

## **Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force Meeting**

Wednesday, June 24, 2020 (9:00am-12:30pm EDT)

Location: FWC-FWRI, 100 8<sup>th</sup> Ave SE, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

This meeting is open to the public by teleconference.

**In Attendance:** Andrew Reich, Barbara Kirkpatrick, Charles Jacoby, Dave Whiting, Don Anderson, Duane De Freese, Leanne Flewelling, Quay Dortch, Rhonda Watkins, Sherry Larkin, Jill Fleiger

**Guests and Presenters:** Kevin Claridge, Kate Hubbard, Clarissa Anderson, Meghan Abbott (Public dial-in, number of audio attendees 15)

### **Agenda:**

#### 9:10-9:15 a.m. Welcome and introductions

Leanne Flewelling welcomed attendees, conducted rollcall of Task Force members, and reviewed the agenda.

Call to Task Force members for changes to the agenda.

None – agenda approved as posted.

#### 9:15-11:15 a.m. Review of HAB Research Funding and Programs

Flewelling introduced invited speakers to present on various HAB research funding and programs available in Florida.

9:15-9:45 a.m. Kevin Claridge from Mote Marine Laboratory presented “[Florida Red Tide Mitigation and Technology Development Initiative](#)” followed by a question and answer period from members of the Task Force.

Members asked if competitive funding available through the initiative will increase in future years to continue to support already funded multi-year projects, as well as new projects. Claridge confirmed increased allocation is planned but budget yet to be determined.

Members inquired if the newly renovated facilities creating a mesocosm laboratory will be available to external researchers at no cost. Claridge confirmed there will not be a cost for use of facilities to research partners.

Members asked if the design of the new facility took into consideration human health risks of individuals working in the facility e.g., HVAC for aerosols. Claridge confirmed this has been

part of the discussion and design, and they welcome further advice and guidance to ensure protections are in place.

Members asked about the QPCR project and how it differed from the Sea Grant funded project. Kate Hubbard of FWRI noted her understanding that each is funding different needed components of the project to ensure it had the resources and support to be successful.

9:45-10:15 a.m. Kate Hubbard, FWRI, presented “[HAB Research Funding and Programs: local to national \(for Florida\)](#)” followed by a question and answer period from members of the Task Force.

Members asked if the nutrient data being collected is publicly available. Hubbard confirmed it is available by request as it is currently not hosted the same way as cell count data given the time lag it takes to produce these data.

Flewelling commented that the state budget is still pending signature of the Governor, and given the current situation that significant vetoes are expected. But we expect to hear in the next week and will provide an update on red tide funding as soon as confirmed.

10:15-10:45 a.m. Quay Dortch, NOAA, presented “[NOAA HAB Programs in Florida](#)” followed by a question and answer period from members of the Task Force.

Members of the Task Force inquired if the money that is available and growing in Florida for HAB and red tide research is creating challenges for evaluating federal program proposals knowing there are additional resources. Dortch confirmed it did not and evaluators are told not to consider those other resources, and projects were funded from Florida this last round.

Flewelling noted one of the outcomes of the last Task Force meeting was to arrange a workshop hosted by GCOOS and SECOORA for partners to revise plans for integrated coastal and ocean monitoring. As the Task Force moves forward with this, how does it make sure it is aligned with National effort. Dortch noted herself and Barb Kirkpatrick are both on the national group as well as this, and as a program it is intended to incorporate those regional efforts including involvement and funding support. There is strong representation of regional efforts in national planning.

Flewelling addressed and apologized to public listeners acknowledging audio issues and delays in meeting materials posting to the website, and confirmed future meetings will ensure improved public access and engagement including online options.

10:45-11:05 a.m. Charles Jacoby, HAB Task Force, provided an update on FWRI’s [HAB Grant Program](#) evaluation process and June 22 panel meeting. Jacoby noted the external Evaluation Panel met for just over 3 hours and engaged in robust discussion of all proposals submitted to the May 2020 call (3 communication stream and 9 research stream) and the

evaluation criteria (10pts Resources/Qualifications, 30pts Relevance to call/Ability to achieve goals, 30pts Design, 10pts Budget, 20pts Overall quality). He presented [data on scoring variability](#) among reviewers and submissions (each proposal being assessed by 4-6 reviewers). Jacoby reminded members of the process and recommendations from the Evaluation Panel that will go to the FWRI Grants Committee for final determination including funding 1 communications proposal and 1 research proposal in full, and for an additional 3 research proposals which received high ranking to be evaluated by FWRI as end user for consideration of partial funding or specific project component(s) funding. Jacoby noted he will liaise with the FWRI Grants Committee to communicate Task Force and Evaluation Panel recommendations.

Members asked about members of review panels. Meghan Abbott noted the external evaluation panel comprised 17 members from around Florida and the country including communication and science experts, with broad representation of stakeholders from government, academia, research and non-profit environmental organizations. Flewelling noted FWRI Grants Committee comprises the FWRI Director and Section Leaders.

Break 11:05-11:20 a.m.

