

DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**FOR THE
Prevention, Control, and Mitigation of
Harmful Algal Blooms Program**



MAY 2014

**NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
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COVER SHEET

Proposed Action: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Prevention, Control, and Mitigation of Harmful Algal Blooms Program proposes to provide funding for the field demonstration of harmful algal bloom control techniques. The funding period is for five years. The areas of performance are those areas under the purview of NOAA.

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Abstract: Harmful algal blooms cause a wide variety of environmental, economic, and human health problems. The growing frequency and magnitude of harmful algal blooms has created a pressing need for in situ control in coastal waters. Field demonstration of harmful algal bloom control techniques is needed to fill the gap between laboratory research and larger scale implementation. The Prevention, Control, and Mitigation of Harmful Algal Blooms Program proposes to provide funding for the field demonstration of harmful algal bloom control techniques. This Programmatic Environmental Assessment has been prepared to comply with National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. § 4231 *et seq.*), as amended. This document assesses the potential environmental effects associated with demonstration phase projects within the Prevention, Control, and Mitigation of Harmful Algal Blooms Program under the purview of NOAA (i.e., within coastal waters of the United States and the Great Lakes).

Cover Photo: A bloom of harmful algal species *Lingulodinium polyedrum* off the coast of La Jolla, San Diego County, California. This species has been associated with fish and shellfish mortality events, but its threat to human health is still being evaluated. Photo credit: Kai Schumann, California Department of Public Health volunteer (NOAA National Ocean Service, 2013).

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|------------|--|
| ASP | Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning |
| BOD | Biochemical Oxygen Demand |
| C.F.R. | Code of Federal Regulations |
| CEQ | Council on Environmental Quality |
| CFP | Ciguatera Fish Poisoning |
| Corps | United States Department of the Army Corps of Engineers |
| CWA | Clean Water Act |
| CZMA | Coastal Zone Management Act |
| DO | Dissolved Oxygen |
| DSP | Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning |
| E.O. | Executive Order |
| EFH | Essential Fish Habitat |
| EIS | Environmental Impact Statement |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency |
| ERL | Effects Range Low |
| ESA | Endangered Species Act |
| FONSI | Finding of No Significant Impact |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| HAB | Harmful Algal Bloom |
| MBTA | Migratory Bird Treaty Act |
| mg/L | milligrams per liter |
| MMPA | Marine Mammal Protection Act |
| MPA | Marine Protected Area |
| MSA | Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act |
| NCCOS | National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science |
| NEPA | National Environmental Policy Act |
| NERRS | National Estuarine Research Reserve System |
| NHPA | National Historic Preservation Act |
| NMFS | National Marine Fisheries Service |
| NOAA | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| NSP | Neurotoxic Shellfish Poisoning |
| PCM | Prevention, Control, and Mitigation |
| PEA | Programmatic Environmental Assessment |
| PSP | Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning |
| RDDTT Plan | National Scientific Development, Demonstration, and Technology Transfer Plan on Reducing Impacts from Harmful Algal Blooms |
| RFMC | Regional Fishery Management Council |
| SAV | Submerged Aquatic Vegetation |
| SEA | Supplemental Environmental Assessment |
| SEIS-APM | Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Aquatic Plant Management |
| spp. | Species |
| U.S. | United States |

U.S.C. United States Code
USFWS United States Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Prevention, Control, and Mitigation (PCM) of Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Program proposes to provide funding for field demonstration of select HAB control techniques. The PCM HAB Program is a research program authorized by the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 (16 U.S.C. 1451 note). The PCM HAB Program is a component of the larger *National Scientific Development, Demonstration, and Technology Transfer Plan on Reducing Impacts from Harmful Algal Blooms* (RDDTT Plan). The goal of the RDDTT Plan is to protect public health, economies, communities, ecosystems, and fisheries while demonstrating and transferring techniques for the prevention, control, and mitigation of HABs. Additionally, the RDDTT Plan establishes a national HAB Event Response Program and implements a Core Infrastructure Program to support HAB research. The PCM HAB Program addresses the first component of the RDDTT Plan by advancing promising techniques from laboratory investigation to field demonstration, and transferring those techniques to end users. Projects within all three phases (development, demonstration, and transfer) are supported under the PCM HAB Program.

This Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) is being prepared to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. § 4231 *et seq.*), as amended. As such, this PEA assesses the potential environmental effects associated with demonstration phase projects within the PCM HAB Program and under the purview of NOAA (i.e., within coastal waters of the United States (U.S.) and the Great Lakes). The purpose of the proposed action is to provide funding for the advancement of the scientific understanding through the field demonstration of promising HAB control techniques. Under the proposed action, “demonstration” is defined as the minimum amount of a control method anticipated to decrease, but not necessarily eliminate, a HAB. Demonstration is explicitly envisioned to be limited in size and scale. The area treated is anticipated to less than an acre in size through a limited number of applications. Further, demonstration will be limited to waters already suffering severe ecological harm (e.g., areas with existing fish kills, sick or distressed animals). This PEA addresses a subset of possible HAB control techniques that are expected to be viable for field demonstration within the next five-year period of program funding. Therefore, actions to be considered under this PEA are those that are likely to be ready for field demonstration between fiscal years (FY) 2014-2019.

1.2 PROJECT NEED

The PCM HAB program seeks to provide a coordinated research initiative to advance knowledge on methods and strategies capable of reducing the numbers and/or toxicity of harmful algal blooms. While PCM HAB has begun developing several promising control methods in the laboratory, the program has not funded field-demonstration of these techniques. Advancing the state of scientific knowledge on these methods and strategies through the demonstration phase is critical based on the significant environmental, human health, and socioeconomic impact of harmful algal blooms.

Also known as red tides, the term “harmful algal blooms” has been used by the scientific community to describe a diverse array of blooms of microscopic marine algae that produce:

- Toxic effects on humans and other organisms;
- Physical impairment of fish and shellfish;
- Nuisance conditions from odors and discoloration of water; or

- Overwhelming effects on ecosystems such as severe oxygen depletion (hypoxia) or overgrowth.

Impacts from HABs occur on a wide range of temporal and spatial scales, and may be felt in across an ecosystem. The impact HABs may have on an ecosystem is also varied; an algal species may do little to no harm in one ecosystem and devastate another. Some blooms can disrupt entire ecological communities simply due to their accumulated biomass, by contributing to the creation of oxygen-depleted hypoxic zones as their biomass decomposes. HABs also harm other organisms through predation, the production of deadly toxins and biochemical compounds, their morphological characteristics, or by decreasing light penetration through the water column (Glibert et al., 2005). Additionally, HAB toxins can cause a variety of human poisoning syndromes through either direct exposure to the organism's toxins or through the consumption of contaminated fish or shellfish (Glibert et al., 2005).

The average economic impact of HABs in the U.S. is conservatively estimated at over \$82 million per year (Anderson et al., 2000; NOAA NCCOS, 2011). This loss is associated with reduction in shellfish harvests, tourism, recreational opportunities, and medical costs, among others (see Table 1-1).

Table 1-1. Average impact of HABs on the American economy from 1987-2000. Adapted from "The economic effects of harmful algal blooms" by Hoagland and Scatista (2006).

| Economic Sector: | Impact (in millions of dollars per year): |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Commercial fisheries | \$38 |
| Public health | \$37 |
| Recreation and tourism | \$4 |
| Coastal monitoring and management | \$3 |
| Total: | \$82 |

The PCM HAB PEA will encompass projects in coastal portions of all U.S. coastal states (including the Great Lakes), since all are routinely impacted by HABs (Anderson et al., 2008; Lewitus et al., 2012). Some HABs occur naturally, but human activities that disturb ecosystems, such as increased nutrient inputs and pollution, food web alterations, and introduced species, have been linked to the increased occurrence of some HABs. Many species are being found in regions that were previously unaffected by or not known to have HAB problems (Reardon, 1989; Eisler, 1998; Glibert et al., 2005; Pokrzwinski, 2012).

1.3 PROJECT PURPOSE

The Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act required the development of four interagency reports and plans to assess HABs within the U.S. and update priorities for Federal research and response programs. As a result of these requirements, the RDDTT Plan was developed. The plan includes three essential objectives: funding for the development, demonstration, and transfer of techniques for the prevention, control and mitigation of HABs; development and implementation of a national HAB Event Response Program; and establishment of a Core Infrastructure Program to support HAB research and response. The PCM HAB Program is an integral part of the RDDTT Plan. The purpose of the PCM HAB Program is to provide support to competitive peer-reviewed projects by funding the development and demonstration phases of PCM research.

1
2 Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other non-profits, state, local, Indian Tribal
3 Governments, commercial organizations, US Territories and Federal agencies that possess the
4 statutory authority to receive financial assistance.

5
6 **1.4 PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH TO NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT**
7 **COMPLIANCE**

8
9 The projects approved and funded under the PCM HAB Program are Federal activities and as
10 such, must comply with NEPA. Because the PCM HAB Program would occur over many different
11 locations across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Great Lakes, and would
12 be implemented at various points in time over the next five years, it was determined that a
13 programmatic approach would be the most efficient in terms of an overall NEPA analysis. A
14 programmatic analysis at a conceptual level of detail provides early identification and analysis of
15 potential impacts, methods to mitigate anticipated impacts, and a strategy to address issues at a tiered
16 level of analysis, if necessary.

17
18 Preparing a PEA serves several purposes. First, it provides a format for a comprehensive
19 impact analysis by taking a view of the planned PCM HAB activities as a whole. This is
20 accomplished by assembling and analyzing the broadest range of potential direct, indirect, and
21 cumulative impacts associated with a suite of techniques likely to be viable for field demonstration
22 within the next five years through the PCM HAB.

23
24 A PEA also sets up a framework for addressing the time- and location-specific aspects of
25 proposed PCM HAB projects through the use of a site-specific tiered analysis, if warranted. In Tier
26 1, or the PEA, NOAA has prepared an analysis at a program-level, broad scale. In Tier 2, one or
27 more project specific EAs would be written to examine individual projects in greater detail, if
28 required. Tier 2 may also include the application of a categorical exclusion if a proposed project
29 meets the criteria for categorical exclusion (NOAA NOA 216-6). Supplemental Environmental
30 Assessments (SEA) may also be written if research indicates a new methodology, not covered in this
31 PEA, is ready for field demonstration. Tiering of environmental documents in this manner makes
32 subsequent assessments more specific concerning the potential affects a specific control technique
33 will have on a specific area, without duplicating paperwork and analysis from a previous assessment.

34
35 **1.5 SUMMARY OF KEY COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS**

36
37 NOAA is responsible, through the NEPA process, for ensuring that decision makers have
38 adequate information to make an informed decision regarding the project. The implementation of the
39 PCM HAB Program requires the applicants to obtain proper work permits, comply with the
40 provisions of all Federal and state regulations, and notify appropriate organizations before performing
41 any project using an approved control method. Additional action by applicants may be required to
42 ensure compliance with the other Federal regulations identified below.

43
44 **1.5.1 Clean Water Act**

45
46 The Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1972 (33 U.S.C. § 1251 *et seq.*) is the primary Federal law
47 that protects the Nation's waters, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, and coastal areas. The primary
48 objective of the CWA is to restore and maintain the integrity of the Nation's waters. Jurisdictional
49 waters of the U.S. are regulated resources and are subject to Federal authority under Section 404 of
50 the CWA. This term is broadly defined to include navigable waters (including intermittent streams),
51 impoundments, tributary streams, and wetlands. Areas meeting the waters of the U.S. definition are

1 under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). Anyone proposing to conduct a
2 project that requires a Federal permit or involves dredging or fill activities that may result in a
3 discharge to waters of the U.S. must also obtain a CWA Section 401 Water Quality Certification,
4 verifying that the project activities would comply with state water quality standards. Compliance
5 with this law may require additional action from the PCMHAB applicant depending upon the control
6 method being used.

8 **1.5.2 Coastal Zone Management Act**

9
10 The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972 (16 U.S.C. § 1451 *et seq.*) requires that
11 “any Federal activity within or outside of the coastal zone that affects any land or water use or natural
12 resource of the coastal zone” shall be “consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the
13 enforceable policies” of a federally-approved state coastal zone management program (State agency).
14 There are three categories of federal activities that are subject to consistency review by a State
15 agency. The first is direct federal agency activity, which means any activity or project performed by
16 a federal agency or by a contractor for the benefit of a federal agency. The second involves federal
17 license or permit, license, or other federal approval. An example of this second category would be an
18 activity requiring Section 404 CWA permit issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The third
19 category involves state and local activities or project for which federal financial assistance is sought.
20 Prior to carrying out any of these federal activities, the proposed action is subject to consistency
21 review by the State’s coastal zone management program, and one must comply with the
22 “consistency” regulations promulgated by the Secretary of Commerce (15 C.F.R. 930) under CZMA.
23 Compliance with this law may require additional action from the PCM HAB applicant.

25 **1.5.3 Endangered Species Act**

26
27 The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (16 U.S.C. § 1531 *et seq.*) and subsequent
28 amendments provide for the conservation of threatened and endangered species of animals and plants,
29 and the habitats in which they are found. The ESA prohibits jeopardizing threatened and endangered
30 species or adversely modifying critical habitats essential to their survival. Generally, the U.S. Fish
31 and Wildlife Service (USFWS) manage land and freshwater species while the National Marine
32 Fisheries Service (NMFS) manages marine species, including anadromous fish such as salmon. The
33 USFWS also has responsibility for some marine animals such as nesting sea turtles, walruses, polar
34 bears, sea otters, and manatees. ESA Section 7 requires consultation with the NMFS and the USFWS
35 to determine whether any endangered or threatened species under their jurisdiction may be negatively
36 affected by a proposed action. Compliance with this law may require additional action from the PCM
37 HAB applicant.

