

AHAB Monthly Meeting July 11th, 2019

Attendees (by phone): Kayla Schommer (AOOS), Kari Lanphier and Chris Whitehead (Sitka Tribe), Barbara Mahoney (NMFS), Dominic Hondelero, Sherri Fields and Kris Holderied (NOAA NCCOS), Steve Kibler and Amy Holman (NOAA), Sarah Schoen and Caroline Van Hemert (USGS), Stephanie Mason (Kodiak Area Native Association), John Harley (Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center), Don Anderson (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute), Gay Sheffield (Alaska Sea Grant), Kim Stryker and Jeremy (Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation), Dean Stockwell (UAF), Patryce McKinney (ADEC Lab), Rosie Robinson, Hatten, and Jasmine Maurer(KBNERR), Debbie Tobin (KBNERR/UAA), Xiuninh DU (Hatfield Marine Science Center), Danielle Stickman (WALCC), Courtney Hart (UAF), Paula Doby (Alaska Sea Grant), Erica Lujan (ANTHC), Katie G. (Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies), Alex Whiting (Native Village of Kotzebue), and Kathy Burek-Huntington (Alaska Veterinary Pathology Services).

Updates by Region

Kachemak Bay/Cook inlet

Rosie Robinson from the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve provided an update on the Cook inlet and Kachemak Bay region. She expressed that the region is feeling on edge due to the high levels of toxin in the Southeast but nothing has happened in her region as of yet. No samples have come back with concerning levels. However, this week they began seeing a Pseudo-nitzschia bloom in the inner bay. These blooms have never had concerning level before but they are working on getting samples soon. The Reserve has begun communication with villages across the bay due to an increase in people going over there to harvest hard-shell species. The beaches across the Bay were not being routinely monitored so the Reserve began a partnership to test samples there as it steadily become a more popular recreational harvest site. They are currently working with ADF&G and a charter company out of Ninilchik to obtain samples. The waters are extremely warm around the Bay, but things are starting to cool off.

Dominic Hondelero and Kris Holderied provided an update for the Kasistna Bay Laboratory. They have not seen any Alexandrium in their samples so far this summer. They have been collecting samples of forage and predator fish to send in for toxin testing. They have also heard rumor of another bloom and think it is most likely the one Rosie had mentioned.

Aleutian and Pribilof Islands

Steve Kibler of NOAA was able to provide a short update for the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands region. Steve has been working closely with Bruce Wright who is the main point of contact for the region. Steve reported that Sand Point and King Cove have elevated levels of toxins in their samples. King Cove has levels over 1,000 micrograms per gram, which is the first time it has been this high in recorded history. ADF&G is providing fish samples to test after the recent sand lance and bird die offs. Bruce has also begun a sampling project in Unalaska with Missy Good of Alaska Sea Grant. Tribal interns are collecting phytoplankton samples for Alexandrium abundance and Bruce is researching bloom dynamics in the area.

Southeast

Kari Lanphier (Sitka Tribe of Alaska/ Southeast Alaska Tribal Ocean Research) provided an update on the Southeast region. She spoke to the incredible season they have had so far. Their first samples went above the regulatory limit in early April in Ketchikan and have not gone back down since. Most of the Southeast communities they monitor have gone above the limit. The only communities that have not gone above the limit are: Sitka, Wrangel, and Petersburg.

Kodiak

Stephanie Mason (KANA) provided an update on the Kodiak region. Samples are coming back above the regulatory limit but nothing as bad as the Southeast. They are also experiencing a sand lance die off and have sent samples to Bruce Wright to process. Their monitoring program is currently going "live", which means they are active on all social media sites and did an interview with the local public radio station discussing PSP and their monitoring program.

Arctic

Alex Whiting (Native Village of Kotzebue) and Gay Sheffield (Alaska Sea Grant) provided an update on the Arctic region. Alex expressed that they have not seen any signs of a bloom yet and that they don't usually see it until August. Gay stressed the fact that it has been extremely warm in their region this summer. With air temperatures in the 80's/90's degrees Fahrenheit and river temperatures hitting 20 degrees Celsius. This has resulted in disturbingly low O2 levels which have led to salmon die offs in Eastern Norton Sound. The Northern Bering Sea is strikingly different this season in terms of catch-return. There is no thermal barrier and the catches are mostly Pacific cod.

Discussion of PSA for AHAB Website

Network members discussed a draft template of a PSA that members could use to update the Network and general public on new or concerning information in their region. This template was created by the Communications and Outreach and Event Response Working Groups. The goal was to make a basic template that network members could fill in and send to AOOS to put on the website. A template would also allow the public to get used to seeing the same format and would hopefully lend to it being easily understood by the general population. We are hoping to have the template finalized soon.

If you have any questions about the PSA or would like to join either the Communications and Outreach Working Group or the Event Response Working Group, please let Kayla know and she can put you into contact with working group leads.

Updates from other Network members

USGS

Sarah Schoen (USGS) provided an update on USGS HABs work. They have been collecting PWS forage fish, sea birds, and HABs samples for testing. They have experienced very high temperatures and very few forage fish in the PWS. There also appears to be fewer birds than

normal but won't know for sure until they analyze the data. The waters are very clear with low turbidity. They will be tracking samples during an active bloom, as well as when a non-active bloom is present. They'd appreciate any early warning signs of hot levels in the PWS and Cook Inlet area.

NOAA

Steve Kibler provided an update on his Alaska HABs research. He is in Kachemak Bay this week to collect more fish, zooplankton, and phytoplankton samples. He is looking into food web dynamics to see how toxins accumulate. They are also looking at subsets of invertebrates including urchins, lipids, seastars, and snails. He is hoping as the year goes on he will be able to provide more updates.

Sitka Tribe of Alaska

Chris Whitehead provided an additional update from the Southeast. Chris said he spoke to a colleague from Washington who works with folks from British Columbia and that they are starting to see samples above the regulatory limit. Chris also wanted to remind everyone that SEATOR's domoic acid project will kick off this fall and if anyone want to help or is collecting samples and wants them analyzed- to please get in contact with either him or Karri.

Update from the AHAB Network Coordinator

Kayla Schommer (AOOS) provided a few last minute updates and reminders for the AHAB Network. If you are not a part of a working group and would like to be, please email Kayla and she will get you in touch with the leader of the working group(s) you're interested in.

Our next monthly update call will be held **August 7th at 10 am akst.**