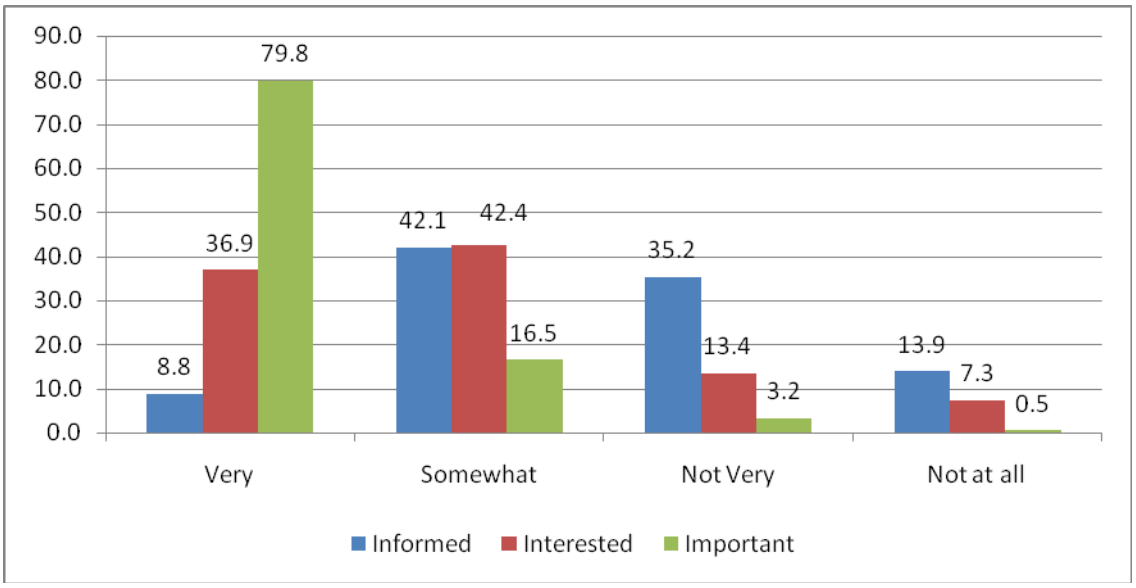


Table 7: Self-Reported Information Levels by Selected Demographics

		In general, how well informed would you consider yourself to be concerning Louisiana coastal policy issues?			
		Very	Somewhat	Not Very	Not at all
		Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %
Over the last 12 months, have you or any members of your immediate family been involved in the commercial fishing or seafood industry?	Yes	15.3%	37.3%	38.0%	9.4%
	No	8.1%	42.3%	35.2%	14.3%
Over the past 12 months, have you or any members of immediate family been involved in other commercial marine industries, such as shipping or offshore oil and gas?	Yes	10.0%	44.0%	37.4%	8.7%
	No	8.6%	41.2%	35.2%	15.0%
Are you a member of any conservation or environmental organizations?	Yes	39.2%	47.9%	12.8%	.0%
	No	7.1%	41.8%	37.2%	13.9%
Are you a member of any commercial or recreational fishing or boating associations?	Yes	16.6%	57.4%	7.8%	18.2%
	No	8.5%	41.0%	36.9%	13.6%
Race	White/Caucasian	8.6%	46.1%	34.0%	11.3%
	Black/African American	8.9%	35.3%	39.4%	16.4%
	Other	9.8%	23.6%	33.7%	32.9%
Education	Less than HS	8.0%	43.2%	36.6%	12.2%
	HS	8.1%	35.5%	38.6%	17.8%
	Some College	7.9%	45.3%	34.7%	12.1%
	College Degree	13.2%	48.8%	29.9%	8.1%
Distance from the Coast	Less than 30 miles	12.3%	42.9%	31.4%	13.4%
	30-60 miles	5.1%	45.1%	32.6%	17.3%
	More than 60 miles	7.7%	38.1%	42.2%	12.1%
Gender	Male	10.4%	42.6%	34.5%	12.5%
	Female	7.2%	41.6%	36.0%	15.2%