39 **1.5.4 Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands**

40
41 This Executive Order (E.O.) requires Federal agencies to minimize the destruction, loss, or
42 degradation of wetlands, and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands in
43 carrying out the agency's responsibilities. The goal of the PCM HAB Program is to grow closer to in
44 situ control of HABs and reduce their impacts on environmental resources, including their indirect
45 impact on wetlands. Compliance with this law may require additional action from the applicant
46 depending upon the control method and the likelihood of impacts to wetlands. Should impacts to
47 wetlands be expected, the PCM HAB applicant would be required to consult with and obtain permits
48 from all appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies.

50 **1.5.5 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act**

1 The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) of 1975 (16
2 U.S.C. § 1801-1882) establishes U.S. jurisdiction from the seaward boundary of the coastal states out
3 to 200 nautical miles for the purpose of managing fisheries resources. The MSA is the principal
4 Federal statute that provides for the management of marine fisheries in the U.S. The purposes of the
5 MSA include: (1) conservation and management of the fishery resources of the U.S.; (2) promotion
6 of domestic commercial and recreational fishing; (3) preparation and implementation of Fishery
7 Management Plans; (4) establishment of Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMCs); (5)
8 development of fisheries that are underutilized or not utilized; and (6) protection of Essential Fish
9 Habitat (EFH).

10
11 EFH is defined as those waters and substrate necessary to fish or invertebrates for spawning,
12 breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity. Areas designated as EFH contain habitat essential to the
13 long-term survival and health of U.S. fisheries. Under provisions of the MSA, eight RFMCs were
14 established for the New England, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, Pacific,
15 Western Pacific, and North Pacific regions. Should a PCM HAB project potentially have an adverse
16 effect on EFH, consultation with NMFS is required. RFMCs may, or in the case of anadromous
17 fisheries must, comment on PCM HAB projects affecting fishery habitat, including EFH during this
18 consultation or during the public comment period for the PEA.

19 20 **1.5.6 National Historic Preservation Act**

21
22 The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (16 U.S.C. § 470 *et seq.*) establishes
23 historic preservation as a national policy and defines it as the protection, rehabilitation, restoration,
24 and reconstruction of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American
25 history, architecture, archaeology, or engineering. Section 106 of NHPA requires Federal agencies to
26 take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties that are potentially eligible
27 for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. In general, demonstration phase projects are
28 excluded, as a means of mitigation, from deploying control methods in areas listed on the National
29 Register of Historic Places in an effort to protect these resources. Compliance with this law may
30 require additional action from the applicant depending upon the control method being used and the
31 site of application.

32 33 **1.5.7 National Marine Sanctuaries Act**

34
35 Section 304(d) of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA)(16 U.S.C. § 1431 *et seq.*)
36 establishes that federal agency actions internal or external to a national marine sanctuary, including
37 private activities authorized by licenses, leases, or permits, that are likely to destroy, cause the loss of
38 or injure any sanctuary resource are subject to consultations with NOAA's Office of National Marine
39 Sanctuaries. Each federal agency proposing such an action must provide a written statement
40 describing the action and its potential effects on sanctuary resources no later than 45 days before the
41 final approval of the action. In addition, sanctuary regulations (15 C.F.R. pt. 922) promulgated by the
42 Secretary of Commerce under the NMSA may require a sanctuary permit or authorization for certain
43 actions that would otherwise be prohibited. Compliance with this law may require additional action
44 from the PCM HAB applicant if the proposed action is likely to impact sanctuary resources or
45 qualities.

46 47 **1.5.8 Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks**

48
49 Executive Order 13045 on Children's Health and Safety directs Federal agency, to the extent
50 permitted by law and appropriate, to make it a high priority to identify and assess environmental
51 health and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children, and to ensure that its policies,

1 programs, activities, and standards address these risks. The Executive Order recognizes that some
2 physiological and behavioral traits of children render them more susceptible and vulnerable than
3 adults to environmental health and safety risks. Children may have a higher exposure level to
4 contaminants because they generally eat more food, drink more water, and have higher inhalation
5 rates relative to their size. Children also exhibit behaviors such as spending excessive amounts of
6 time in contact with the ground and frequently putting their hands and objects in their mouths that can
7 also lead to much higher exposure levels to environmental contaminants. In addition, a child's
8 neurological, immunological, digestive, and other bodily systems are also potentially more
9 susceptible to exposure related health effects. It has been well established that lower levels of
10 exposure can have a negative toxicological effect in children as opposed to adults, and childhood
11 exposures to contaminants can have long-term negative health effects. Examples include life-long
12 neurological deficits resulting from exposure to lead, mercury, and other metals, and the increased
13 susceptibility to particulate matter and other asthma triggers in the environment. In general,
14 demonstration phase projects are excluded, as a means of mitigation, from deploying control methods
15 in proximity to areas where children are known to congregate. Compliance with this law may require
16 additional action from the applicant depending upon the control method being used and the site of
17 application.

18 19 **1.5.9 Rivers and Harbors Act**

20
21 Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 U.S.C. § 401 *et seq.*) gives the Corps
22 the authority to regulate structures or work in or affecting navigable waters of the U.S. Structures
23 include any pier, wharf, bulkhead, etc. Work includes dredging, filling, excavation, or other
24 modifications to navigable waters of the U.S. Some of the proposed control measures may involve
25 dredging or filling, and as such, may require additional action from the PCM HAB applicant in order
26 to comply with the Rivers and Harbors Act.

27 28 **1.5.10 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments**

29
30 Executive Order 13175, "Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments"
31 (November 6, 2000), requires each Federal agency to establish procedures for meaningful
32 consultation and coordination with tribal officials in the development of Federal policies that have
33 tribal implications.

34
35 The procedures outlined in the NOAA Procedures for Government-to-Government
36 Consultation with Federally Recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives (NOAA Tribal
37 Consultation Handbook) provide guidance to NOAA to support a more consistent, effective and
38 proactive approach to conducting tribal consultations. This Handbook is intended to improve
39 NOAA's management of its relations and cooperative activities with Indian Tribes, and to provide for
40 meaningful and timely input from Tribes into the Federal decision-making process on policy matters
41 having substantial direct effects on them. Policies that have tribal implications refer to regulations,
42 legislative comments or actions that have substantial direct effects on one or more Indian Tribes, on
43 the relationship between the Federal government and Indian Tribes, or on the distribution of power
44 and responsibilities between the Federal government and Indian Tribes. While science, charting, and
45 observations are not described in the Handbook as actions likely to require consultation, at tribe could
46 request consultation on any NOAA action it believes has tribal implications.

47
48 As a matter of courtesy, if a HAB control demonstration project is planned to occur in an area
49 of tribal jurisdiction or the action is believed to impact tribal concerns, the applicable Indian Tribes
50 will be consulted.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

As a result of extensive review of numerous planning and technical supporting documents, two possible action alternatives for the Proposed Action emerged that would satisfy the identified purpose and need and scientific objectives. Consequently, the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative are carried forward for analysis in this PEA. A third Alternative was considered, but rejected prior to the comprehensive analysis. This section describes the three alternatives and the ability of each to meet the purpose and need of supporting competitive peer-reviewed projects by funding the field demonstration of HAB control methods. The analysis of the No Action Alternative represents the baseline to compare the impacts of the Proposed Action.

2.1 THE PROPOSED ACTION (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

The Proposed Action is to fund projects for the field demonstration of HAB control that use methods identified in Table 2-1 below. The Proposed Action includes only those control methods that the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) have determined are likely to be field demonstration ready within the next five years. To constrain the scale and limit the potential effects of demonstration phase projects, demonstration will explicitly be limited to one acre or less in size with a limited number of applications. Knowledge gained through these methods would allow for a more informed assessment of the best approach for mitigating individual HABs as well as optimal PCM for HABs in general.

Table 2-1. Control methods included in the Proposed Action.

| Physical Control Methods | Chemical Control Methods |
|--|--|
| Flocculation | Native Macroalgae and Extracts |
| Sediment Resuspension, Burial, and Removal | Barley Straw |
| Cell Harvesting and Removal | Biosurfactants |
| Water Column Mixing | Hydrogen Peroxide |
| | Copper |
| | Silica |
| | Extracted/purified algicidal compounds |

2.1.1 Physical Control Methods

Physical controls are those methods that physically remove algal cells from the water column, limit the spatial extent of a bloom by physical barrier or manipulation of abiotic factors, or kill algal cells through physical means. The methods included herein are those that have proven most promising in the laboratory or on the mesocosm scale. These methods are also likely to be more easily constrained in a variable, open aquatic system than are chemical or biological controls. Therefore, these methods are generally the closest to being field-ready for in situ demonstration projects. The physical control methods that are likely to be field demonstration ready by FY2018 and therefore included in the Proposed Action are flocculation; sediment resuspension, burial, and removal; cell harvesting and removal; and water column mixing.

Flocculation

Flocculation is the process of removing microscopic algae through the use of clay and sedimentation. Through repeated collisions and adhesion, large, rapidly sinking aggregates (or flocs)

1 of algae and clay are formed and settle to the ocean floor. The specific type of clay that is used is
2 dependent upon the type of bloom. Researchers are currently developing modified clays to improve
3 algal removal efficiency. Removal efficiency depends upon many factors, including both flocculant
4 and algal type, concentration and size, flocculant dispersal method, water flow, and salinity. If the
5 flocs remain out of the photic zone, the zone in the water column in which light penetrates, the algae
6 would not have an opportunity for photosynthesis, resulting in cell mortality. In some instances,
7 physiochemical interactions occur between the algae and the flocculant, directly resulting in mortality
8 (Beaulieu et al., 2003). Flocculants have also been shown to adsorb, or adhere, to the surface of some
9 types of HAB toxin, removing both intracellular and extracellular toxins (Pierce et al., 2004).

10 *Sediment Resuspension, Burial, and Removal*

11
12
13 Sediment resuspension, burial, and removal activities achieve HAB control through different
14 mechanisms. Resuspension of bottom sediments affects HABs in two ways: one, to resuspend
15 sediments in an area thought to be a seedbed for algal cysts (thick walled dormant cells of algae) with
16 the objective of burying cysts in deeper oxygen-depleted sediments where they are unable to
17 germinate; and two, to resuspend sediments which would act as a natural flocculant to remove algal
18 cells from the water column.

19
20 Burial can be achieved by the placement of offsite material over the treatment area. All
21 offsite material would be clean and free of toxins and of similar grain size and composition to
22 sediments of the treatment area. Burial is also achievable through hydraulic suction dredging, where
23 dredged material is removed from one area and discharged over the treatment area. It is also possible
24 to remove the sediment and cysts through dredging and retain the sediments for treatment and
25 disposal instead of discharging the sediments back to the treatment area. Burial and removal
26 activities can also remove algal cysts so they cannot initiate new blooms.

27 *Cell Harvesting and Removal*

28
29
30 Hydrodynamic separation, centrifugation, pump filtration, and plankton net trawling are all
31 examples of harvesting technologies with the ability to separate algae from water. Hydrodynamic
32 separation and centrifugation are active methods that involve the withdrawal and processing of
33 affected water through either centrifugation or vortex to create concentrated algal cells and water
34 discharge. Pump filtration is also an active removal method involving the withdrawal of affected
35 water in which a screen or filter is used to separate the algae from the water. All active cell-
36 harvesting methods would have screening over the water intake and an appropriate flow rate to
37 prevent impacts to non-target organisms.

38 *Water Column Mixing*

39
40
41 Water column mixing is a prevention method suitable for closed systems such as lakes,
42 reservoirs, and small or semi-enclosed coastal systems. This method consists of mixing the water
43 column with a pump or other water-circulating device. Horizontal mixing of surface waters can
44 create localized water currents that impair algal buoyancy and inhibit the ability to move
45 independently, subsequently removing algae from the photic zone and preventing photosynthesis.
46 Vertical mixing of the water column mixes and aerates bottom waters in order to prevent thermal
47 stratification of the water column and the subsequent warming of surface waters that promotes the
48 growth of algae. Water column mixing to control an existing bloom would have multiple effects on a
49 given algal species. Vertical mixing of the water column would result in isothermal conditions and a
50 redistribution of nutrients and oxygen, both of which impact algal growth. The water intake would

1 have screening and an appropriate flow rate for the environment in which it is located, to prevent
2 impacts to non-target organisms.

3 4 **2.1.2 Chemical Control Methods**

5
6 Chemical controls rely on the release of chemicals that interfere with cellular growth, through
7 a variety of mechanisms, of algal species. There are several chemical control methods likely to be
8 field demonstration ready in the next five years and therefore included in the Proposed Action. These
9 methods include the use of whole macroalgae and macroalgal isolates, barley straw and related
10 extracts/liquors, biosurfactants, hydrogen peroxide, copper, silica, and isolated algicidal compounds.

