



Project Background and Overview

As the number of alternatives to control and mitigate (C&M) red tide blooms increases, it may not be adequate for scientists, managers and legislators to presume that the alternatives are equally acceptable to the public (especially if political impetus can be influenced by public misperceptions regarding the state of the science). Moreover, it is possible that some control measures will be undesirable (e.g., local opposition to spraying for mosquitoes). A lack of information to the general public about the efficacy, impacts, risks and benefits of alternative *K. brevis* control and mitigation measures, or misinformation about such details, could hinder research efforts and ultimately compromise the development of the best available science. Thus, an informed populace is critical to the success of any attempt to C&M the harmful effects of red tide blooms. Increased efforts to explore procedures and approaches for addressing how citizens can acquire needed information about complex science and policy decisions are needed.

While public participation is a key to better communication, it is not, by itself, the total solution. At the same time, we know that information alone is seldom a sufficient condition for promoting informed decision-making. This study seeks to build a model of providing appropriate information, combined with an efficient process of participation to help scientists, policy makers and regulators arrive at a sound decision. To foster the required trust and understanding of the public and various stakeholder groups in the development and maintenance of red tide C&M strategies in Florida, this research will capitalize on both (a) the experience of an investigative team with a diverse set of knowledge, skills and available resources and (b) a plethora of recent information with respect to red tide events and how they are perceived and understood by various stakeholder groups.

Expected benefits include (1) ensuring that costs and benefits (and associated risk and uncertainty) of C&M strategies are conveyed to stakeholders; (2) demonstrating that public preferences are considered in order to foster trust in management; and (3) providing an interdisciplinary link (road map) on how to address human dimensions research within NOAA. Realizing these benefits will better ensure that the long-range goals of municipal, county and state coastal resource managers are achieved with efficacy. Such benefits, when realized, will help better convey the overall purpose of red tide related research efforts to the general public, increasing the general public's willingness to address the available biological and social science pertaining to red tide events in an objective manner.