Table 8: Self-Reported Interest Levels by Selected Demographics

		How interested are you in these topics?			
		Very	Somewhat	Not Very	Not at all
		Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %
Over the last 12 months, have you or any members of your immediate family been involved in the commercial fishing or seafood industry?	Yes	58.3%	26.4%	2.8%	12.5%
	No	34.6%	44.2%	14.7%	6.5%
Over the past 12 months, have you or any members of immediate family been involved in other commercial marine industries, such as shipping or offshore oil and gas?	Yes	39.3%	37.3%	9.7%	13.8%
	No	36.5%	43.5%	14.4%	5.6%
Are you a member of any conservation or environmental organizations?	Yes	69.4%	30.6%	.0%	.0%
	No	35.3%	42.7%	14.5%	7.6%
Are you a member of any commercial or recreational fishing or boating associations?	Yes	48.7%	40.1%	.8%	10.4%
	No	36.4%	42.5%	14.2%	6.9%
Race	White/Caucasian	39.5%	43.0%	12.4%	5.0%
	Black/African American	32.0%	36.6%	17.5%	13.9%
	Other	25.3%	55.5%	10.0%	9.2%
Education	Less than HS	43.4%	27.0%	19.0%	10.6%
	HS	26.2%	48.3%	15.3%	10.3%
	Some College	38.8%	50.1%	9.0%	2.0%
	College Degree	48.5%	40.9%	8.8%	1.7%
Distance from the Coast	Less than 30 miles	43.6%	40.2%	10.6%	5.6%
	30-60 miles	33.1%	47.2%	13.2%	6.5%
	More than 60 miles	31.6%	43.4%	16.2%	8.8%
Gender	Male	41.2%	42.4%	11.7%	4.8%
	Female	32.8%	42.5%	15.1%	9.7%

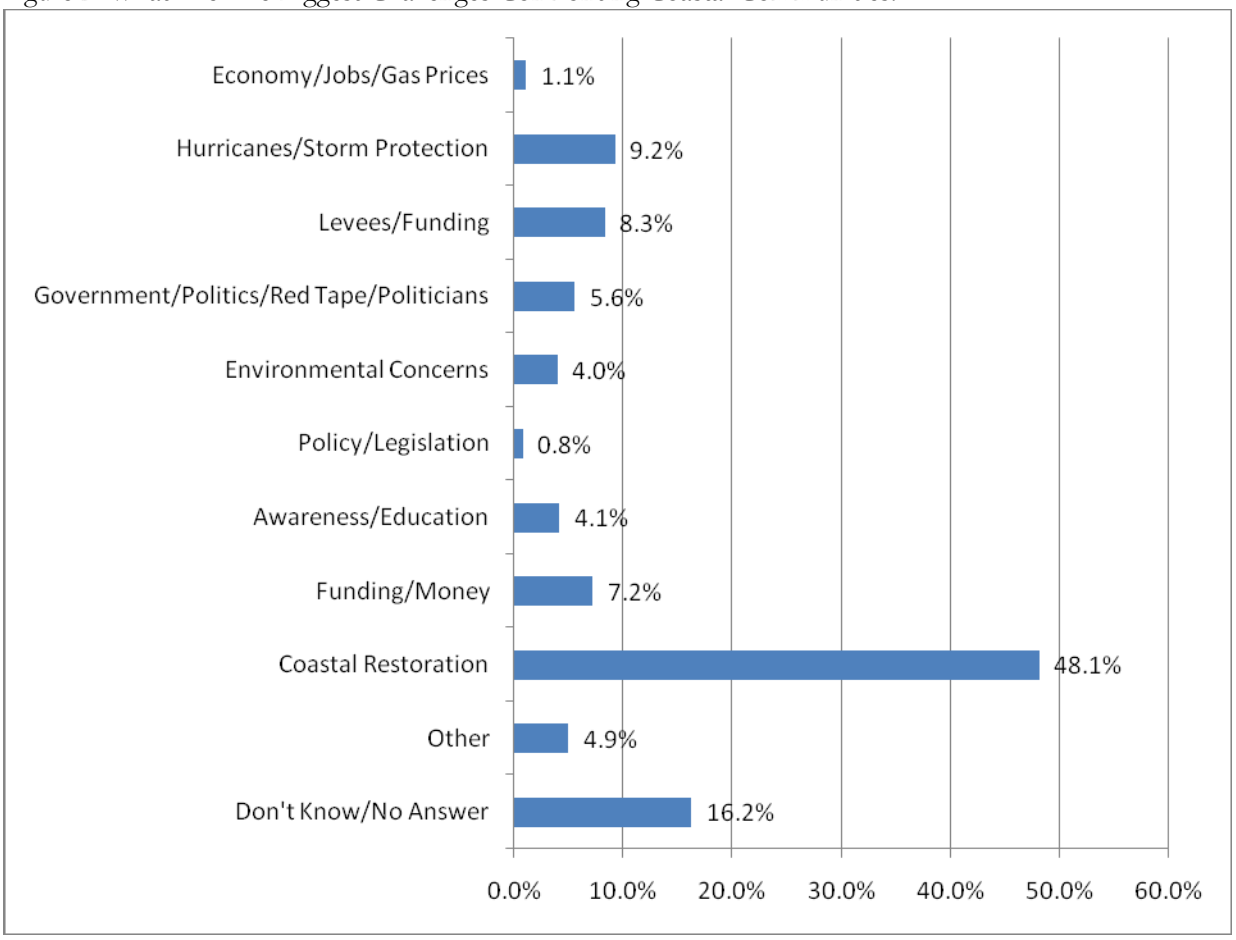
While respondents clearly believe coastal issues are personally important, they are less sure about what they can personally do to protect the health of the coast. 30.3 percent of respondents said there was something they could do protect the coast, while 69.7 said that they did not know. Members of environmental or conservation organizations were much more likely to say there was something they could personally do to protect the coast (73.5), as were more educated respondents (50.5 with a college degree compared to 28.0 with less than a high school education). When asked specifically about what they could do to help protect Louisiana's coastal communities in an open-ended format, a majority of respondents mentioned a specific action (e.g., donating Christmas trees, not littering, obeying laws and regulations). Substantial percentages also mentioned staying informed or educating others (18.5 percent), and trying to influence policy or policy makers (17.1 percent). [Full Responses are provided in Appendix B].