11 12 *Native Macroalgae and Isolates*

13
14 Macroalgae are large subaquatic plants that can be seen without the aid of a microscope.
15 Macroalgae have been known to impact HABs through nutrient competition and the subsequent
16 limitation of HAB forming species, or through allelopathic effects on HAB species. Allelopathy is
17 the inhibition of growth in one species of plant by chemicals produced by another species. The
18 allelochemicals produced by macroalgae have algistatic (algae growth inhibiting) and algicidal (algae
19 killing) properties that prevent the growth of other algae and cause cell mortality. Isolates of the
20 allelochemicals maintain the same algistatic and algicidal properties as the whole macroalgae. The
21 allelochemicals produced by macroalgae quickly degrade in the aquatic environment, thus the use of
22 whole native macroalgae, rather than isolates, would be required to achieve sustained control. A
23 variety of environmental variables can influence the efficacy of allelochemicals, including nutrient
24 concentrations, pH, sunlight, and temperature. Macroalgae that have been shown to exhibit these
25 allelopathic effects include, but are not limited to: *Spirogyra* spp., *Cladophora* spp. (Trochine et al.,
26 2011), *Corallina* spp. (Jeong et al., 2000), *Ecklonia* spp. (Nagayama et al., 2003), *Gracilaria* spp.,
27 and *Ulva* spp. (Lu et al., 2011; Nan et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2007).

28 29 *Barley Straw*

30
31 The aerobic decomposition of barley straw has been shown to have an allelopathic effect on
32 certain species of microalgae. The exact allelopathic mechanism that causes the inhibitory effect is
33 debated, but barley straw liquor, extract from decomposing barley straw, and whole barley straw have
34 each been shown to have algistatic and algicidal effects. The chemicals responsible for the control
35 effect appear to be heavy phenolic compounds (Waybright et al., 2009) resulting from lignin
36 decomposition (Ball et al., 2001); as well as the transformation of lignin to humic substances (humic
37 substances are substances resulting from the decay of plant matter) and the subsequent formation of
38 hydrogen peroxide in the presence of light and oxygen (Center for Ecology and Hydrology, 2004);
39 though other reports suggest that the phenols instead increase the effects of ester compounds actually
40 primarily responsible for inhibiting algal growth (Choe and Jung, 2002).

41
42 Masses of barley straw are used frequently to prevent the growth of algae in freshwater
43 ponds (hUallacháin and Fenton, 2010). These masses are suspended at the water's surface where
44 aerobic decomposition can occur and must be replaced every 4-6 months to continue producing the
45 allelopathic effect. The allelochemical produced from the decomposing straw quickly degrades in the
46 aquatic environment to non-toxic byproducts and thus large quantities of straw would be required to
47 achieve sustained control (Hagström et al., 2010).

48 49 *Biosurfactants*

50

1 Surfactants are compounds that lower the surface tension of a liquid and are used as
2 detergents and emulsifiers. Biosurfactants are surfactants produced naturally by organisms such as
3 bacteria or yeasts, as opposed to chemical surfactants which are man-made. As potential algicides,
4 they have an advantage in terms of their diversity, biodegradability, low environmental toxicity, and
5 biocompatibility (Ahn et al., 2003). Surfactants break down membranes, making them non-functional,
6 often resulting in cell lysis. Some biosurfactants investigated to date for HAB control include
7 surfactin produced by *Bacillus subtilis* (Ahn et al., 2003), sophorolipid produced by *Candida*
8 *bombicola* (Baek et al., 2003), and rhamnolipid produced by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Wang et al.,
9 2005).

10 *Hydrogen Peroxide*

11
12
13 Hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) is naturally occurring in aquatic environments and is produced by
14 several HAB species. In the aquatic environment, hydrogen peroxide has a residence time which can
15 last anywhere from hours to days and decomposes into the byproducts water (H₂O) and oxygen (O₂).
16 In the presence of a catalyst, such as ferrous iron (Fe II, Fe²⁺), decomposition can result in a hydroxyl
17 radical (OH[•]) byproduct. The hydroxyl radical is a short-lived, highly reactive oxidant. Hydrogen
18 peroxide has shown the greatest potential for control of HABs of cyanobacteria and the degradation
19 of its toxin, microcystin. Cyanobacteria are more susceptible to the effects of hydrogen peroxide than
20 other organisms given their lack of membrane organelles (Barrington et al., 2013), though can also
21 control dinoflagellates (Burson et al., 2014).

22 *Copper*

23
24
25 Copper, primarily copper sulfate (CuSO₄) and chelated compounds, has been used in situ to
26 control algal blooms in both marine and freshwater environments. Copper has been shown to be toxic
27 to a wide range of organisms and is used for algae control because it interferes with the chemical
28 pathways for photosynthesis and causes cell lysis. Copper based algicides are commercially available
29 for use in freshwater ponds, lakes, and reservoirs. Copper can undergo various transformations in the
30 aquatic environment, including sorption, the process where one substance takes up or holds on to
31 another, onto organic sediments and clays. The use of chelated copper compounds prevents the loss
32 of copper from the water column so that it can remain available for algal control. Although copper
33 may undergo transformation in the aquatic environment, it does not biodegrade.

34 *Silica*

35
36
37 Silica is a limiting factor for diatom growth. In a silica-limited environment, the natural
38 assemblage of diatoms would experience reduced primary productivity, allowing HAB species to take
39 over. The application of dissolved silica is expected to encourage the growth of the natural diatoms
40 assemblage that would compete with and control the HAB species. This technique has been tried in
41 closed freshwater environments with inconclusive results (Burkholder and Marshall, 2012).

42 *Isolated Algicidal Compounds*

43
44
45 Some bacteria and viruses have algicidal or algistatic effects on phytoplankton, including
46 HAB species (Nakashima et al., 2006; Alamsjah et al., 2005). Compounds from these can be isolated
47 and used as a technique to control HABs. The bacterium *Shewanella* produces an allelochemical that
48 has been shown to inhibit the growth of dinoflagellates. Developing research has shown that isolates
49 from these bacteria maintain their algicidal activity and may be used in situ to control dinoflagellate
50 HABs (Pokrzywinski et al., 2012; Hare et al., 2005).

51

1 **2.2 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

2
3 Under the No Action Alternative, projects for the field demonstration of HAB control
4 methods would not be funded. However, the PCM HAB Program would still continue to fund
5 programs in the development phase of control method research. Other existing programs would also
6 continue to focus on reducing the impacts of HABs, although they would provide no support for
7 testing the control techniques in the natural environment.

8
9 Understanding why, when, how, and where HABs occur is the basis of the prevention
10 component of the PCM HAB Program. Although research indicates HABs may be prevented, the
11 prevention component would likely only reduce the frequency and spatial extent of blooms, not
12 eliminate them completely. If prevention fails and in situ control as developed by the PCM HAB
13 Program is eliminated, resource managers and event responders would continue to be limited in their
14 ability to curtail the spatial and temporal scales of the HAB.

15
16 Options for funding of field demonstration projects would be limited to local, state and/or
17 private entities, where few programs currently exist in coastal environments. This would impede the
18 development of competitive peer-reviewed research and new discoveries in HAB science. Without
19 field demonstration of control methods, the gap between laboratory research and in situ control would
20 remain, unless other funding mechanisms are created. As such, the No Action Alternative does not
21 meet the program purpose and need.

22
23 **2.3 ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS**

24
25 The Council on Environmental Quality guidance requires that an environmental assessment
26 discuss only reasonable alternatives in detail for an action (40 C.F.R. §§ 1500-1508). The following
27 alternatives were considered, but were eliminated from additional analyses as they do not meet the
28 criteria for a demonstration phase PCM HAB project.

29
30 **2.3.1 No Laboratory Testing**

31
32 The NOAA PCM HAB research program is comprised of three phases; research and
33 development, demonstration, and transition to application. Prior to moving into the field
34 demonstration phase, potential PCM techniques must have displayed promise in mitigating HABs in
35 the research and development phase. Only a limited number of possible PCM techniques have been
36 evaluated within a controlled laboratory setting to determine whether they may be an applicable
37 strategy to mitigate a HAB. Therefore, only a limited number of possible techniques will be available
38 for field demonstration during the life of this PEA.

39
40 **2.3.2 Significant Environmental Impacts Expected**

41
42 Other techniques, despite showing promise for mitigating HABs in research and
43 development, have been excluded due to high likelihood of significant environmental impacts. For
44 example, a number of macroalgae species have been shown to inhibit the growth of HABs. There
45 have been a number of examples of non-native, invasive algae causing significant ecological harm
46 following an introduction. Therefore, no field demonstration project involving the introduction of
47 non-native and/or live organisms will be funded through the PCM HAB program. In addition, a
48 number of chemicals, such as sodium hypochlorite, have been shown to reduce a bloom, but have
49 been excluded due to a strong likelihood of significant cumulative environmental impacts. Examples
50 of excluded techniques are shown in Table 2.2.

1
2
3**Table 2-2. Examples of control methods evaluated and excluded.**

| Method | Description |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Bleach | Sodium hypochlorite (bleach, NaHClO ₄) can be produced through the electrolysis of seawater. Exposure to sodium hypochlorite has been shown to cause mortality in red tide producing dinoflagellates. However, due to significant broad-range effects to non-target species, this method has been excluded from the Proposed Action. |
| Cysteine | Cysteine, in various forms, has shown promise as a mitigation technique for reducing the impact of HAB toxins on fish and shellfish, primarily in operations where fish or other marine life is grown for human consumption. Current application of cysteine is in a closed environment with no effects on the human or natural environment. This method has been excluded from the Proposed Action because it is not expected to be field demonstration ready by FY2018. |
| Algicidal Bacteria | Some bacterial species have been shown to have inhibitory effects on algal growth and play a role in the decomposition of algal biomass. In some instances, bacterial species may exhibit algicidal effects to specific algal species; however, there are a large number of unknown consequences at this time. This method has been generally excluded from the Proposed Action because there are numerous unknown consequences at this time to cover the method under a PEA. But as explained in section 2.1.2, some isolated compounds from algicidal bacteria that have been shown to inhibit HABs are included within this PEA. |
| Selective Breeding of Shellfish | Some shellfish which occur in areas prone to HABs have shown resistance to HAB toxins, bioaccumulating them in significantly higher quantities than susceptible shellfish in areas which do not experience HABs. Breeding and planting shellfish to change the ratio of susceptible and resistant shellfish to minimize toxicity has been proposed. This method has been excluded because the use of native shellfish would not require a NEPA analysis. |

4

1 **3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

2
3 The alternatives discussed in this PEA may have effects on the environments where HABs
4 are known or likely to occur and impact the same resources as those affected by HABs. In order to
5 evaluate these effects it is first necessary to define the affected environment. For the purposes of this
6 PEA, the affected environment includes as U.S. coastal waters, including bays, estuaries, and near-
7 shore habitats, as well as the Great Lakes. However, the scope of the affected environment for
8 individual demonstration projects will be limited in the scale of application as noted in Sections 1.1
9 and 2.1.

10
11 **3.1 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

12
13 **3.1.1 Water Quality**

14
15 Water is made of many components, including dissolved gases, dissolved and particulate
16 minerals, metals, organic matter, as well as other compounds such as toxins and contaminants. The
17 parameters used to determine water quality are generally dependent upon the intended use of the
18 water. The water quality parameters most relevant to this analysis are described in sections 3.1.2-
19 3.1.4.

20
21 Water quality is also directly influenced by the phenomenon of stratification. Both
22 freshwater and marine environments have the ability to stratify given the appropriate environmental
23 conditions. Stratification can be caused by differences in salinity or temperature and results in a
24 vertical layering within the waterbody. Without mixing, the lower layer (hypolimnion) can become
25 hypoxic and nutrient-rich from the deposition of organic material, while the upper layer (epilimnion)
26 typically remains oxygenated through surface contact with the air, water currents, and wind
27 movement. Phytoplankton and other plant life use up dissolved nutrients within the epilimnion,
28 leaving it devoid of nutrients. The longer the waterbody remains stratified the greater the differences
29 in salinity and temperature become, making destratification (turnover) within the waterbody more
30 difficult. When the waterbody does turnover, typically due to wind or seasonal changes in
31 temperature or hydrology, nutrients and DO are redistributed throughout the water column.

32
33 **3.1.2 Phosphorus and Nitrogen Content**

34
35 Phosphorus and nitrogen are naturally occurring nutrients found in a variety of forms in the
36 environment. Different forms of these nutrients have different effects on water quality and
37 phytoplankton growth depending on the environment in which they occur. Dissolved inorganic
38 nutrients (e.g., nitrate [NO₂₊₃], ammonia [NH₄], or phosphate [PO₄]) are necessary nutrients for
39 aquatic plant growth and are readily available for phytoplankton uptake. Others must undergo
40 transformation in the environment before they are available for phytoplankton uptake. In freshwater
41 systems, phosphorus is the limiting nutrient for phytoplankton growth and in marine systems it is
42 nitrogen. These nutrients enter aquatic systems from point sources such as sewage treatment plant
43 discharge and non-point sources such as stormwater runoff from agricultural and livestock operations.
44 Excess of these nutrients, in their respective systems, can cause water quality problems, including
45 rapid algal growth, SAV depletion, and eventually, hypoxic zones.

46
47 **3.1.3 Turbidity**

48
49 Turbidity is a measure of the loss in transparency of water due to suspended particles.
50 Sediment and particulate matter increases the turbidity of water, thereby decreasing the amount of
51 light penetrating through the water column to SAV and other organisms.

