

Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act

Agencies: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Citation: [16 U.S.C. §§ 1451 note](#)

Enacted as: the “Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998” ([Public Law 105-383](#)), on November 13, 1998

Summary:

The [Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act \(the Act\)](#), as amended, establishes an Interagency Task Force on Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia (Task Force), chaired by the Secretary of Commerce, to assess ecological and economic impacts of marine and freshwater harmful algal blooms, identify alternatives for reducing, mitigating, and controlling those impacts, and examine the social and economic costs and benefits of such alternatives. (section 603(a) (b)).

The Act charges the Task Force with assessing the ecological and economic impacts of hypoxia (reduced oxygen concentration within sea water, caused in part by the presence of harmful algal blooms) in United States coastal waters, identify alternatives for reducing, mitigating, and controlling hypoxia, and examine the social and economic costs and benefits of such alternatives. (section 603(c)). The Task Force is also charged with assessing hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico, specifically the sources and loads of nutrients transported to the Gulf by the Mississippi River, the effects of nutrient loads, methods for reducing nutrient loads, and social and economic costs and benefits of such alternatives. (section 604).

As amended in 2004 ([Public Law 108-456](#)), the Act authorizes funding for research and development methods to advance scientific understanding and the ability to detect, assess, prevent, control, and mitigate harmful algal bloom events (section 603(d)). The Act also authorizes funding for the preparation of local and regional scientific assessments of hypoxia and harmful algal blooms, upon request by states, Indian tribes, local governments, or affected areas identified by the Secretary of Commerce (section 603(e)). To improve understanding of the causes, characteristics, and impacts of freshwater harmful algal blooms, the 2004 amendments established a merit-based interagency research program, Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algal Blooms (ECOHAB) (section 603(f)).

Under the 2004 amendments, the Task Force is required to develop and submit to Congress a harmful algal bloom (HAB) action plan, which must establish priorities and guidelines for a competitive, peer reviewed, merit-based interagency program on methods for preventing, controlling, and mitigating HABs. The plan must also identify ways to improve coordination and reduce duplication of efforts among federal agencies and departments (section 603(i)(2)). The Secretary is authorized to establish a research, development, demonstration, and technology transfer program on methods for preventing, controlling, and mitigating harmful algal blooms on coastal ecosystems (including the Great Lakes), public health, and the economy (section 603(i)).

Source: [Public Law 105-383](#) and [Public Law 108-456](#)

Information last updated: September 20, 2012