

**MINUTES
TOXIC SUBSTANCES COORDINATING COMMITTEE
(TSCC)**

**March 24, 2009
10:00 am – 11:30 am.**

**Room M-618
Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)
1100 West 49th Street
Austin, Texas 78756**

1. Call to order and welcome visitors – Bob Free –visitor;
Attendance was: John Villanacci (speaker phone) Susan Prosperie, Tom Ellerbee, Heidi Bojes, Joseph Haney, Julie Borders, Keller Thormahlen, Luci Cook, Michelle Bost, David Villarreal and Debbie Potter taking minutes.
2. Approval of minutes from the December meeting –Michelle moved to accept and Tom seconded.
3. Presentation: Bob Free presented "**DSHS Radiation Emergency Response**"
4. Subcommittee reports

a. Harmful Algal Bloom workgroup meeting update –Luci Presented the update.
Attached are the minutes from the March HAB meeting.
Meridith began by adding one discussion item to the agenda to address a concern brought about by Dr. Antonietta Quigg of TAMU-Galveston regarding the current drought and its possible implications for making the coast susceptible to a red tide bloom. The group suggested that a short coordination meeting be held with all responding agencies/entities to go over response protocol, possibly in conjunction with either the Texas Bays and Estuaries meeting or the Seagrass Symposium. Meridith will talk to Alex Nunez, Jesus Franco and Mark Lingo about possible Mexican HAB contacts.

Luci Cook-Hildreth gave the golden alga update for inland waters. In the Red River basin, Lake Wichita contained moderate to high cell counts through February. Fish kills occurred up until late in the month amounting to about 130,000. Lake Diversion has had high cell counts as well. The Colorado River basin has seen fish kills and high cell counts at Lake Colorado City, Paint Creek and Moss Creek. A caller reported a golden alga bloom and fish kill in Elm Creek at Ballinger, describing the affected fish as having heads that looked “burned.” In the Brazos River basin, Possum Kingdom’s fish kills dropped off by the end of February and to date there have been no fish kills on Lake Granbury. No activity in the Rio Grande basin.

Meridith gave the report on the Nueces River basin, where a golden alga bloom was confirmed in a Kingsville private pond in January. Meridith and Janet Nelson added Tranquitas Creek (which is where the pond drains when water levels are high) to their coastal golden alga survey. The site was visited February 18 and no signs of a bloom were detected, though it was noted that a wastewater treatment plant is located upstream of the pond. Alex Nunez revisited the pond on March 5 and observed an algal bloom, but there was no *P. parvum* in his samples.

Meridith solicited ideas from the group for how she and Janet should redesign and/or expand their coastal golden alga survey. David pointed out that the Texas Dept of Agriculture will put out RFPs after the legislative session and might have money for aquaculture-related monitoring. It was also suggested that Joan Glass be contacted about the possibility of writing up her cyst findings.

On February 18, while traveling the coast for the coastal golden alga survey, Janet noticed Los Olmos Creek at Highway 77 looked particularly yellow. She and Meridith collected water quality parameters and a water sample from the creek on February 19. Salinity was 65 ppt, so it was reasoned that the discolored water likely wasn't *P. parvum*. Sample analysis showed high concentrations of *Aureoumbra lagunensis*, the brown tide organism. No additional followup has been done at the creek. Meridith will ask someone in the Corpus Christi office to follow up.

Two papers will soon be published regarding the 2008 toxic *Dinophysis* event. Lisa Campbell's paper (to be published in the Journal of Phycology) will cover the Imaging Flow CytoBot and the organism's biology, including the re-identification of the species from *D. acuminata* to *D. ovum*. Katie Swanson's paper (to be published in Harmful Algae) will cover the bloom distribution. *D. ovum* and *Karenia papillonaceae* are currently being seen at low concentrations in water samples collected from UTMSI's pier at the Corpus Christi ship channel. A question was raised about the possibility that the bloom might be considered invasive, that if so it might be proven with sediment core samples, as the Galveston Bay Estuary Program and TCEQ fund invasive species studies involving ballast water.