1
2 **3.1.4 Dissolved Oxygen**
3

4 Dissolved Oxygen (DO) is the amount of oxygen in the water available for aquatic
5 organisms. For most aquatic life, low levels of DO results in negative health effects, including death
6 (Engle et al., 1999; Miller et al., 2002). Saline environments generally hold less DO than freshwater
7 environments due to the presence of dissolved solids (primarily salt). Aeration of the waterbody
8 through turbulence and mixing as well as the production of oxygen from aquatic plants increases DO.
9 DO is removed from the water through the respiration of aquatic organisms, the decomposition of
10 organic material, and increased water temperature. The amount of DO needed for the microbial
11 decomposition of organic material is known as the biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) (Wackett,
12 2011). The depletion of DO in a given area results in hypoxia (often defined as dissolved oxygen
13 levels below 2mg/l). Hypoxic areas cause fish kills and create dead zones where aquatic life cannot
14 survive. One such area is the Gulf of Mexico dead zone, off the coast of Louisiana. This dead zone
15 varies seasonally, but can grow up to several thousand square miles (NOAA, 2012).
16

17 **3.2 BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT**
18

19 **3.2.1 Submerged Aquatic Vegetation**
20

21 Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), sometimes called seagrass, are aquatic plants that grow
22 in clear, shallow, sub-tidal regions of bays, rivers, and coastal lagoons. These are typically vascular,
23 rooted plants that grow to the water's surface. Algae and floating plants are generally not considered
24 to be SAV. The extent and range of SAV is dependent upon many factors such as type of substrate,
25 temperature, water clarity, salinity, and protection from wave energy. Because SAV require clear
26 water in order to receive the light necessary for photosynthesis, these plants are often used as
27 indicators of ecosystem health and water quality.
28

29 These grasses are critical components of coastal ecosystems around the world and serve as a
30 food source for both aquatic and terrestrial organisms, as well as shelter and habitat for a host of
31 resident and migratory aquatic species. SAV also serve a variety of ecosystem functions, including
32 absorbing wave energy, helping to settle out sediments and decrease turbidity, binding the substrate to
33 prevent erosion, filtering polluted runoff, uptake of nutrients, and oxygenation of the water column.
34

35 A threat to SAV is poor water quality, primarily water clarity. Increased turbidity prevents
36 sunlight from reaching SAV, reducing the capacity for photosynthesis, subsequently killing the plant.
37 Thus, sunlight is an important factor influencing SAV survival, which makes water clarity critically
38 important. Fewer SAV means less oxygenation of the water and less uptake of nutrients. A decline
39 in SAV has been observed worldwide with increasing frequency over the last few decades (Short and
40 Wyllie-Echeverria, 1996).
41

42 **3.2.2 Wetlands**
43

44 Wetlands are defined by the CWA as “those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface
45 water or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and under normal
46 circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil
47 conditions” and are under the jurisdiction of the Corps per Section 404 of the CWA. To be delineated
48 as a wetland, an area must exhibit three characteristics: hydric soils, dominance of hydrophytic
49 vegetation, and hydrology.
50

1 Wetlands provide a host of valuable ecosystem functions, including flood abatement, erosion
2 control, sequestration and transformation of nutrients, storage of water, food supply, and habitat.
3 Wetlands also possess socioeconomic value for heritage, aesthetics, recreation, food production, and
4 harvesting of resources. Wetlands subject to tidal fluctuation naturally experience extremes in
5 temperature, DO, and salinity; whereas freshwater wetlands are likely to maintain more constant
6 conditions. Coastal wetlands serve as feeding, breeding, and nesting ground for migratory waterfowl,
7 with some waterfowl being completely dependent upon specific coastal wetlands.
8

9 **3.2.3 Protected Species, Wildlife, and Critical Habitats**

10
11 For this analysis, a variety of aquatic and terrestrial animal species and their habitats are
12 included. Aquatic wildlife may include insects and other invertebrates, as well as fish and shellfish
13 that are not species of interest in aquaculture, commercial, or recreational fisheries, as these are
14 discussed in their respective sections. Terrestrial wildlife may include those organisms that have an
15 aquatic diet or those that use the water for one or more life stages. Pollution, over-fishing, and other
16 human-caused impacts can harm both terrestrial and aquatic species that rely coastal environments.
17

18 Marine mammals and migratory birds are protected species and as such, are included in this
19 analysis. All marine mammals are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of
20 1972 (16 U.S.C. § 1361 *et seq.*). This act prohibits the taking of marine mammals in U.S. waters and
21 mandates the use of ecosystem based management in order to keep marine mammal populations from
22 declining beyond the point where they are no longer functional parts of their ecosystems. This makes
23 conservation of healthy and stable ecosystems as much a priority as conservation of the individual
24 organism. Baseline data for marine mammals is incorporated by reference from the NOAA website
25 (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/>).
26

27 The Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. § 7421) amended the Migratory
28 Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 (16 U.S.C. §§ 703-712), to include Federal action to protect
29 identified ecosystems of special importance to migratory birds against pollution, detrimental
30 alterations, and other environmental degradations. The USFWS is responsible for maintaining and
31 updating the list of migratory birds protected under the MBTA; this list is incorporated by reference
32 from the USFWS website
33 (<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/RegulationsPolicies/mbta/mbtandx.html>).
34

35 The USFWS also has responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Bald and Golden Eagle
36 Protection Act of 1940 (16 U.S.C. §§ 668-668d), as amended. Under this act, it is unlawful to take,
37 possess, transport, purchase, barter, sell, import, or export bald or golden eagle (alive or dead),
38 including the nest, egg, or any part of the eagle without a permit issued by the USFWS. The Act
39 defines “take” as “pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest, or
40 disturb.” The USFWS, who is responsible for carrying out provisions of this Act, define “disturb” to
41 include a “decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or
42 sheltering behavior, or nest abandonment.”
43

44 Both plant and animal species are eligible for listing as threatened or endangered, and as
45 such, are protected under the Endangered Species Act. Administered jointly by the USFWS and
46 NMFS Office of Protected Resources, the purpose of this act is to protect and recover the species and
47 its ecosystem. Baseline data for threatened and endangered species is incorporated by reference from
48 the USFWS website (<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/index.html>) and the NMFS website
49 (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/>). Additional state listed endangered and threatened
50 species may be determined through contact with the appropriate individual state agencies.
51

1 Critical habitat was identified in the ESA as habitats that are essential for the conservation of
2 a threatened or endangered species. Critical habitats are specific geographical locations that may
3 require special management or protection. This habitat may include an area that is not currently
4 utilized by the species but may be needed for its recovery. Baseline data for critical habitat is
5 incorporated by reference from the USFWS critical habitat portal website
6 (<http://criticalhabitat.fws.gov/crithab/>). Under the MSA, EFH must be identified and conserved. The
7 act requires RFMCs to identify and describe EFH for each life stage of the managed species within
8 their jurisdiction. Baseline data for EFH is incorporated by reference from the NOAA EFH Mapper
9 website at (<http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/protection/efh/habitatmapper.html>).

10 11 **3.2.4 Invasive Species**

12
13 The National Invasive Species Council defines invasive species as “an alien species whose
14 introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health,”
15 and alien species to mean “with respect to a particular ecosystem, any species, including its seeds,
16 eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species, that is not native to that
17 ecosystem (E.O. 13112, 1999).” Invasive species are introduced through a variety of ways including,
18 but not limited to ballast water from ships, entanglement in fishing gear, aquaculture escapes, release
19 of unwanted pets or other domestic animals, and transportation of produce. In some cases, the new
20 environment is not well suited for the introduced species and it cannot survive. However, in many
21 cases the new environmental conditions are suited for survival of the invasive species.

22
23 Once established in the new environment a variety of scenarios can unfold. Generally, the
24 introduced species proliferates through the ecosystem. In some instances the new species is able to
25 out compete native species, causing a decline in native populations. In other instances native species
26 are not adapted to the presence of the introduced species and easily succumb to predation, again
27 causing a decline in native populations. Invasive species include a wide variety of organisms,
28 including some HAB species.

29 30 **3.2.5 Coral Reefs**

31
32 A coral reef is an ecosystem that includes a collection of biological communities. Coral reefs
33 are one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world (Moberg and Folke, 1999). Corals themselves
34 are sessile animals belonging to the group Cnidaria, along with jellyfish and sea anemones. Most reef
35 forming corals have single celled algae known as zooxanthellae that live within them. Zooxanthellae
36 are what give coral their color; together they have a mutually beneficial relationship. Corals secrete a
37 calcium carbonate skeleton that forms the structure for the reef. This provides protection for the
38 zooxanthellae and compounds needed for photosynthesis, while the zooxanthellae provide food and
39 nutrients for the coral. Both tropical reefs and slow growing cold water corals are faced with a
40 variety of environmental threats including overfishing, coral bleaching, ocean acidification, and
41 disease.

42 43 **3.2.6 Benthic Environment**

44
45 The benthic environment is the area at the sediment-water interface in a waterbody. A
46 variety of plants and organisms inhabit this area and their distribution is dependent upon a variety of
47 abiotic factors, such as light availability, salinity, temperature, and DO. Benthos, (organisms residing
48 in the benthic environment) such as worms, mollusks, and crustaceans serve as a food source for
49 organisms higher up the food chain. Many benthos, as well as the fish that feed upon them, are
50 important commercial fisheries, including demersal fish such as flounder and halibut.

51

1 The chemistry of both the water and the sediment plays an important role in many
2 interactions in the benthic environment, including decomposition and nutrient transformation at the
3 sediment-water interface. When organisms die and sink to the bottom of the waterbody, along with
4 other organic material, decomposition occurs and uses up DO in the benthic environment. In
5 addition, the transformation and sequestration of nutrients in the benthic environment is largely
6 dependent upon sediment composition and can have effects on the availability of nutrients for plant
7 growth. Both of these factors can impact the distribution of species within the benthic environment.
8

9 **3.2.7 Aquaculture**

10
11 Aquaculture is the farming of aquatic organisms such as fish or shellfish. There are many
12 aquaculture operations for the purpose of conservation and restoration, which farm species of concern
13 for research and to restore depleted wild populations. However, most aquaculture operations are for
14 commercial purposes, for which the goal is to provide a safe and sustainable source of seafood in
15 order to relieve stress on wild populations. Numerous aquacultured species are relevant to this
16 analysis; however, the specific species is dependent upon the geographic location. Major aquaculture
17 industries include salmon, trout, shellfish, and aquatic plants. These organisms are cultured in a
18 variety of ways, including cage, net-pen, suspended, and bottom culture.
19

20 Mariculture (aquaculture in the marine environment) is known to leave bio-deposits upon the
21 sediment below and near the operation. These deposits primarily consist of feces and uneaten feed
22 but also include trace metals associated with antifouling paint and other biocides. Bio-deposits can
23 alter the chemistry of the sediment and the benthic community assemblage. The impact to the
24 sediment and benthic environment at an aquaculture facility can also depend largely upon the type of
25 organism being farmed. Different organisms have differing nutrition requirements and thus different
26 feed compositions and subsequently different types and concentrations of excreta. Given fallow
27 periods between farming operations, sediment conditions and community assemblages have been
28 observed returning to pre-farming conditions within periods of weeks to years (Nash, 2001).
29

30 **3.2.8 Fisheries**

31
32 The MSA, as amended, authorizes the NMFS to manage fisheries within 3 to 200 miles off
33 the coast of the U.S. to address human impacts on the marine environment and to prioritize
34 identification and management of EFH. The MSA created eight RFMCs, each responsible for the
35 area adjacent to its constituent states (the Exclusive Economic Zone), while individual states manage
36 the fisheries that remain within state waters. These fisheries include a wide variety of both finfish and
37 shellfish.
38

39 **3.3 CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT**

40
41 Cultural and historic resources are those sites, areas, structures, landmarks, water bodies, and
42 objects significant in American history or culture. These resources are recognized and protected in
43 order to preserve American history and culture for future generations. Many local and state
44 governments have their own nomination and designation programs. The National Park Service
45 operates the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks programs.
46 Baseline data is incorporated by reference from the National Park Service National Register of
47 Historic Places Database website (<http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/natreghome.do?searchtype=natreghome>).
48 The resources relevant to this analysis include submerged and coastal resources. Historic wrecks can
49 be located anywhere in coastal waters due to a variety of reasons, particularly in shallow waters.
50 Known wrecks are typically listed on nautical charts, but are often found around navigational hazards

1 (e.g., shoals or reefs) near shipping lanes. Other wrecks can be found in ship graveyards, where they
2 have been abandoned after their use has expired.

3 4 **3.3.1 Tribal and Native Communities**

5
6 Executive Order 13175, “Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments”
7 (November 6, 2000), requires each Federal agency to establish procedures for meaningful
8 consultation and coordination with tribal officials in the development of Federal policies that have
9 tribal implications.

10
11 The procedures outlined in the NOAA Procedures for Government-to-Government
12 Consultation with Federally Recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives (NOAA Tribal
13 Consultation Handbook) provide guidance to NOAA to support a more consistent, effective and
14 proactive approach to conducting tribal consultations. This Handbook is intended to improve
15 NOAA’s management of its relations and cooperative activities with Indian Tribes, and to provide for
16 meaningful and timely input from Tribes into the Federal decision-making process on policy matters
17 having substantial direct effects on them. Policies that have tribal implications refer to regulations,
18 legislative comments or actions that have substantial direct effects on one or more Indian Tribes, on
19 the relationship between the Federal government and Indian Tribes, or on the distribution of power
20 and responsibilities between the Federal government and Indian Tribes.

21 22 **3.4 MARINE PROTECTED AREAS**

23
24 Executive Order 13158, Marine Protected Areas, helps protect natural and cultural resources
25 within the marine environment by strengthening and expanding the Nation’s system of marine
26 protected areas (MPAs). The E.O. defines MPAs to include any area of the marine environment that
27 has been reserved by Federal, state, territorial, tribal, or local laws or regulations to provide lasting
28 protection for part or all of the natural and cultural resources therein. NOAA maintains an inventory
29 of existing MPAs, which includes National Marine Sanctuaries, National Wildlife Refuges, Marine
30 Preserves, and National Estuarine Research Reserve System sites, among others. Baseline data is
31 incorporated by reference from NOAA’s MPA Inventory website
32 (<http://www.mpa.gov/dataanalysis/mpainventory/mpaviewer/>).

