

Snowe/Nelson (FL) Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Amendments Act of 2009

The Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Amendments Act of 2009 would reauthorize the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act, which was first passed in 1998 and last amended in 2004 (16 U.S.C. 1421 note). For over a decade this program has served as the federal government's research and response framework for harmful algal blooms. According to a recent NOAA report, the United States seafood and tourism industries suffer annual losses of \$82 million due to economic impacts of harmful algal blooms.

The three primary objectives of this reauthorization are:

- (1) To **integrate and improve coordination** among the individual Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) and hypoxia research programs at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA);
- (2) To **facilitate the identification and consideration of regional, state, and local needs** in prioritizing research and developing products and tools to aid decision making; and
- (3) To **promote the transition of research products into implementable actions** for regional, State, and local governments to predict, prevent, monitor, and mitigate HAB and hypoxia events and to minimize any resulting economic, ecologic, and human health impacts in their communities.

MAJOR PROVISIONS

- Establishes a **National HAB/Hypoxia Program at NOAA**, which will be responsible for:
 - Promoting a national strategy to help communities understand, predict, control and mitigate freshwater and marine HAB and hypoxia events
 - Enhancing and coordinating the activities of existing HAB and hypoxia programs
 - Creating a new extramural, competitive research program
- Expands the **Interagency Task Force** to include 2 State representatives, and defines other Task Force functions, including interagency coordination and review of budget requests
- Provides for development of **Regional Research and Action Plans**, each crafted by a regional Panel of Experts comprised of representatives from a wide range of stakeholders. These plans will guide the prioritization of research grants issued competitively by the National HAB/Hypoxia Program.
- Establishes a **collaborative Pilot Program for Freshwater Harmful Algal Booms and Hypoxia** with the EPA and other Federal agencies.

Reporting: The Program would be required to provide a biennial report to Congress. The Interagency Task Force would produce a comprehensive report every five years concerning HAB and hypoxia research, impacts, and management and mitigation activities.

Appropriations: The bill authorizes \$40 million to NOAA annually from 2010 to 2014. Of this, \$10 million shall be allocated each fiscal year to develop and implement the Regional Research and Action Plans. The remainder would support the National HAB/Hypoxia Program, including funding for competitively selected, extramural research, monitoring, prevention, and mitigation projects.