Data analysis is ongoing for the Lake Whitney golden alga study.

Jeff Paternoster of the Phytoplankton Monitoring Network is planning a trip to Texas in April to train new volunteers and visit the sampling sites of current volunteers.

The TPWD Kills and Spills Team (KAST) is planning to hold a mock fish kill response drill to train coastal TPWD staff and staff of other responding agencies in May (date TBD). It was suggested that Meridith hold the next TexHAB meeting in conjunction with this training in order to encourage new attendees.

Interviews are currently being held for the Waco KAST biologist position vacated by Joan Glass.

Luci presented a short report on January's Golden Alga Symposium. 12 researchers from the U.S. and Europe were invited to give presentations at the Symposium. There was a panel discussion with resource managers and researchers to discuss topics that had been proposed by attendees. Luci is writing a report summarizing the results of the panel discussion, including suggestions to improve lines of communication, the need for practical applications coming out of the research, and the inclusion of other agencies and regulating entities when implementing research. Tracy suggested contacting START (Solutions To Avoid Red Tide), a grassroots group in Florida, if the Golden Alga Task Force is interested in partnering with private entities, as START would have good suggestions for getting off the ground.

Tracy began a discussion on the need for a comprehensive list of red tides in Texas including literature on the blooms. Hugo Magana wrote a paper that includes good details on blooms but his list ends at 2002. Tracy suggested using the figure from Magana's paper (which is a map showing dates of red tides along corresponding portions of the Texas coast) on the TPWD website and making it interactive. (i.e. information pops up when users scroll over the dates on the map – links to documentation of bloom, fish kills, maps, etc) David mentioned that the Texas Geographic Information Council (Department of Information Resources) has done or wanted to do something similar with Superfund sites and the like. Michael Ouimet is the contact. Also suggested was the possibility of obtaining funding to gather all the research into one place and make it available to those interested. Meridith is planning a long-term project to redesign the TPWD HAB website to make it more useful and eye-catching. She and Luci will collaborate on ideas for the website. Suggestions from the group include making the site more interactive with photos and maps and reorganizing the site to make it easier to navigate through. Also mentioned was the topic of fish being safe to eat: new research shows that brevetoxin does not only accumulate in fishes' organs, but also in the muscle and in crustaceans as well. Meridith will follow up on this and bring it to the attention of the state health department.

The next TexHAB meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10 in Corpus Christi.

Action Items:

1. Meridith will follow up with the state health department on the wording regarding the safety of eating fish caught during red tides.
2. Meridith will ask someone in the Corpus Christi area to follow up on the Los Olmos Creek bloom.
3. Meridith will talk to Alex Nunez, Jesus Franco and Mark Lingo about possible Mexican HAB contacts.
 - update: Meridith is attending a GOM HAB conference in April and has found out there will be Mexican attendees as well

b. Fish Sampling Subcommittee meeting update

No one was present to give a report

c. The Human Health Workgroup update

Nothing new to report – committee not able to meet

5. Agency updates:

TCEQ - Zavala Elementary/Purecasting, did air and soil samples. Did detect metals in the air, nothing in the soil; USA Today did rankings of schools; lot of bills regarding air; working on coordinating remediation projects and would like to get the health consults from DSHS a day earlier to give TCEQ toxicologists a heads up before the document goes public because they get a lot of phone calls.

Comment: Communication needs to be better between the agencies.

List Serv options will be looked into by David V, Michelle Bost

TDA – no update

DSHS- John V. mentioned ATSDR getting flack for Midlothian; lots of strange bills in legislature.

Dates and location for future meetings are:

June 23, 2009 G-107

September 22, 2009 G-107

December 15, 2009 G-107

All meetings are at DSHS

6. Adjourned at 11:30

TSCC Mission:

Our mission is to protect and promote the health of the people of Texas through the prevention and control of adverse health effects related to toxic substances and harmful physical agents. This is accomplished through interagency coordination of regulation development, health risk assessments, cooperative studies, information dissemination, and public education efforts.