33
34 National Marine Sanctuaries are protected areas of the marine environment with special
35 national significance due to their conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, scientific, cultural,
36 archeological, educational, or aesthetic qualities as national marine sanctuaries. The sanctuaries are
37 administered by NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Baseline data is incorporated by
38 reference from the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries website (<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>).

39
40 The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) is a nationwide network of
41 coastal research reserves cooperatively managed coastal states and universities with funding and
42 technical assistance provided by NOAA. Reserves are established for long-term research, education,
43 and coastal stewardship. Currently, NERRS include 28 reserves across the country; baseline data is
44 incorporated by reference from the NERRS website (<http://nerrs.noaa.gov>).

45 46 **3.5 RECREATION**

47
48 Recreation includes any activity of leisure done for enjoyment, pleasure, fitness, or fun.
49 Recreational activities considered in this analysis are those activities likely to use aquatic
50 environments, such as fishing, swimming, boating, scuba diving, snorkeling, surfing, and the use of

1 beaches. Some coastal regions rely heavily on tourism revenue from recreational activities, as
2 addressed in sections 3.7 and 4.2.7, Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics.

3 4 **3.6 LAND USE**

5
6 Land use, simply put, is the human use of a landscape. Land is typically zoned categorically
7 based upon the intended use. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported the major uses of land in
8 the U.S. as of 2007 were forestland (30%), grassland, pasture and rangeland (27%), cropland (18%),
9 parks and wildlife areas (14%), miscellaneous use (9%), and urban land (3%) (USDA, 2011). Subsets
10 of these uses include, but are not limited to, recreational areas, barren land, urban residential, rural
11 residential, roadways, rights-of-way, and industry. The coastal environment relevant to this analysis
12 includes a wide variety of land uses.

13 14 **3.7 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND SOCIOECONOMICS**

15
16 The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines environmental justice as “the fair
17 treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or
18 income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws,
19 regulations, and policies.” Fair treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or
20 socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental
21 consequences of industrial, municipal, or commercial operations or the execution of Federal, state,
22 local, or tribal programs and policies.

23
24 NOAA evaluates impacts on low-income and minority communities as part of the NEPA
25 process in order to comply with E.O. 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in
26 Minority Populations and Low Income Communities and Low Income Populations. Under this E.O.,
27 agencies are required to identify and correct programs, policies, and activities that have
28 disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-
29 income populations. The E.O. also tasks Federal agencies with ensuring that public notifications
30 regarding environmental issues are concise, understandable, and readily accessible.

31
32 The Federal government has a legal obligation to protect Native American tribal treaty rights,
33 lands, assets, and resources. Given that Native Americans are a minority group, impacts to Native
34 Americans are evaluated under environmental justice for the purposes of this PEA. There are
35 approximately 566 Federally recognized tribes with guaranteed tribal hunting, trapping, and fishing
36 rights, including the right to hunt and fish in “usual and accustomed places” even if these places do
37 not occur on land areas administered as Federal Reservations. States do not have the authority to
38 regulate tribes or their lands, including matters such as environmental control and land use. Many
39 Native American tribes rely on subsistence harvesting of fish and shellfish for food, spiritual, and
40 economic reasons.

41 42 **3.8 CLIMATE CHANGE**

43
44 Climate change, as defined by the EPA, is “any significant change in measures of climate
45 lasting for an extended period.” This is different than global warming, although frequently
46 interchanged, because climate change is more than just temperature as it also includes precipitation
47 and wind. Climate change can be caused by a number of natural factors, such as changes in ocean
48 circulation or the variation in the sun’s intensity. Climate change can also be caused by human
49 activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, which changes the atmosphere’s composition. Evidence
50 of global climate change includes warming surface temperatures, melting glaciers, rising sea level,
51 ocean acidification, shifting ranges of plants and animals, as well as changing precipitation patterns.

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3.9 HUMAN HEALTH

Human health is the overall condition of a person’s mind and body. The primary exposure pathways through which impacts to human health occur, with regards to this PEA, are inhalation and ingestion. Inhalation of toxicants can impact the respiratory tract, resulting in throat, nose, and lung irritation. While some toxicants may deposit in the respiratory tract and be coughed out, others can be absorbed into the blood stream through contact with the lining of the lung. The ingestion of toxicants can impact the digestive tract, including the mouth, throat, stomach, and intestines. As the primary purpose of the digestive tract is to breakdown the foods we eat and absorb the necessary nutrients, toxicants that are ingested may also be absorbed into the blood stream and distributed throughout the body. Similar exposure is also a factor in child health and safety. Children are also likely more susceptible to the impacts of toxicants as well as to developmental impairments.

3.10 CHILD HEALTH

A growing body of scientific knowledge demonstrates that children may suffer disproportionately from environmental health risks and safety risks. These risks arise because: children’s neurological, immunological, digestive, and other bodily systems are still developing; children eat more food, drink more fluids, and breath more air in proportion to their body weight than adults; children’s size and weight may diminish their protection from standard safety features; and children’s behavior patterns may make them more susceptible to accidents because they are less able to protect themselves. Therefore, to the extent permitted by law and appropriate, and consistent with the agency’s mission, each Federal agency: (a) shall make it a high priority to identify and assess environmental health risks and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children; and (b) shall ensure that its policies, programs, activities, and standards address disproportionate risks to children that result from environmental health risks or safety risks.

While some HAB control measures might adversely impact child health, neither project activities nor potential minor and transitory environmental impacts are in proximity of areas where children congregate; therefore this project does not pose a hazard to child health.

1 **4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**
2

3 This section evaluates the potential impacts from the implementation of the No Action
4 Alternative and the Proposed Action. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, as defined in the
5 Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of
6 the National Environmental Policy Act (40 Code of the Federal Register [C.F.R.] Parts 1500-1508)
7 have been considered for each alternative.
8

9 **4.1 THE PROPOSED ACTION**
10

11 The Proposed Action is to fund projects for the field demonstration of specific PCM HAB
12 techniques that fit under the physical and chemical control method categories (see Table 2-1). The
13 Proposed Action includes only those methods that would be applicable to environments under
14 NOAA’s purview and that the NCCOS have determined are likely to be field demonstration ready
15 within the next five years. Demonstration phase projects would be localized and on a small scale, as
16 indicated in Sections 1.1 and 2.1. Most methods would involve limited applications that are not
17 anticipated to be significant. Specific projects funded through PCM HAB will be evaluated through a
18 tier 2 consistency memorandum, unless deemed to be covered through a Categorical Exclusion.
19

20 As described in section 1.1 and 2.1 demonstrations of the Proposed Actions will be occurring
21 in environments that are already significantly affected by a HAB. While the Proposed Action is not
22 anticipated to result in significant benefits to the environment, the small scale and scope of PCM
23 application relative to the large scale and scope of the HAB will also not result in additional or
24 cumulative environmental impacts. None of the control methods included in the Proposed Action
25 would have an effect on land use, nor would any control method disproportionately affect a minority
26 or low-income population. In addition, given the limited temporal and spatial scale of demonstration
27 phase projects, the Proposed Action is not expected to have an impact on the local or regional
28 economy. Therefore, Land Use, Environmental Justice, and Socioeconomic impacts are excluded
29 from further consideration.
30

31 **4.1.1 Physical Control Methods**
32

33 Physical controls are those methods that physically remove algal cells from the water column,
34 limit the spatial extent of a bloom by physical barrier or manipulation of abiotic factors, or kill algal
35 cells through physical means. The methods included herein are those that have proven most
36 promising in the laboratory or on the mesocosm scale. The physical control methods that are likely to
37 be field demonstration ready by FY2018 and therefore included in the Proposed Action are
38 flocculation, sediment resuspension, burial, and removal, cell harvesting and removal, and water
39 column mixing. The potential effects of each of these methods on the affected environment are
40 discussed below.
41

42 **4.1.1.1 Physical Environment**
43

44 *Water Quality*
45

46 Flocculation and sediment resuspension, burial, and removal activities would increase
47 turbidity; however, this effect is not expected to be significant as particles would immediately begin
48 settling from the water column and would not result in long-term or permanent changes to water
49 clarity. Microbial decomposition of flocced/sedimented HAB cells would result in changes to DO
50 and nutrient content and the increased BOD created by the decomposing HAB cells would contribute

1 the development of hypoxia and/or hydrogen sulfide toxicity, depending upon existing water quality
2 conditions. However, in most environments subjected to HABs, these water quality conditions are
3 already negatively impacted. In addition, the limited extent of proposed action would result in
4 possible water quality effects that are temporary and localized. Further, it is likely that the proposed
5 actions may result in slight improvements in water quality. Therefore flocked/sedimented HABs
6 would not substantially result in increased direct, indirect, or cumulative significant impacts.

7
8 The flocculant alone may also have the ability to temporarily increase or decrease nutrients in
9 the water column, depending on the type and modification of the flocculant. Similarly, sediment
10 resuspension, burial, and removal activities also have the ability to increase or decrease the flux of
11 nutrients into the water column, given particular sediment-water interactions. Generally, larger, open
12 systems would experience a lower severity of effects and for a shorter duration of time than smaller,
13 enclosed systems that may experience a lower rate of water mixing/circulation. However, these
14 effects are not expected to significantly impact the water quality of the water body given the limited
15 size of a demonstration phase project and the interaction that is required by a number of
16 environmental variables to result in these effects.

17
18 The resuspension of bottom sediments can release contaminants such as chemicals, heavy
19 metals, or other toxins which had previously settled from the water column. Due to the potential for
20 reintroduction of contaminants to overlying waters, sediment resuspension, burial, and removal
21 activities could result in significant impacts to water quality. The exclusion of this control method in
22 areas with known sediment contamination, as a means of mitigation, would preclude significant
23 impacts to water quality (see Section 5.1). Another means of mitigation would be to characterize the
24 contaminated soils and develop a mitigation plan for their use, isolation, treatment, or disposal. If
25 mitigation is not feasible, the proposed action will not be conducted.

26
27 Cell harvesting and removal activities could indirectly alter nutrient concentrations in the
28 water column through the removal of nutrient-fixing organisms. This effect would not be significant,
29 as the natural phytoplankton community would be expected to equilibrate after removal of the
30 dominant HAB species and nutrient competition interactions would return to pre-treatment
31 conditions.

32
33 Vertical water column mixing could result in isothermal conditions with a more uniform
34 distribution of salinity, nutrients and DO; while horizontal mixing would increase DO in surface
35 waters. Though these are direct changes to a stratified system, these changes would generally
36 improve water quality. Water column mixing activities which feature a benthic water intake would
37 increase turbidity. However, this effect would not be significant as the increase would not be to a
38 degree that would be harmful to other organisms. In addition, this effect would be temporary, as
39 turbidity levels would return to pre-treatment levels upon cessation of the control method. The
40 redistribution of nutrients in the water column is simply a redistribution of the nutrients already
41 present within the waterbody. This effect would not be significant as it would not result in a
42 continued flux of nutrients into the water column. Given the already highly degraded water quality
43 condition of systems suffering from HABs, see section 4.2.1, Water Quality, physical control
44 methods are not anticipated to result in additional significant impacts.

45 46 **4.1.1.2 Biological Environment**

47 48 *Submerged Aquatic Vegetation*

49
50 Projects using physical control methods not located within or directly adjacent to SAV would
51 not have a direct effect on SAV. However, if a physical control method project is located within or

1 adjacent to SAV, an effect is expected. SAV beds naturally accumulate more particulate matter than
2 unvegetated areas due to a reduction in water current and wave energy within the bed. Flocculation
3 and sediment resuspension, burial, and removal activities increase turbidity and have the capacity to
4 bury SAV, preventing the light penetration necessary for photosynthesis. While high depositional
5 rates can stimulate the growth of some SAV species, others are more susceptible to sedimentation,
6 which can reduce the development of seedlings and tubers. Given the greater accumulation of
7 organic matter within SAV beds and the production of sulfides during anaerobic microbial
8 decomposition, SAV beds can have greater sulfide production than surrounding unvegetated areas.
9 Depending upon existing water quality conditions and hydrodynamics within the project area, the
10 increased BOD created by the decomposing HAB cells could reduce DO levels and contribute to the
11 development of hypoxia or hydrogen sulfide toxicity, resulting in SAV mortality.

12
13 The exclusion of flocculation and sediment resuspension, burial, and removal activities over
14 SAV, as a means of mitigation, would preclude significant impacts to SAV. If a project is unable to
15 be redesigned to prevent significant impacts to SAV and mitigation is not feasible, the project will
16 require further analysis under a project specific EIS in order to be funded for demonstration through
17 the PCM HAB program.

18
19 In those instances where water column mixing features a benthic intake and SAV is present,
20 the method could result in increased turbidity and localized changes in water circulation patterns.
21 These effects are not expected to be significant enough to result in SAV mortality because they are
22 limited in duration and/or intensity.

23
24 It is not expected that the cell harvesting and removal method would have an effect on SAV
25 as these activities occur at the water's surface.

