

SEA LAB SOUNDS

Annual Legislative Update for the Dauphin Island Sea Lab



Alabama's Marine Science Research Lab

On October 10, the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC) will celebrate its 50th Anniversary of creation by the Alabama State Legislature.

Over these 50 years, the MESC, known to many as the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL), has been committed to serving students of all ages across the state of Alabama, while remaining a diligent steward of resources appropriated by the Legislature. Events last year, including hurricanes and COVID, presented us with significant challenges, but commitments by faculty and staff, combined with support we received from Alabama's legislators have ensured future students will continue to have state-of-the-art resources for their research and education.

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DISL Initiatives for 2021 Legislative Session

Passage of HB110 - Alabama's Aquarium

Representative Chip Brown introduced HB110 in the 2020 Legislative Session, which was cut short because of COVID, to recognize the Aquarium at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab as the official aquarium of Alabama.

The DISL Aquarium highlights the importance of Alabama's rivers and their role in creating the Mobile Tensaw Delta, which is the fourth largest in the United States. When visitors enter the Aquarium they follow a path from the Delta land and waters through Mobile Bay and into the Gulf of Mexico waters and seeing the marine life that makes up this valuable ecosystem.

In 2019, the Aquarium saw the largest number of visitors in its history with over 85,000. Despite COVID, we adopted CDC guidelines and were able to host just over 31,000 visitors. HB110 would open doors for new sponsors and external grant funds and allow the Aquarium to modernize the experience of Alabama citizens.

Move DISL to Same Category as other Higher Education Institutions

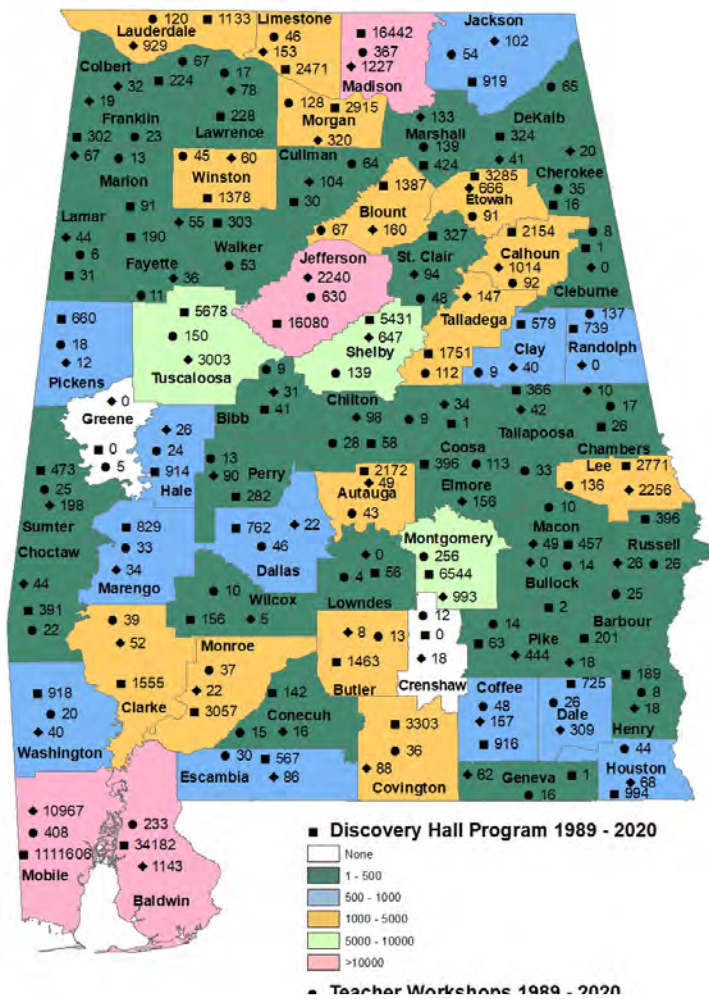
In 1971, the Alabama Legislature created the MESC to make resources available to Alabama's public and private universities and colleges for research and teaching in a financially efficient manner to the Alabama taxpayers. Today the Consortium counts 23 of the State's higher education institutions as members.

The Consortium is housed at the DISL because of its close proximity to multiple marine ecosystems. This location and resources such as laboratories and vessels, provide member institutions with opportunities without costly investment. However, for DISL to continue providing these institutions with modern, state-of-the-art resources and facilities, budget appropriations must increase alongside the member institutions.



Geographic Reach of DISL

Graduate and Undergraduate Credit Hours Earned



Recognizing the importance of demonstrating DISL's programmatic reach to the K-12 and college students, and teachers across the state of Alabama, we began tracking the cumulative hours in 1989.

