

The Regional Workshop for Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in California Coastal Waters: April 2-3, 2008 Workshop Proceedings

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, California Ocean Science Trust and Southern California Coastal Water Research Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Within California there are numerous programs for studying and monitoring harmful algal blooms (HABs); however, these programs are largely uncoordinated with respect to each other. To assess the interest in, and potential impediments to, the formation of a coordinated statewide HABs monitoring network, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research and the California Ocean Science Trust convened a workshop that included 42 invited participants representing the leading HAB research groups in California and a diverse range of interest groups, including: water quality management, shellfish management and public health protection, and animal rescue communities. Overall, workshop participants made significant contributions to a more comprehensive understanding of HAB events and expressed a desire to improve regional monitoring communication and data sharing.

The workshop consisted of four sessions. The first plenary session was comprised of presentations summarizing the work of 18 organizations presently collecting HAB related data with the potential to form the backbone of a coordinated statewide program. In the second session, participants broke into two working groups to assess the extent to which methodological differences in toxin detection and species identification among programs poses an impediment to the development of a statewide network. The third session involved two working groups discussing data sharing and information management potential impediments. The final session was a plenary discussion to identify the next steps necessary to begin forming a statewide HAB alert network.

Following the summary presentations, the second and third sessions included breakout groups that outlined and examined current methods of toxin detection, species identification, and data management used in California. Participants agreed that method incompatibility was not a major impediment to establishing a statewide network, but that an intercalibration study to better assess methodological differences would significantly benefit the program design. Similarly, participants in the third session, the data sharing breakout group, concluded that there are no major impediments with respect to data structures or data storage. Notably, this group did identify concerns about data sharing, particularly as it affects loss of publication rights, but developed an approach to resolve this issue and indicated a willingness to share data as part of a statewide network.

The final session focused on assessing the interest among the HAB community in implementing a statewide alert network and discussing requisite next steps if such a system were desired. The community strongly agreed that there is a need for an integrated system and identified the many benefits to a variety of end users, including the participants and their respective organizations. The group agreed that the primary impediment to such a network is not technical, but the lack of a mandate for such a system to be designed and implemented. The group felt that the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) would be the appropriate group to express such interest and that their interest should be assessed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There was widespread agreement among the participants that the development of an integrated statewide HAB alert network would be of value to both researchers and end user communities. The participants further determined that the impediments identified at the workshop were primarily organizational and motivational, rather than technical. Based on this conclusion, the workshop participants agreed that the following next steps should be implemented:

- The workshop participants should formalize their interaction by electing a steering committee and facilitator that would organize the group, implement the recommendations from the workshop, and centralize information from all groups in the state.
- A summary of the workshop and recommendations should be communicated to the OPC to gauge their interest in having a coordinated network and potentially funding the initial steps of developing the network.
- Initiate interaction tools, such as an e-mail list server, a website, and a summary of existing programs.
- Develop study plans and seek funding for an interlaboratory intercalibration study of toxin detection and species identification methods.
- Conduct a regional data pilot study building on one of the programs with a regional mission, such as the SCCOOS HAB pier program or the MERHAB Cal-PREeMPT program.

Full Text

ftp://ftp.sccwrp.org/pub/download/DOCUMENTS/TechnicalReports/565_HAB_WorkshopProceedings.pdf