26 27 *Wetlands*

28
29 Physical control methods would only be used in open water where HABs occur. As such,
30 none of the physical control methods (flocculation, sediment resuspension, burial, and removal, cell
31 harvesting and removal, and water column mixing) would directly affect wetlands. Each of the
32 methods have the potential to result in indirect effects to wetlands through the means discussed in
33 section, 4.1.1.1, Water Quality; however, these effects were determined to be not significant, as long
34 as mitigation is performed in areas with sediment contamination (see Section 5.1).

35 36 *Protected Species, Wildlife, and Critical Habitats*

37
38 Impacts to these resources would be the same impacts that are thoroughly discussed in the
39 Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Wildlife, and Benthic Environment sections. These impacts would
40 remain the same for similar species and habitat, regardless of an official listing or designation.
41 Flocculation would affect wildlife in several ways, including indirectly through the effects discussed
42 in section 4.1.1.1, Water Quality, which were determined to be not significant as they would be
43 temporary and localized. Other effects of flocculation on wildlife include reduced clearance rates and
44 reduced shell and tissue growth rates in bivalves (Archambault et al., 2004), temporary coughing in
45 fish (Rensel and Anderson, 2004), and decreased feeding activity of visual predators (Beaulieu et al.,
46 2003). None of these effects are expected to be significant as they would not last in sufficient
47 duration to cause harm, and do not significantly exceed the effects of the HAB itself. Entrainment of
48 non-target plankton during sedimentation would occur, affecting species with a planktonic life stage.
49 However, this effect would not be significant because the control method is used over a limited area
50 in discrete events which is not expected to result in reduced recruitment or reduced larval
51 survivorship for a particular population.

1
2 Sediment resuspension, burial, and removal activities would also affect wildlife in the ways
3 discussed in section 4.1.1.1, Water Quality, which were determined to be not significant. Other
4 effects include attracting fish to the treatment area due to the suspension of benthic
5 macroinvertebrates, capture of non-target species in removal activities, and burial of non-target
6 species. Burial and removal activities would result in the capture and burial of some individuals;
7 however, mortality would not be significant because it would not have a measurable effect on the
8 population. These activities could also result in a temporary loss of prey for some species until the
9 benthic community recovered. This effect would also not result in significant impacts to wildlife
10 since they would not impact populations as a whole and the area would be re-colonized after the
11 treatment.

12
13 Cell harvesting and removal activities would entrain non-target species. Cell harvesting and
14 removal activities which use water withdrawal would have an appropriate flow rate for the
15 environment which it is located and be fitted with screening to prevent the entrainment of larger
16 organisms. While this control method would result in mortality for some individuals, given the scale
17 of demonstration phase project, the mortality rate would not be significant because it is not expected
18 to have a measurable effect upon the population.

19
20 Vertical water column mixing activities would destratify systems and create turbulence at the
21 water's surface which interferes with algal buoyancy. Many fish use deeper, cooler waters for
22 behavioral thermoregulation. Vertical water column mixing activities would create isothermal
23 conditions in the vicinity of the mixing device, causing discontinuity in the thermal refuge. This
24 effect would not be significant as demonstration phase projects are limited in size and duration, and
25 would not result in isothermal conditions throughout the waterbody. The creation of turbulence at the
26 water's surface would interfere with the buoyancy of non-target phytoplankton. However, this effect
27 would also not be significant because phytoplankton are extremely abundant and would return to the
28 native community composition after cessation of the control method. Just as with cell harvesting and
29 removal activities, the water intake would have an appropriate flow rate for the environment which it
30 is located and be fitted with screening to prevent the entrainment of larger organisms.

31
32 NOAA's PCM HAB Program will coordinate with USFWS, NMFS, and the appropriate state
33 and local agencies for site-specific projects as required under the ESA, MMPA, MBTA, and relevant
34 federal, state and local laws. Each project will be reviewed for potential impacts species and habitats
35 covered by these environmental statutes. If necessary, informal consultation with such agencies will
36 be conducted. If it is determined that a particular project would have no effect on these resources,
37 then no further evaluation would be required. If the coordination concludes that effects on these
38 resources may occur, formal consultation would be initiated and either a project-specific SEA or EIS
39 will be prepared.

40 41 *Coral Reefs*

42
43 Each of the physical control methods has the potential to adversely affect coral reefs if used
44 over a coral reef. Clear water is necessary to support photosynthesis of the zooxanthellae. Several of
45 the physical control methods can result in increased turbidity and/or increased water currents over a
46 reef which could prohibit photosynthesis and abrade the coral. Cell harvesting has the potential to
47 remove the zooxanthallae, remove or damage the coral, and remove sources of food. Water column
48 mixing activities which feature a benthic intake would increase turbidity; however, turbidity levels
49 would return to pre-treatment levels upon cessation of the control method. Although these effects are
50 temporary in nature, when combined with other problems facing coral reefs, physical control methods
51 could result in cumulative impacts to coral reefs. The exclusion of these control methods over coral

1 reefs, as a means of mitigation, precludes significant impacts to coral reefs. If exclusion is not
2 feasible, the project will require a project-specific SEA or EIS as well as coordination with
3 appropriate Federal and state agencies to minimize and offset any adverse impacts and ensure no
4 long-term or cumulative impacts occur. The PCM HAB program will not fund a PCM demonstration
5 projects over coral reefs that have not undertaken a project-specific SEA or EIS.

6 7 *Invasive Species*

8
9 None of the control methods included in the Proposed Action have the potential to introduce
10 or promote the spread of an invasive species. The use of whole macroalgae has been conditioned by
11 the mitigation measures in section 5.0, Mitigation and Monitoring, to only include the use of native or
12 naturalized species, as to eliminate any opportunity for the introduction or spread of an invasive
13 species.

14 15 *Benthic Environment*

16
17 Flocculation would affect the benthic environment through the means discussed in section
18 4.1.1.1, Water Quality, which were determined to be not significant, as well as through the burial and
19 deposition of the flocculent and flocced material. Depending upon existing water quality conditions
20 and the hydrodynamics in the project area, an accumulation of flocced HAB cells in the benthic
21 environment could contribute to the development of hypoxia or hydrogen sulfide toxicity. An
22 accumulation of flocced material could burry sessile organisms and result in mortality; however,
23 some research has shown that benthic communities have remained unchanged even after years of clay
24 flocculation (Hagström et al., 2010). The hydrology at the treatment site will also largely determine
25 the impact flocculation has on the benthic environment, as higher energy environments which keep
26 particles suspended for longer periods of time may be more detrimental to bivalves than lower energy
27 environments where sedimentation can occur more quickly (Archambault et al., 2004; Beaulieu et al.,
28 2003). While mortality to some individuals may occur, this effect is not expected to be significant
29 because the limited spatial scale of a demonstration phase project. Furthermore, the burial and
30 deposition of flocced material is not expected to be greater than would otherwise occur over the life
31 of an uncontrolled bloom.

32
33 The intensity of effects resulting from sediment resuspension, burial, and removal activities
34 largely depends upon sediment composition and hydrodynamics at the treatment site. Areas where
35 the sediment is composed of larger grain sizes, such as sandy areas, would experience a very brief
36 increase in turbidity, as these particles would settle quickly. Areas with a finer sediment composition
37 would experience an increase in turbidity for a greater period of time, as the particles would remain
38 suspended longer. In either case, this effect is not expected to be significant as these activities are
39 discrete events which are not expected to decrease water clarity for a duration which would cause
40 harm to other organisms. Many motile benthic organisms would be able to leave the treatment area
41 during application of the control method. These activities could result in mortality to those organisms
42 that are sessile or have limited motility. However, this effect would not be significant as the area
43 would be re-colonized following completion of the activities and the mortality of individuals would
44 not have a measurable effect on the population.

45
46 While sediment burial and removal activities may eliminate or mitigate the presence of HAB
47 cysts in the benthic environment, resuspension activities can resuspend previously interred cysts.
48 Many HAB cysts are known to germinate when resuspended, even after many years of burial (Keafer
49 et al., 1992 and Anderson et al., 2005). Additionally, resting cysts of some species have been shown
50 to be even more toxic than corresponding motile stages (Dale et al., 1978). One objective of sediment
51 resuspension is to disturb bottom sediments in order to inter HAB cysts in hypoxic sediments to

1 prevent germination. If burial does not occur, HAB cysts would have been resuspended into
2 overlying waters.

3
4 Cell harvesting and removal activities occur at the water's surface where they have no effect
5 on the benthic environment. The intake for a water column mixing device would have an appropriate
6 flow rate for the environment which it is located and be fitted with screening to prevent the
7 entrainment of organisms. Water column mixing activities which feature a benthic water intake
8 would increase turbidity, although, not to a degree which would be harmful to benthos as turbidity
9 levels would return to pre-treatment levels upon cessation of the control method.

10 11 *Aquaculture*

12
13 Clay flocculation was developed as a control method in Japan and Korea for the treatment of
14 HABs at mariculture facilities (Sengco and Anderson, 2004). The increased suspended particulate
15 matter has been shown to cause temporary coughing in fish (Rensel and Anderson, 2004). However,
16 this effect has not been shown to be significant as it does not result in fish mortality. Flocculation
17 would have effects on aquaculture operations taking place in the benthic environment, such as
18 shellfish production, due to the non-significant impacts discussed in sections 4.1.1.1, Water Quality;
19 4.1.1.2, Protected Species, Wildlife, and Critical Habitats; and 4.1.1.2+, Benthic Environment. In the
20 wild, these effects would not be significant as mortality of individuals is not expected to have a
21 measurable effect upon the population. Within an aquaculture operation, mortality is expected to be
22 moderate, particularly when compared to adverse effects associated with the HAB.

23
24 Sediment resuspension, burial, and removal activities would disturb sediments within
25 aquaculture operations, resulting in the same effects discussed in sections 4.1.1.1.1, Water Quality;
26 4.1.1.2.3, Protected Species, Wildlife, and Critical Habitat; and 4.1.1.2.6, Benthic Environment.
27 These activities would not only increase turbidity, but also resuspend nutrients and bio-solids, as well
28 as trace metals associated with antifouling paint and other biocides used in aquaculture operations.
29 To determine the magnitude of the effects that would result from the resuspension of these sediments,
30 further NEPA analyses may be required.

31
32 Cell harvesting and removal activities would occur at the water's surface with no effect on
33 water quality or the benthic environment. Water column mixing activities which feature a benthic
34 water intake have the potential to resuspend sediments below aquaculture operations, as discussed
35 above for sediment resuspension, burial, and removal activities. Water column mixing activities
36 without a benthic water intake would not disturb the sediments beneath the aquaculture facility and as
37 such, would not have any adverse effects on aquaculture operations.

38
39 For all the physical control methods, temporary impacts would be associated with the
40 removal of beneficial phytoplankton/food source species. These temporary effects would be
41 negligible as phytoplankton are extremely abundant and would return to the native community
42 composition after cessation of the control method. In general, demonstration phase projects within or
43 directly adjacent to privately leased areas for aquaculture operations must coordinate with and obtain
44 approval from appropriate stakeholders and regulators.

45 46 **4.1.1.3 Cultural Environment, Tribal and Native Communities**

47
48 For all physical control methods, impacts are anticipated to be minor and temporary. Given the
49 unique nature of these resources and variation in environmental conditions between locations, the
50 evaluation of specific impacts to these resources from physical control methods at a programmatic
51 level would not provide any useful information to decision makers. Rather, a project-specific

1 evaluation would be appropriate for assessing impacts to these resources. The use of flocculation or
2 sediment resuspension could make subsistence harvesting by native communities temporarily
3 unavailable, but these areas would already be closed to harvesting due to the presence of a HAB.
4 While science, charting, and observations are not described in the Handbook as actions likely to
5 require consultation, at tribe could request consultation on any NOAA action it believes has tribal
6 implications. As a matter of courtesy, if a HAB control demonstration project is planned to occur in
7 an area of tribal jurisdiction or the action is believed to impact tribal concerns, the applicable Indian
8 Tribes will be consulted.

9 10 **4.1.1.4 Marine Protected Areas**

11
12 Potential impacts resulting from physical control methods are anticipated to be the same as
13 those described in sections 4.1.1.1, Physical Environment and 4.1.1.2, Biological Environment.
14 Therefore, the Proposed Action is generally excluded from Marine Protected Areas and known
15 cultural and historic resource unless mitigation measures are identified through the project-specific
16 evaluation and coordination with and approval from appropriate Federal, state, and local authorities
17 has occurred.

18 19 **4.1.1.5 Recreation**

20
21 For all of the physical control methods, temporary impacts would be associated with the use
22 or placement of equipment within a waterbody for application of the method. These temporary
23 impacts are not expected to be significant because work would be minimal compared to current
24 activities and existing uses. Upon completion of the treatment and removal of equipment, relational
25 activities would return to normal. Additionally, flocculation and sediment resuspension may make
26 recreation activities undesirable while the control method is being tested. However, the duration and
27 limited size of the control method (see sections 1.1 and 2.1) being tested is not long enough to result
28 in effects that would rise to the level of significance.

29 30 **4.1.1.6 Human and Child Health**

31
32 Flocculants would be clean and free of toxins and would not be modified in a way that would
33 introduce toxins into the environment. As such, flocculation would not affect human health.

34
35 As discussed in section 4.1.1.2, Water Quality, the resuspension of contaminated bottom
36 sediments has the potential to affect water quality, which could in turn affect human health. The
37 exclusion of this control method in areas with known sediment contamination, as a means of
38 mitigation, would preclude significant impacts to water quality and thus human health. If mitigation
39 is not feasible, the project would require a project-specific SEA or EIS and coordination with Federal,
40 state, and/or local authorities which regulate these activities, and which may have expertise on the
41 contamination and means for preventing impacts to human health.

