



COG's Regional Role in Addressing the 2011 Potomac River Algal Blooms Update to the Regional Water Quality Monitoring Subcommittee – August 9, 2012

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- **Microcystis first developed in the Potomac in early July 2011 near Mattawoman Creek in Maryland and Aquia Creek in Virginia.**
 - COG held four **conference calls** throughout the summer – purpose was to provide a forum to share information such as monitoring conditions and sampling schedules, Microcystis and Microcystin levels, and the need for a regional press release
 - Four conference calls were held - started on July 22nd and ended September 9th
 - They were productive on many levels – note a few items that resulted:
 - **Web Site:** Created a Web Site to support this algal bloom effort
 - Contains links to monitoring agencies and universities, sampling schedules, harmful algae bloom links/FAQs and press releases, historical documents from the 1983 bloom, algal encouragement index and related documents
 - **Map:** Drafted a comprehensive map of water quality monitoring stations that collect data to assess algae blooms
 - **Press Releases:**
 - **COG issued a press release on August 15th – Headline: Potomac Algae blooms are beginning to dissipate but dense patches still exist in localized areas.**
 - Stated that COG is working with state and local governments, universities, and scientists from around the region to monitor and provide up-to-date information on the algae blooms
 - **COG issued a press release on September 15th – Headline: Potomac River Algae Largely Dissipated – Tropical Storm Lee and Hurricane Irene flushed our remaining algae**
 - **Funding:** Helped fund additional cruises/sampling on the River during the month of August
 - **Workgroups:** Created a list of potential workgroup members for a Public Information Workgroup (to assist with future press releases) and a Scientific/Data Analysis Workgroup
 - **Items that were discussed but remain on our 'to-do list'. Question – Still appropriate to move forward with these items?**
 1. **Identify a list of desired samples and monitoring parameters** that it would be good to collect/analyze to help inform our understanding (e.g., pH, alkalinity, calcite, total calcium, calcium carbonate, total inorganic carbon, sediment core samples, primary production, algal species identification)
 - **Agree on protocols** for the analysis that is being done to ensure consistency/comparability of results
 2. **Evaluate loadings** (including nutrients and alkalinity levels) at Potomac Fall Line (i.e., Chain Bridge) – Note this item will be discussed in detail at our meeting
 3. **Update the Algal Encouragement Index** since 1983 and compare to current/prior events



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4. **Coordinate regional efforts** – i.e., share sampling activities/schedules/locations and work to leverage efforts, do same-day sampling events in order to gather additional samples and conduct analysis
5. **Create a Public Outreach Workgroup**
 - In Maryland there is a HAB Taskforce that created an SOP with guidance on when/how to inform the public about blooms/dissipation of blooms – use this as a model
6. **Create a Scientific/ Data Analysis Workgroup**
 - To develop recommendations regarding additional data and further analysis needed and how best to get that work done – both in response to specific algal bloom issues, as well as broader water quality issues