Table 9: What do you think you can do specifically to help protect Louisiana's coastal communities?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mentioned Specific Action	108	49.8	50.0	50.0
	Mentioned Staying Informed, Awareness, Education	40	18.4	18.5	68.5
	Mentioned Support for Policy/Government Action	37	17.1	17.1	85.6
	Mentioned Making Contributions/Donations	18	8.3	8.3	94.0
	Other	9	4.1	4.2	98.1
	Don't Know/Not Sure	4	1.8	1.9	100.0
	Total	216	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		217	100.0		

Biggest Challenges Confronting Louisiana's Coastal Communities: When asked to identify the most important challenges confronting Louisiana's coastal communities in an open-ended format, a substantial plurality of respondents identified issues related to coast restoration and wetlands loss. The next most common response, 16.2 percent of respondents, was the "don't know" option, followed by hurricane and storm protection (9.2 percent), and rebuilding levees. Each response was reviewed and coded into according to whether it mentioned the following categories. Responses were coded for up to two mentions. [Full responses are provided in Appendix A).

Figure 2: What Are The Biggest Challenges Confronting Coastal Communities?



Importance of Louisiana Sea Grant Goals to the Local Community: To assess the importance of various goals to their local community, respondents were asked three separate questions. The first asked respondents to rate each of eight goals on a 1-10 scale with 1 indicating not at all important and 10 indicating the greatest importance possible. Respondents were then asked to identify the single most important goal to their local community and the least important goal to the local community. Respondents perceive wetlands loss and preservation as the single most important goal - though slightly more respondents (66.6 percent compared to 64.8 percent) rated "ensuring a sustainable supply of Louisiana seafood" as having the "greatest importance possible." When asked about the single most important goal, ensuring a sustainable supply of Louisiana seafood falls to 5th behind:

(2) Educating the public about the risks associated with living, working, and doing business along Louisiana's coast;

(3) Protecting the livelihood of fishers and people who depend on the oceans for a living;

(4) Educating Louisiana residents about their relationship with marine and coastal environments.