11:20-11:50 a.m. Continued Review of HAB Research Funding and Programs

Jacoby asked the Task Force to confirm if they prioritize funding a portfolio of projects or projects that move the science and management forward to inform the FWRI Grants Committee in their consideration of remaining funding allocations. The Task Force preferred red tide research progress over project diversity for this call stage as there as some diversity in the call itself with two funding streams as well as a portfolio of projects as the end goal from response to all initial recommendations.

Flewelling introduced presenter Clarissa Anderson.

11:20-11:50 a.m. Clarissa Anderson, SCOOS, presented “[Implementation of an automated early warning system for HAB events in California](#)” followed by a question and answer period from members of the Task Force.

Members asked about contact to reach out for more information on hydrogen sulfide traveling inland causing respiratory effects. Anderson noted most data is collected qualitatively through self-reported survey from partners like SurfRider but was not aware of public health officials investigating capturing quantitative data.

Flewelling thanked presenters.

11:50 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Task Force Discussion

Flewelling reviewed initial red tide recommended priorities identified at previous meeting including:

- 1) communication plans and 2) detection research, addressed in the May 2020 FWRI HAB Grant Program call, and
- 3) workshop for integrated coastal monitoring, FWRI will follow-up with GCOOS and SECORA in the new fiscal year for planning and development, and
- 4) data portal, FWRI is planning discussions at agency level first with DEP, and other relevant agencies to determine what needs to be done, can be done, role we can play, and potential investments.

Flewelling reminded the Task Force public health and economic studies priority discussions were deferred pending results of other currently funded initiatives by DOH GCOOS, NCCOS etc.

Flewelling introduced topic of developing working groups. She noted a communications working group will be developed coordinated by FWC-FWRI to work with recipients of communication funding and other stakeholders to advise and inform on HAB communication needs, state of the science, hazard assessment, evaluating tools, developing plans, etc.

**ACTION:** Task Force members to provide Meghan with recommendations for members representing scientists, resource managers and communication specialist to serve on the FWC Communications Working Group, including personal expressions of interest.

Flewelling asked the Task Force if there were any items on the existing list of initial priority recommendations the Task Force would like to work on themselves, with consideration the Task Force is an advisory body and the creation of recommendations for the State does meet their mandate.

- Duane DeFreese informed the Task Force that Florida Ocean Alliance may receive more funding for economic analysis and that it will be important for FWC to advise on how to use some of those funds to look at red tide impacts, maybe even pair as COVID.
- Members inquired if there were any plans to look into health impacts during COVID if there is a red tide bloom. Reich noted DOH does not have formal plans (current funding has been allocated to blue-green algae prior to COVID) but recognized community and public health interest in learning more about co-exposure but will be difficult given we know so little about brevetoxin exposure. **ACTION:** Kirkpatrick and Reich will follow-up with CDC to see if there is discussion on COVID-brevetoxin inhalation
- Rhonda Watkins added management response to red tide blooms may need to be better coordinated during COVID as in the past the clear message in some counties has been “we do not close beaches,” while some counties on the east coast did close beaches during the 2017-2019 red tide, and all beaches closed temporarily in response to COVID. If there is a bloom during COVID, we will need a clear state message and

response plan in place before that happens. Reich noted DOH will likely continue to issue health advisories as commonly done with red tide especially for individuals with underlying health or respiratory issues, and likely would adjust messaging in coordination with state agencies and the Governor's office to add COVID to these advisories. Counties to make their own determination on closures.

Flewelling asked members if there were any remaining short-term red tide recommendations from the document to discuss, as well as other targets for future recommendations that we can begin addressing at the October meeting.

- Members recognize the initial document did not address all red tide issues and impacts that we will discuss going forward such as effects on natural resources, wildlife and animal health.
- October meeting has planned presentations by the DOH on HABS, and SEFSC/NOAA on fisherman perceptions. These will be a good opportunity to start expanding our discussion to other red tide impacts as well as other Florida HABS of concern.
- Reich noted initial year of DOH HAB funding went to blue-green algae but public health needs related to red tide should be raised with DOH at the October meeting to inform them of priority items to consider funding.
- DeFreese would like to expand beyond *Karenia* to other potentially worrisome HABS in Florida e.g., *Pseudo nitzschia*, *Aureoumbra lagunensis*, *Pyrodinium* etc.
- Reich also suggested we add potential HAB shellfish issues and management.
- Dortch added including some discussion of Ciguatera i.e., is it an area of concern in Florida? Flewelling noted we could invite Mike Parsons to present on his project and how climate change might impact it. Reich added it is a reportable disease and DOH has some figures and research on it as well.
- Kirkpatrick suggested including a presentation of research on neuroeffects. **ACTION:** Kirkpatrick to send contact information.
- Members suggested a presentation on the ECOHAB regional *Karenia* project would be beneficial, even an overview if too early for an update. **ACTION:** Abbott to reach out to PIs Heil and Hubbard.

Flewelling opened the public dial-in line for questions and comments. None received. Flewelling gave closing remarks.

Adjourned 12:32 p.m.