ACCESS to HARMFUL ALGAE DATA IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

Mary E. Culver*, Michelle C. Tomlinson, Tim H. Orsi, and Richard P. Stumpf
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Ocean Service, Coastal Services Center, Coastal Remote Sensing Program, Charleston, SC, USA

Due to a large increase in the number and severity of HABs throughout U.S. coastal waters, numerous institutions from the federal, state, and local levels have engaged in regional research and monitoring programs for HABs. Users of these data have different needs and requirements for HAB data and information. A resource manager may have an immediate need to know the current location of a bloom, where as a research scientist may want access to historical data in order to test hypotheses regarding bloom development. Due to these varied needs, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is coordinating with laboratories in the Gulf of Mexico to provide access to current bloom conditions, special project data, and historical monitoring datasets. In addition, efforts are now underway to develop a Harmful Algal Blooms Observing System (HABSOS) in the Gulf of Mexico, which will build upon current HAB activities. Currently, the National Ocean Service provides a Harmful Algal Bloom bulletin, which indicates the status of current bloom conditions through the integration of near real-time data. This information is displayed through an online mapping application that is updated daily. In addition, the Harmful Algal Bloom-Data Management System (HABDMS) has been developed to provide easy access and limited display of historical records of toxic phytoplankton species abundance and distribution, shellfish toxicity, and associated environmental data. The combination of these systems provides both the data and the integrated information necessary to inform the general public, management, and research communities of HAB conditions in the Gulf.