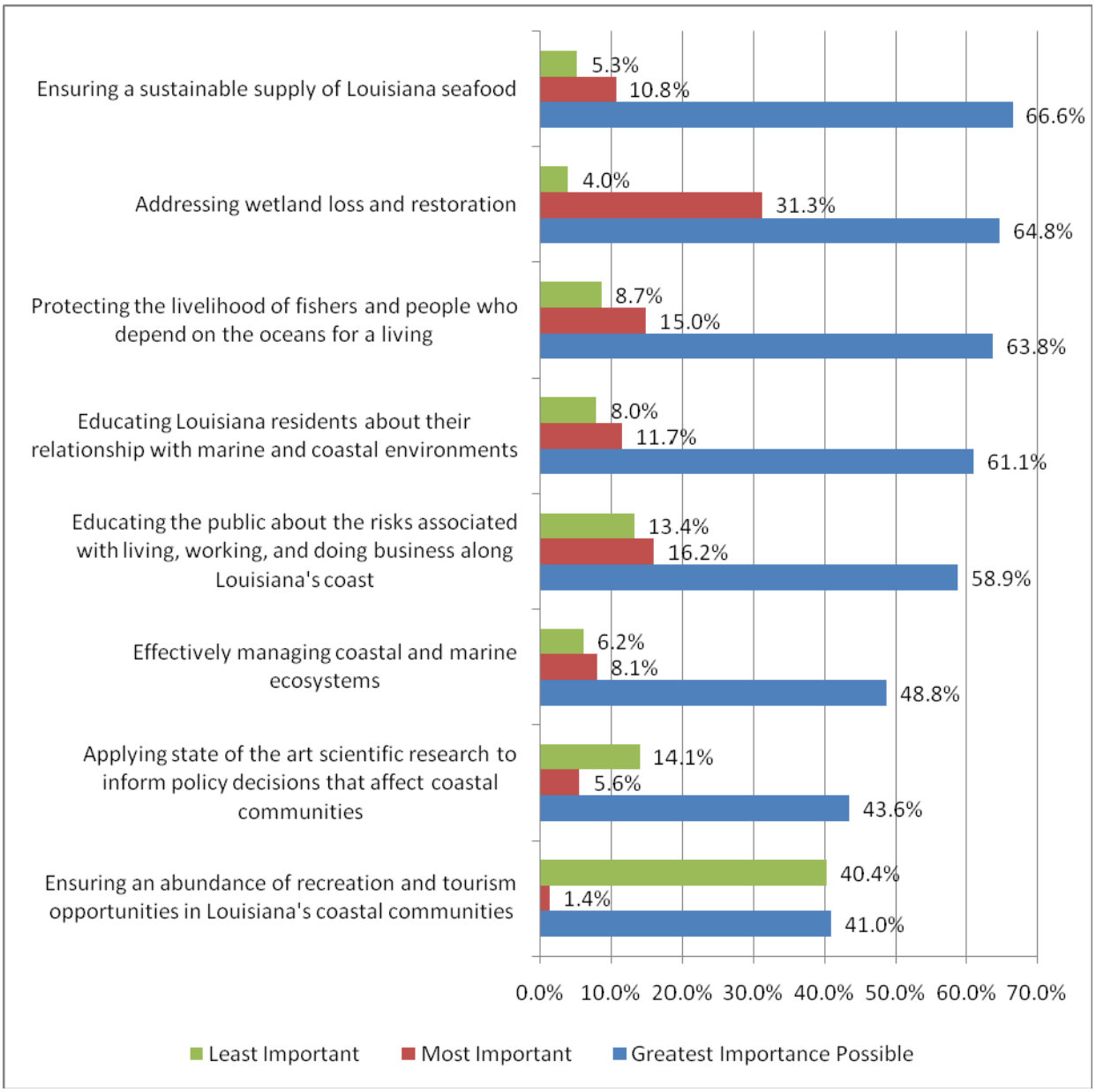
What the results reveal is a split between the importance of education-related goals relative to goals dealing food supplies and the livelihoods of local communities. Rather than say one set of goals is clearly more important than others, it is perhaps more accurate to say each set of goals is important. Less important – at least in terms of public opinion are the goals at the end of the list. These are:

(1) Ensuring an abundance of recreation and tourism opportunities in Louisiana's coastal communities;

(2) Applying state of the art scientific research to inform policy decisions that affect coastal communities;

(3) Effectively managing coastal and marine ecosystems.