42
43 Cell harvesting and removal activities do not involve the introduction of materials into the
44 human environment and would not alter the natural environment in such a way as to affect human
45 health.

46
47 Water column mixing activities that do not feature a benthic intake do not involve the
48 introduction of materials into the human environment and would not alter the natural environment in
49 such a way as to effect human health. However, water column mixing activities that feature a benthic
50 intake, if used within an aquaculture operation, have the potential to resuspend trace metals associated
51 with antifouling paint and other biocides that are used in aquaculture operations. The effects on

1 human health that would result from the resuspension of these materials is unknown. In general,
2 demonstration phase projects within or directly adjacent to privately leased areas for aquaculture
3 operations must coordinate with and obtain approval from appropriate stakeholders and regulators.
4 Through this coordination, potential impacts to human health may be reduced through the use of
5 project-specific mitigation measures, or the project may require a project-specific SEA or EIS to
6 ensure the project would not affect human health.

7
8 Impacts to child health and safety are anticipated to be similar to those outlined previously for
9 Human Health. Further, PCM control methods will only be demonstrated in environments that are
10 not located near children or locations where children may recreate since HABs preclude the use of, or
11 nearby, environments by children.

12 13 **4.1.2 Chemical Control Methods**

14
15 Chemical control methods rely on the release of compounds that either cause cell lysis or
16 which prevent the photosynthesis of algal species. There are several chemical control methods likely
17 to be field demonstration ready in the next five years and therefore included in the Proposed Action.
18 These methods include the use of whole macroalgae and macroalgal isolates, barley straw and barley
19 straw extracts/liquors, biosurfactants, hydrogen peroxide, copper, silica, and isolated algicidal
20 compounds.

21
22 The Washington State Department of Ecology published a Supplemental Environmental
23 Impact Statement for Freshwater Aquatic Plant Management (SEIS-APM) in July 2000, revised in
24 2001. This document supplements the original 1980 and 1992 EISs and assesses the impacts of
25 copper on the aquatic and human environment. The SEIS provides technical background and
26 references scientific literature relevant to the proposed action and is therefore incorporated by
27 reference.

28 29 **4.1.2.1 Physical Environment**

30 31 *Water Quality*

32
33 In the case of toxin-producing HABs, the chemical controls which induce cell lysis would
34 cause the release of toxins into the waterbody. Controlled HABs are expected to have a lower cell
35 density and be smaller in spatial scale than uncontrolled HABs. Therefore, the one-time release of
36 toxins from the application of a chemical control is expected to be less than what would be produced
37 from a sustained bloom with uncontrolled growth. Given the already highly degraded water quality
38 condition of systems suffering from HABs, see section 4.2.1.1, Water Quality, chemical control
39 methods are not anticipated to result in additional significant impacts.

40
41 Each of the chemical control methods would affect water quality through changes in nutrient
42 content and DO. These methods would increase the nutrient content of the waterbody either through
43 the direct addition of organic material or by causing HAB cell lysis, which would release nutrients
44 into the waterbody. This release would be a one-time event and would not permanently alter water
45 quality. Depending upon existing water quality conditions and hydrodynamics within the project
46 area, the increased BOD created by the decomposing HAB cells could reduce DO levels and
47 contribute to the development of hypoxia. Generally, wide spread or prolonged hypoxia would be
48 unlikely to result in open systems due to water mixing/circulation. The decrease in DO from the
49 decomposition of a controlled bloom is expected to be both lower in intensity and smaller in scale
50 than an uncontrolled bloom, as a controlled bloom would have a lower cell density and be smaller in
51 spatial extent.

1
2 The use of whole barley straw would temporarily increase turbidity from the increase in
3 particulate matter and as soluble organic compounds are leached from the decomposing straw when it
4 is first placed in the water. This effect would not diminish overall water clarity as the soluble
5 compounds would quickly dilute and disperse in the receiving water and particulate matter would
6 settle from the water column.

7
8 Copper compounds are water-soluble and dissipate within hours to days, depending on
9 environmental factors, as the free copper ion is adsorbed to sediments and organic material. As such,
10 copper would not persist in toxic levels in the water column. However, copper is a naturally
11 occurring trace element and would persist indefinitely in its elemental form in the sediments, as
12 discussed further in section 4.1.2.2.5, Benthic Environment. The EPA provides a threshold of 1.3
13 mg/L of copper in drinking water (EPA, 2012). Given the limited spatial scale of demonstration
14 phase projects and limited number of application, the use of copper is not expected to exceed this
15 threshold.

16 **4.1.2.2 Biological Environment**

17 *Submerged Aquatic Vegetation*

18
19
20
21 Each of the chemical control methods would have an indirect effect on SAV. After
22 treatment, dead HAB cells would settle from the water column and begin decomposition. The
23 increased BOD created by the decomposing HAB cells, depending upon existing water quality
24 conditions, could reduce DO levels and contribute to the development of hypoxia or hydrogen sulfide
25 toxicity, resulting in SAV mortality. Given the nationwide decline of SAV, these effects may result
26 in significant impacts. The exclusion of chemical controls over or adjacent to SAV, as a means of
27 mitigation, would preclude significant impacts to SAV. If a project is unable to be redesigned to
28 reduce impacts and mitigation is not feasible, the project may require a project-specific SEA or EIS.

29
30 The use of whole macroalgae as a control method serves two purposes, to elicit an
31 allelopathic effect and to inhibit HABs through nutrient competition. Although the purpose of using
32 macroalgae is to reduce the amount of nutrients available for growth, HABs occur in nutrient-rich
33 environments and macroalgae would not be expected to reduce nutrient availability to a level which
34 would limit SAV growth. In addition, the limited spatial scale of demonstration phase projects would
35 only produce localized nutrient reductions as opposed to reducing the nutrient content of the entire
36 waterbody, and the limited number of applications would preclude any lasting effects.

37
38 As noted in the SEIS-APM, copper bioaccumulates in plants and animals in varying amounts
39 dependent upon environmental conditions and species; however, biomagnification does not appear to
40 occur. The use of copper may result in SAV mortality if SAV are within the treatment area. The
41 exclusion of the copper control methods within or adjacent to an SAV, as a means of mitigation,
42 would preclude significant impacts to SAV.

43 *Wetlands*

44
45
46 The chemical control methods would be applied in open water where HABs occur and would
47 not have a direct effect on wetlands. Each of the methods have the potential to result in indirect
48 effects to wetlands through the means discussed in sections 4.1.2.1.1, Water Quality and 4.1.2.2.5,
49 Benthic Environment; however, these effects were determined to be not significant when the
50 specified mitigation is used.

51

1 *Protected Species, Wildlife, and Critical Habitats*

2
3 As previously discussed in section 4.1.2.1.1, Water Quality, some of the chemical controls
4 induce cell lysis which may cause the release of toxins into the waterbody. This could result in a
5 discrete mortality event for a variety of species, as compared to the sustained mortalities which would
6 occur from uncontrolled toxic HABs. These single mortality events are expected to be smaller, with
7 regards to the number of individuals, than sustained mortality events caused by uncontrolled HABs.
8 Controlled HABs would have a lower density of toxin producing cells and would be smaller in spatial
9 scale, therefore reducing the amount and spread of toxin.

10
11 The effect reduced levels of DO would have on wildlife depends on the existing water quality
12 conditions and the hydrology in the project area. If the area is already hypoxic, then the chemical
13 control methods would not have a change on the existing environment that would affect wildlife.
14 However, decreasing DO levels could exacerbate existing water quality problems and promote the
15 development of hypoxic areas which would cause the relocation of motile organisms and potentially
16 cause mortality to those organisms that cannot relocate. Again, the decrease in DO from the
17 decomposition of a controlled bloom is expected to be both lower in intensity and smaller in scale
18 than an uncontrolled bloom, and as such would result in the relocation and/or mortality of fewer
19 organisms than would occur without the control method.

20
21 The use of whole barley straw would provide habitat for aquatic detritivore invertebrates
22 which would feed upon the decomposing barley straw. These invertebrates are a valuable food
23 source for many waterfowl and a variety of fish, which would be attracted to the project area by the
24 increased food supply. Waterfowl may also be attracted to floating straw masses as a place to rest,
25 forage or roost. Attraction of waterfowl to floating straw masses is not expected to cause nuisance to
26 surrounding land use or recreational areas. Given the limited spatial scale of demonstration phase
27 projects, the attraction of fish, waterfowl, or other wildlife to the project area is not anticipated to
28 change the distribution of local populations nor place any stress on local food resources.

29
30 The use of whole macroalgae may attract zooplankton, fish, and other wildlife to the
31 treatment area, both as a food source and as an area of refuge. Given the limited spatial scale of
32 demonstration phase projects, the attraction of fish or other wildlife to the project area is not
33 anticipated to change the distribution of local populations nor place any stress on local food
34 resources. The allelochemicals from whole macroalgae and isolates of those allelochemicals are also
35 known to have algicidal and algistatic properties against phytoplankton. Their indiscriminate nature
36 would result in the inhibition or mortality of non-target phytoplankton species. However, the use of
37 whole macroalgae is different from the application of an allelochemical isolate over a bloom. The use
38 of whole macroalgae works preventatively to control the size of a HAB, by inhibiting growth through
39 nutrient competition and allelopathic interaction. Control through this means is not anticipated to
40 result in the death of an entire bloom, rather it is expected to restrict the growth and spread of the
41 bloom. This may temporarily reduce phytoplankton diversity in the project area; however, these
42 effects would not be significant because phytoplankton are extremely abundant and the assemblage
43 would return to its native composition after treatment.

44
45 In both laboratory and in situ experiments, low concentrations of hydrogen peroxide and
46 biosurfactants have been shown to control HABs. Use of low concentrations in demonstration phase
47 projects would preclude these chemicals from causing harm to other non-target organisms, including
48 zooplankton and macrofauna. Concentrations which are known to result in harm to non-target species
49 exceed those which have been observed to be effective for bloom control (Mathijs et al., 2011).
50 Higher doses have been found to reduce both phytoplankton and zooplankton abundance, but effects
51 to larger organisms were minimal (Burson et al., 2014). Hydrogen peroxide and biosurfactants

1 quickly degrade into non-toxic byproducts in the aquatic environment and would no longer possess
2 harmful properties. The low concentration used in demonstration phase projects and limited number
3 of applications would limit impacts beyond those already occurring as a result of a HAB.
4

5 As detailed in the SEIS-APM, copper can bioaccumulate in both plants and animals. The
6 sensitivity of a particular organism to copper varies between species and is dependent upon a number
7 of environmental variables such as organic matter content, pH, temperature, water hardness, and
8 initial dosage concentration. Copper can be highly toxic for a variety of species, in particular, aquatic
9 invertebrates and salmonids. Effects to fish and other vertebrates include disruption in hormone
10 activity, reductions in growth rate, and respiratory distress leading to mortality. The use of copper
11 may result in mortality to those species that cannot relocate from the project area. However, given
12 the limited spatial scale of demonstration phase projects, limited number of applications, and brief
13 residency time in the water column, mortality is not expected to be significant. In addition, the use of
14 mitigation measures discussed in section 5.0, Mitigation and Monitoring, would preclude impacts to
15 many aquatic organisms.
16

17 As a limiting factor for growth, the addition of dissolved silica would encourage,
18 indiscriminately, the growth of the existing diatom community. Given that silica is naturally
19 occurring and is required for growth, no negative impacts are expected from the application of silica.
20

21 *Shewanella* are naturally occurring marine bacteria that can be present in fish, shellfish, and
22 seawater. *Shewanella* are found throughout aquatic environments around the world and have been
23 shown to produce discriminate bioactive compounds with algicidal affects to dinoflagellates (Hare et
24 al., 2005). This technique uses isolates from naturally occurring marine bacteria to control toxic
25 dinoflagellate blooms. According to Hare et al. (2005), *Shewanella* IRI-160 had a growth-inhibiting
26 effect on all three dinoflagellate species tested, including *P. piscicida* (potentially toxic zoospores),
27 *Prorocentrum minimum*, and *Gyrodinium uncatenum*. This bacterium did not have a negative effect
28 on the growth of any of the other four common estuarine non-dinoflagellate species tested, and in fact
29 had a slight stimulatory effect on a diatom, a prasinophyte, a cryptophyte, and a raphidophyte. Given
30 that these bacteria are naturally occurring, no negative impacts are expected from the use of these
31 isolated algicidal compounds.
32

33 *Invasive Species*

34

35 With the exception of the use of whole native macroalgae, none of the control methods
36 included in the Proposed Action have the potential to introduce or promote the spread of an invasive
37 species. The use of whole macroalgae has been conditioned by the mitigation measures in section
38 5.0, Mitigation and Monitoring, to only include the use of native or naturalized species, as to
39 eliminate any opportunity for the introduction or spread of an invasive species.
40

41 *Coral Reefs*

42

43 Corals are known to produce a large number of secondary metabolites. Many exhibit
44 allelopathic affects, including inhibition of polyp activity and necrosis. The zooxanthellae that live
45 within coral are dinoflagellates that could be inhibited by both barley straw and macroalgal isolates
46 and be more susceptible to allelopathic effects. When stressed, such as during a HAB, corals expel
47 the zooxanthellae that live within them. If the coral go for an extended period of time without re-
48 taking the zooxanthellae the coral will die. The use of any of the chemical controls over a reef that
49 has expelled its zooxanthellae could result in the mortality of these photosynthetic organisms.
50 Although the inhibition would only be temporary, when combined with other problems facing coral
51 reefs, these methods could result in cumulative impacts. As such, the exclusion of these control

1 methods over coral reefs, as a means of mitigation, precludes significant impacts to coral reefs (see
2 Section 5.1)

3
4 *Benthic Environment*

5
6 None of the chemical control methods described in the Proposed Action, with the exception
7 of copper, would directly affect the benthic environment. However, after treatment, dead HAB cells
8 would settle to the benthic environment where they would begin to decompose. Decomposing HAB
9 cells would reduce DO and release toxins as discussed in section 4.1.2.1.1, Water Quality, thereby
10 having an indirect effect on the benthic environment. Depending on the hydrodynamic conditions at
11 the treatment site and existing water quality conditions, an accumulation of decomposing HAB cells,
12 as a result of all chemical controls, can lead to hypoxia and the development of hydrogen sulfide
13 toxicity. This may cause mortality for those benthos which are unable to relocate.

