

## **Oceans and Human Health Act**

**Agencies:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**Citation:** [33 U.S.C. §§ 3101 et seq.](#)

**Enacted as:** the “Oceans and Human Health Act”, on December 8, 2004 as Title IX of [Public Law 108-447](#)

### **Summary:**

The [Oceans and Human Health Act \(OHH Act\)](#) directs the National Science and Technology Council, through the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, to establish a national research program to improve understanding of the role of the oceans in human health (section 902(a)(b)). The program is to build upon and complement the ongoing activities of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Science Foundation, and other departments and agencies, and is not intended to duplicate or supersede activities of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia.

The OHH Act also calls for a ten-year implementation plan to guide the Inter-agency Task Force’s activities by establishing federal research goals and priorities, describing specific activities required to achieve the goals and priorities, and, among other things, making recommendations for coordination (section 902(b)). The scope of the program activities is broad and ranges from interdisciplinary research on vector and waterborne diseases of human and marine organisms, to harmful algal blooms and hypoxia, marine-derived pharmaceuticals, and predictive modeling on marine environmental health or public health threats (section 902(c)).

The OHH Act codifies the Oceans and Human Health Initiative (OHHI), which NOAA established in 2003 to coordinate and implement NOAA’s research and activities related to the role of oceans in human health (section 903(a)). The mission of the OHHI is to improve understanding and management of the ocean, coasts and Great Lakes to enhance benefits to human health and reduce public health risks. The OHHI is authorized to provide support for (section 903):

- centralized program and research coordination;
- an advisory panel to assist in the development of OHHI;
- NOAA National Centers of Excellence to strengthen NOAA capabilities in carrying out its programs and activities related to the oceans’ role in human health;
- research grants to provide financial assistance to the scientific community for critical research and projects that explore the relationships between oceans and human health, and that complement or strengthen NOAA programs and activities;
- training opportunities for pre- and post- doctoral students and scientists in the beginning of their career that are interested in oceans and human health research; and
- public information and outreach (section 904).

**Source:** [Public Law 108-447](#)

**Information last updated:** September 20, 2012