Figure 3: Importance of Various Goals as Indicated by Greatest Importance Possible, Most Important Goal to the Local Community and Least Important Goal to the Local Community.



Awareness of an Ecosystem Approach: A substantial number of respondents, 38.7 percent, reported that they were aware of ecosystem based approaches to solving problems in Louisiana's coastal environments. Self-reported awareness was higher among members of conservation or environmental groups (71.4 percent), white/Caucasian respondents (44.8 percent of Caucasians compared to 23.3 percent African Americans) and more educated respondents (50.5 of respondents with a college degree compared to 34.0 percent with a high school degree).

Awareness and Support of Offshore Fish Farms: Just under a quarter of respondents, 24.8 percent, reported that they were aware of plans to develop offshore fish farms. Awareness was higher among respondents who were member of environmental groups (54.3 percent) and males. 31.5 percent of males compared to 18.5 of females said they were aware of plans to develop offshore fish farms. 31.5 percent of respondents with a college degree compared to 19.9 percent without a college degree said they were aware of plans to develop offshore fish farms.

Despite the fact that only a quarter of respondents reporting being aware of plans to develop offshore fish farms, a clear majority (61.9 percent) support their development in the Gulf of Mexico off Louisiana. Respondents who reported that they were aware of the plans to develop offshore fish farms were more likely to say they supported their development. 68.5 percent of respondents who were aware of these plans said they supported the development of fish farms in the Gulf compared to 59.3 percent who said they were not aware. Nearly a quarter of respondents, 23.0 percent, who said they were unaware of plans to develop offshore fish farms aid they were unsure of whether or not they supported the development of fish farms in the Gulf of Mexico off Louisiana. Support for the development of fish farms was stronger among males, the less educated, and as one moves closer to the coast.

- 65.8 of males expressed support compared to 58.2 of females.
- 67.1 percent of respondents with less than a high school education express support compared to 56.8 percent with a college degree.
- 68.6 percent of respondents living within 30 miles of the coast support the development compared to 57.2 percent who live 60 miles or more from the coast.

Notably, however, a lack of support does not necessarily translate into opposition. Better educated respondents and respondents living further from the coast were more likely to say they did not know whether they supported the development of offshore fish farms.

- 27.0 percent of respondents with a college degree said they did not know compared to 14.4 with less than a high school education.
- 23.3 percent of respondents who live 60 miles or more from the coast compared to 11.9 percent who live within 30 miles of the coast.

Estimates of the Percent of Imported Seafood: When asked to identify the percent of seafood imported from other countries, respondents giving widely varying estimates. On average, respondents guessed that 42.9 percent of seafood is imported from other countries, but the variance (as indicated by the standard deviation, 21.6) is considerable. A quarter of respondents (25.2 percent) estimated that the percent of imported seafood was less than 30 percent of the total, while 24.6 percent estimated that it was between 30-49 percent, 40.9 percent estimated that it was between 50-74 percent, and 9.3 percent estimated that it

was more than 75 percent. (14.5 percent of respondents did not offer an estimate or said they did not know).

Table 10: What Percent of Seafood in US is Imported from Other Countries?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 10	38	6.0	7.0	7.0
	11-29	97	15.5	18.1	25.2
	30-49	132	21.1	24.6	49.8
	50-74	220	35.0	40.9	90.7
	More than 75	50	8.0	9.3	100.0
	Total	537	85.5	100.0	
Missing	System	91	14.5		
Total		628	100.0		
		Mean=42.9	SD= 21.6		