The map above demonstrates DISL's commitment to not only the students of Consortium members, but also K-12 students and teachers around our state. By continuously monitoring information from this map, we have been better able to identify opportunities that can overcome the limited resources which limit student and teacher program participation from underserved areas.

2020 DISL Performance Metrics

As 2020 began, it looked to be a very promising year for programs and the aquarium at DISL based on 2019 results. Below are highlights of how the year ended, with comparisons to 2019 to demonstrate COVID's impacts across our campus.

 **1,128**

Credit hours completed virtually by students from 16 Consortium institutions.

 **19% from 2019 due to COVID**



62%

Occupancy of Discovery Hall Programs Summer Camps



83%

Occupancy of Discovery Hall Programs Summer High School Marine Science Course

In 2019, both programs were above 97% occupancy.



3 Due to COVID, only 3 teacher workshops were held. In 2019, DISL DHP held 6 teacher workshops with 124 participants.



34k 2020 Aquarium Visitors
62% from 2019 due to COVID

Economic Impact of DISL Research & Programs

The DISL, through the nature of its mission providing transformative education and research programs in the areas of marine and environmental sciences, is committed to the wise stewardship of our valuable natural resources across the state of Alabama. Likewise, we are committed to being wise stewards of our state's financial allocations to DISL.

Recently an economic impact study was performed as a measure to demonstrate DISL's financial stewardship impact on the state's economy. DISL programs generate statewide revenue for goods and services, which is subsequently transferred through a number of participants in Alabama's economy in multiple ways. When DISL expends funds into Alabama, the State sees impacts in the areas of employment, personal earnings, and tax; this allows DISL to be a value-added member of the State's economy and contribute to its annual revenue.



DISL's direct effect on Alabama's economy results from goods and services bought by DISL and its employees. The indirect effect is the ability of other entities to spend into the economy as a result of DISL's direct impact. The combined direct and indirect impacts create the induced impact, which benefits Alabamians' personal earnings through increased jobs, hours, salaries, etc.

 **\$29.5M**
Value Added Impact
 Revenues remaining in economy after DISL purchases and revenues

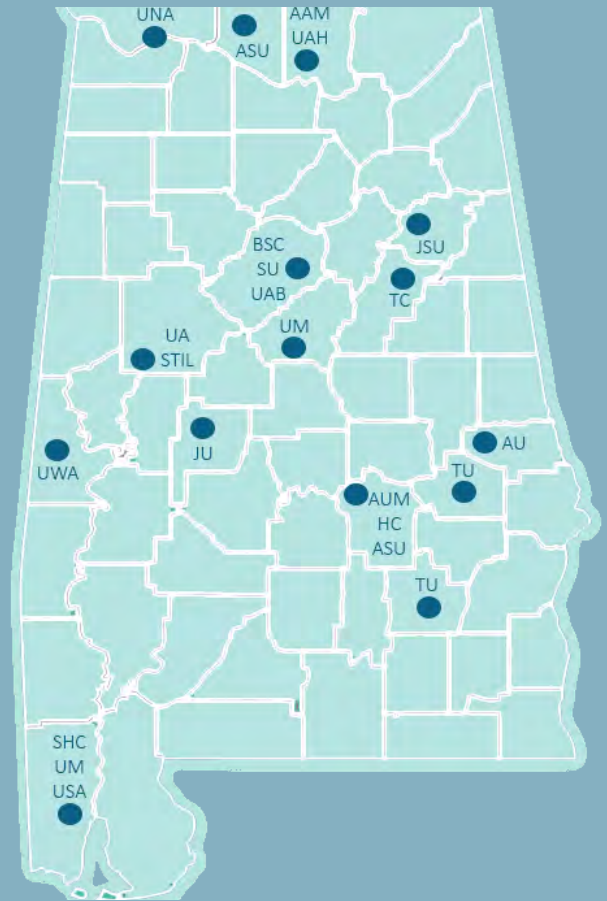
 **\$1.8M**
Tax contribution through jobs dependent on DISL economic activity.

 **508**
Direct, Indirect, Induced Alabama jobs

 **\$17.4M**
Impact to Alabama residents' personal earnings

 **\$56M**
Total Revenue Impact

MESC Members



- Alabama A&M University*
- Alabama State University*
- Athens State University
- Auburn University*
- Auburn University at Montgomery
- Birmingham Southern College
- Huntingdon College
- Jacksonville State University
- Judson College
- Samford University
- Spring Hill College
- Stillman College
- Talladega College
- Troy State University*
- Tuskegee University*
- University of Alabama*
- University of Alabama at Birmingham*
- University of Alabama at Huntsville
- University of Mobile
- University of Montevallo
- University of North Alabama
- University of South Alabama*
- University of West Alabama

*Denotes institutions with graduate programs.