Algal Bloom Response

1. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

1.1. This method details the procedure to collect pertinent information from persons reporting an algal bloom and to coordinate potential response activities.

1.2. Use the following DEP SOPs and forms in conjunction with this SOP:

- SOP FS 7000, *General Biological Community Sampling* - FS 7110, *Phytoplankton Bloom Sampling* and FS 7240, *Algal Mat Sampling for Taxonomic Identification or Toxin Analysis* https://floridadep.gov/dear/quality-assurance/content/dep-sops
- DEP Algal Bloom Notification Form, AB-NOTIFY, or the online Algal Bloom Reporting Form www.reportalgalbloom.com
  - The Algal Bloom Reporting Form can also be found through a Quick Link located on the Algal Bloom Dashboard https://floridadep.gov/AlgalBloom
  - Online reporting established during the summer of 2016
- DEP Cyanobacteria Bloom Response Field Data Sheet, AB-FIELD

2. PROCEDURE FOR INITIAL REPONSE TO AN ALGAL BLOOM REPORT

2.1. Notifications of potential bloom conditions are either received by a direct call to an office phone, a call to the DEP hotline (855-305-3903, established during the summer of 2016), or reported via online entry at www.reportalgalbloom.com or through a Quick Link located on the Algal Bloom Dashboard https://floridadep.gov/AlgalBloom.

2.2. For calls received, enter all relevant information directly into the online Algal Bloom Reporting Form (preferred method) or use the fillable, electronic DEP Algal Bloom Notification Form, AB-NOTIFY.

2.2.1. If the caller reports human health effects, discontinue any discussion of the health effects. Human health effects are covered by HIPAA and should be handled by the Florida Department of Health (DOH). Provide the caller with the Poison Control phone number, 800-222-1222, or refer them to their local county health department. The county Health Department searchable website is https://www.floridahealth.gov/all-county-locations.html?utm_source=floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/county-health-departments/find-a-county-health-department/index. After the call is complete, forward the report to the DOH Algal Bloom Contact.

2.2.2. If the caller reports effects on wildlife or fish kills, provide the caller with information to report directly to FWC or take the necessary information and report for them after the call is complete.

Online: https://myfwc.com/research/saltwater/health/fish-kills-hotline/

Phone: 1-800-636-0511.

2.2.3. Finish collecting information regarding the reported bloom.

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2.3. Notify the Regional Operations Center (ROC) Administrator and designated ROC Algal Bloom Contact having jurisdiction over the water body being reported, along with a Cyanobacteria Bloom Response Team (CBRT, pronounced "see bert") member in Tallahassee (See the list below).

- David Whiting, Deputy Division Director, Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration
- Cheryl Swanson, Program Administrator, Biology Program
- Sarah Noble, Program Administrator, Water Quality Assessment Program
- Marian Fugitt, Professional Geologist, Water Resource Management (Blooms affecting water bodies that are used as a source of drinking water)
- Sarah Meyer, Environmental Administrator for CE, SW, S, SE
- Chris Slade, Environmental Administrator for TLH, NE, NW
- Amelia Rankin, Environmental Manager for Algal Taxonomy Lab (Notify when samples collected)
- Emily Cooley, DOH Scientific Advisor and Algal Bloom Contact (Blooms with Human Health Effects)

Note: It is good practice to make sure the report has been received by the appropriate responders. For large, ongoing algal bloom response, the notification process and members notified may change slightly. For example, if the report is part of a larger algal bloom response already in effect, the ROC Contact may be checking the online entry report daily and CBRT members may only receive the updates and results.

Note: Use of the Harmful Algal Bloom Tracking Module of the DOH's Caspio database was discontinued in July 2019. DOH switched to using the DEP Algal Bloom Dashboard for bloom notifications and tracking. Historical data remains available in Caspio.

2.4. The ROC Contact and/or the CBRT member will review the information. If not enough information was originally recorded from the call to plan a response, the ROC Contact or CBRT member will contact the person who reported the bloom to obtain the missing information.

3. PROCEDURE FOR FOLLOW-UP TO AN ALGAL BLOOM REPORT

3.1. Depending upon the size, location, and severity of the bloom, the ROC Administrator, ROC Contact, and/or CBRT member may need to coordinate to decide the appropriate response.

3.2. If it is determined that DEP or coordinating partners should/can respond to the bloom, the ROC Administrator and/or CBRT member will request that staff perform a site visit.

3.3. Site visit staff will complete the FL Algal Bloom Site Visits survey in the Survey123 app. Submission of the survey adds the site visit to the online Florida Algal Bloom Site Visits map, populates the Cyanobacteria Bloom Response Field Data Sheet (AB-FIELD) and saves AB-FIELD to a documentation folder (.pdf).

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3.3.1. AB-FIELD serves as a submittal form/chain of custody form and is sent along with samples to the DEP Laboratory, either shipped in coolers or emailed directly to the DEP Laboratory Receiving staff. Receiving staff save the field data sheet (.pdf) on a laboratory network drive.

3.3.2. In the event a site visit is performed but no samples are collected, ROC Contacts will still complete the FL Algal Bloom Site Visits survey. The online Algal Bloom Site Visits map will populate with the site visit and AB-FIELD will be generated and saved, but AB-FIELD will not be sent to the Receiving group.

3.4. As results become available, they will be posted by DEP Laboratory staff to the Florida online Florida Algal Bloom Site Visits map, which can also be accessed through the Algal Bloom Dashboard, https://floridadep.gov/algalbloom. As information and results become available, DEP Laboratory staff will provide updates to Senior Management, CBERT members, and the Communications Office (as necessary, to coordinate public outreach).

3.5. The ROC Contact, Administrator, or CBRT member should provide feedback to the initial bloom report originator or notify local health departments and the public as appropriately determined for the particular bloom. DEP staff will coordinate updates to response tools (Survey123).

4. REFERENCES

4.1. SOP FS 7000, General Biological Community Sampling

4.1.1. AB-FIELD *Cyanobacteria Bloom Response Field Data Sheet*

4.1.2. AB-NOTIFY *Florida DEP Algal Bloom Notification Form*

4.1.3. FS 7110, *Phytoplankton Bloom Sampling*

4.1.4. FS 7240, *Algal Mat Sampling for Taxonomic Identification or Toxin Analysis*

Appendix of Changes

11/26/2019 Callers reporting health effects are directed to contact Poison Control. Bloom Response staff will contact DOH, who then deals with the local health department. Removed the use of DOH Caspio as a repository and bloom notification tool. Modified the Cyanobacteria Bloom Field Sheet to be streamlined and usable as a submittal form. Cyanobacteria Bloom Field Sheet changed from an appendix to a stand-alone form, AB-FIELD. Included the link to the DEP Algal Bloom Dashboard, established 2019.

02/05/2021 Updated Algal Bloom Dashboard link. Updated CBRT contacts. Added Dashboard links and noted quick-link to bloom reporting form. Updated process in Section 3.3.

02/23/2022 Updated links and CBRT contacts.

01/30/2023 Updated CBRT contacts. Updated 3.3 to reflect current Survey 123 uses (automatically populates AB-FIELD which is used as submittal/COC sheet).

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01/03/2024	Updated Fish Kill Reporting link and CBRT contacts. Added AB-FIELD and AB-NOTIFY to References.
05/08/2025	Updated DOH county-contacts link; updated Fish Kill Reporting link and CBRT contacts. Reorganized steps 3.4 and 3.5. Tuned Florida Algal Bloom Site Visit Map into a link.
05/28/2026	Updated Environmental Administrator's name in step 2.3.

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