14
15 The use of whole macroalgae would involve floating or suspending macroalgal rafts near the
16 water's surface where they have access to sunlight and may out compete HABs for nutrients. As
17 discussed previously in section 4.1.2.2.3, Protected Species, Wildlife and Critical Habitat, this method
18 is expected to restrict the size of a HAB and is not expected to result in the death of a bloom that
19 would sink and cause problems in the benthic environment. This control method would be removed
20 from the treatment area upon completion of the project and would not have an effect on the benthic
21 environment.

22
23 The accumulation of toxic HAB cells would increase the amount of toxins in the benthic
24 environment. This discrete deposition of toxins could be greater in concentration than would result
25 from natural deposition; however, the total amount of toxin is expected to be less than would
26 naturally occur over the life of an uncontrolled bloom. The resultant mortality from this discrete
27 event is not expected to be significant given the limited spatial scale of demonstration phase projects
28 and in comparison to the mortality that would result over the life of an uncontrolled bloom.

29
30 Sediments are a sink for copper in the aquatic environment. The adsorption of copper onto
31 organic particulates and sediments creates an accumulation of copper in the benthic environment
32 which remains concentrated in upper sediments due to bacterial mechanisms (SEIS-APM, 2001).
33 Copper does not readily desorb from sediments and given its elemental nature, copper can persist in
34 this sediment phase indefinitely. The amount of copper accumulated in benthic sediments is variable
35 across environments as it is dependent upon a number of factors, including organic content, particle
36 size distribution, and pH (SEIS-APM, 2001). While the sensitivity of benthos to copper also varies
37 widely between species, some mortality to benthos would occur. NOAA developed Sediment Quality
38 Guidelines through its National Status and Trends Program. To mitigate the toxic effects of copper,
39 all projects using this control method must test for background levels of copper in the sediments to
40 ensure that the project does not exceed the established Effects Range Low (ERL) value. This value
41 represents a concentration, below which effects are rarely observed.

42
43 *Aquaculture*

44
45 Development of the macroalgal control method stemmed from integrated mariculture. In
46 these systems, macroalgae is grown with finfish to uptake and transform the nutrients from fish waste,
47 reducing the overall nutrient content of effluent from the mariculture operation while developing an
48 additional source of revenue. As such, the use of whole macroalgae would not have an adverse effect
49 on aquaculture.

50

1 The low dosages of the chemical controls used in demonstration phase projects prevents
2 mortality to many species. In addition, all of the chemical controls degrade into non-toxic byproducts
3 and do not bioaccumulate, with the exception of copper. Copper is toxic to many organisms and does
4 bioaccumulate; however, the use of approved copper algicides, when properly applied at the
5 maximum allowable dosage for aquatic plant management, presents no restrictions on fish or shellfish
6 consumption following treatment (SEIS-APM, 2001). *Shewanella* bacteria can contaminate fish and
7 shellfish harvests, making them unpalatable for human consumption due to off-odors and off-flavors
8 (Gram and Huss, 1996). The chemical controls would have the same effects on aquacultured
9 organisms as they would on other organisms, as discussed in sections 4.1.2.1.1, Water Quality;
10 4.1.2.1.3, Protected Species, Wildlife, and Critical Habitat; and 4.1.2.1.5, Benthic Environment. In
11 general, demonstration phase projects within or directly adjacent to privately leased areas for
12 aquaculture operations must coordinate with and obtain approval from appropriate stakeholders and
13 regulators.

14 **4.1.2.3 Cultural Environment and Tribal and Native Communities**

15
16
17 For all physical control methods, impacts are anticipated to be minor and temporary. Given
18 the unique nature of these resources and variation in environmental conditions between locations, the
19 evaluation of specific impacts to these resources from physical control methods at a programmatic
20 level would not provide any useful information to decision makers. Rather, a project-specific
21 evaluation would be appropriate for assessing impacts to these resources. The use of flocculation or
22 sediment resuspension could make subsistence harvesting by native communities temporarily
23 unavailable, but these areas would already be closed to harvesting due to the presence of a HAB.
24 Any field demonstrations occurring on tribal lands would require full coordination and collaboration
25 with appropriate tribal entities.

26 **4.1.2.4 Marine Protected Areas**

27
28
29 Chemical control methods may impact Marine Protected Areas, as described in 4.1.2.1,
30 Physical Environment and 4.1.2.2, Biological Environment. As such, the Proposed Action is
31 generally excluded from Marine Protected Areas and known cultural and historic resource unless
32 mitigation measures are identified through the project-specific evaluation and coordination with and
33 approval from appropriate Federal, state, and local authorities has occurred.

34 **4.1.2.5 Recreation**

35
36
37 Recreational activities may be temporarily restricted from the treatment area during
38 application of any of the chemical control methods. However, areas would not be required to be
39 closed for any length of time after treatment and activities could resume once equipment is removed
40 from the treatment area. In addition, none of the chemical controls are volatile, thus no effects are
41 expected from overspray or aerial drift. In high energy environments, biosurfactants may foam at the
42 water's surface. While these foams are naturally occurring and non-toxic, a negative aesthetic
43 appearance may detract from recreation surrounding the treatment area. Recreational areas are often
44 closed during a HAB event; therefore, the application of control measures would not add further
45 impact.

46 **4.1.2.6 Human and Child Health**

47
48
49 At the levels used in demonstration phase projects, none of the chemical controls would have
50 a direct impact on human health. As discussed previously in section 4.1.2.1.1, Water Quality, the
51 lysing of toxic HAB cells would release toxins into the waterbody, many of which are known to cause

1 a variety of poisoning syndromes. However, the possible one-time release of toxins from the
2 application of a chemical control method would be less than what would be produced from a
3 sustained bloom with uncontrolled growth. This is particularly true in the case of toxins aerosolized
4 by wave action, which have been known to cause respiratory distress for coastal residents. An
5 uncontrolled bloom producing such toxins can persist for weeks and affect many people, whereas the
6 possible one-time release of toxins from a controlled bloom would be a discrete event.

7
8 Impacts to child health and safety are anticipated to be similar to those outlined previously for
9 Human Health. Further, PCM control methods will only be demonstrated in environments that are
10 not located near children or locations where children may recreate since HABs preclude the use of, or
11 nearby, environments by children.

12 13 **4.2 THE NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

14
15 The No Action Alternative would inherently result in continued impacts from HABs to the
16 environment and coastal communities and would not benefit from knowledge gained through the
17 Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative would preclude any impacts from field demonstration
18 projects. Under the No Action Alternative, the gap between laboratory research and testing of control
19 methods would remain. Other existing programs would continue to focus on reducing the impacts of
20 HABs, although they would not provide support for testing the control techniques in the environment.
21 Research indicates some HABs may be prevented; however, prevention would likely only reduce the
22 frequency, spatial extent, and toxicity of blooms, not eliminate them completely. If control methods,
23 as developed by the PCM HAB Program, cannot be tested, resource managers and event responders
24 would not have the knowledge that would be gained from environmental testing. As such, this
25 section evaluates the effect of HABs on the affected environment previously discussed in section 3.0,
26 Affected Environment.

27 28 **4.2.1 Physical Environment**

29 30 *Water Quality*

31
32 HABs, like other phytoplankton species, can impact water quality by both causing and
33 exacerbating existing water quality problems. HABs can contribute to increased turbidity by
34 clouding the water column and increasing light attenuation due to an increase in suspended particles.
35 Increased turbidity can result in other indirect impacts, such as increased surface water temperatures.
36 HABs can also contribute to decreased levels of DO. For example, while high concentrations of
37 algae can temporarily oxygenate the water column, once the algae dies, decomposition strips DO
38 from the water. In addition, high biomass of algae can cause daily swings in oxygen, oxygenating it
39 during the day but depleting it at night. This is also true with regards to the organisms killed by
40 HABs, such as large fish kills. In areas already experiencing degraded water quality, large HAB
41 events or large scale animal mortality events (such as fish kills or jubilees) can contribute to the
42 development of hypoxia or anoxia, leaving these areas unavailable as habitat to higher organisms
43 such as fish and shellfish. Nutrients released from decomposing HABs, or the organisms in which
44 they kill can further exacerbate the existing HAB problem by fueling additional blooms. Some HABs
45 can also temporarily raise and lower the pH of surrounding water, causing stress to fish and other
46 aquatic organisms.

47
48 HABs produce a variety of toxins which can also degrade water quality. Human illness, as
49 well as lethal and sub-lethal effects to marine mammals, fish, and shellfish have been attributed to
50 these toxins and are further discussed in sections 4.2.2.3, Protected Species, Wildlife, and Critical
51 Habitat and 4.2.8, Human Health. When combined with other factors contributing to the degradation

1 of water quality, such as point source pollution and stormwater runoff, not taking steps towards
2 achieving in situ control and implementing the No Action Alternative would result in continued
3 impacts to water quality.

4 5 **4.2.2 Biological Environment**

6 7 *Submerged Aquatic Vegetation*

8
9 Planktonic HABs can impact SAV by restricting light penetration through the water column,
10 subsequently preventing photosynthesis. This can prevent new growth and directly cause SAV
11 mortality. Some HABs can cover SAV, reducing light exposure and, perhaps, restrict access to
12 required nutrients. The death and loss of SAV can cause a host of other direct and indirect effects,
13 including the release of nutrients into the water from decomposing SAV, loss of water column
14 nutrient removal capacity of live SAV, and decreased erosion and sediment control functions from the
15 loss of rooted vegetation. Nutrient release from decaying SAV and the loss of nutrient uptake that
16 these SAV could have provided represent a potential net increase of water column nutrient
17 concentration and a potential increase for further HABs. A decrease in sediment stability could result
18 in resuspension of bottom sediments leading to further erosion of SAV, increased turbidity, and a
19 further reduction in light penetration needed for photosynthesis. In addition, some epiphytes, which
20 are plants that grow upon other plants, or in this case SAV, can bioaccumulate HAB toxins.
21 Bioaccumulation occurs when organisms sequester toxins, or other substances, at higher
22 concentrations than would occur in the surrounding environment. This makes the SAV toxic to
23 organisms and provides an avenue for the transfer of HAB toxins through the food web.

24 25 *Wetlands*

26
27 HABs occur in open water and do not directly affect wetlands; however, HABs can impact
28 wetlands indirectly by contributing to existing water quality problems. Decomposing organisms
29 killed by HABS, such as large fish kills, can wash into wetlands, and depending on the water quality
30 conditions, contribute to the development of hypoxic or anoxic areas. Many organisms use wetlands
31 as nurseries; impacts to wetland resources could have impacts on the food chain that not only affect
32 local wildlife but also migratory waterfowl.

33 34 *Protected Species, Wildlife, and Critical Habitat*

35
36 At least 60 species of HABs are known to be toxic to fish. HABs can be both acutely and
37 chronically toxic to plankton, macroinvertebrates, and vertebrates. Effects may include death,
38 lethargy, paralysis, cell and tissue damage, as well as reductions in movement, hatching, fecundity,
39 growth, recruitment, feeding, filtration, and protein synthesis (Landsberg, 2002). Due to the array of
40 organisms impacted by HABs and the variety of effects, HABs can impact whole food webs (Van
41 Dolah et al., 2001).

42
43 Some cyanobacteria produce highly neurotoxic anatoxin-a(s), which sickens and kills many
44 vertebrates, including ducks, geese, and mice (Carmichael, 2001). The dinoflagellate *Karenia brevis*
45 produces hemolytic and neurotoxic brevetoxin, which causes NSP and is responsible for the mortality
46 of fish, birds, and mammals (Wang, 2008). *Pfiesteria* spp., common in shallow, eutrophic estuaries,
47 injure and kill finfish, shellfish, mammals, and birds through both direct consumption of fish and
48 released toxins. In 1999, *Pseudo-nitzschia australis* killed at least 100 brown pelicans in Monterey
49 Bay, California, after the birds ate anchovies high in domoic acid produced by that diatom (Buck et
50 al., 1992).

51

1 In addition to being acutely toxic, many HABs produce toxins which bioaccumulate and
2 biomagnify. For example, freshwater mussels have been documented to bioaccumulate HAB toxins
3 within their tissues over 100 times greater than toxins in the surrounding water (Miller et al., 2010).
4 Biomagnification is what allows the toxins to impact organisms higher up the food chain. As lower
5 order organisms such as plants, shellfish, marine mammals, and fish bioaccumulate toxins, the higher
6 order organisms that feed upon them, such as marine mammals and birds, are ingesting toxins at
7 lethal concentrations. Research shows that HAB toxins are persistent in the environment, and
8 because of bioaccumulation and biomagnification, toxins are able to impact wildlife long after a HAB
9 has ended (Flewelling et al., 2005; Van Dolah et al., 2001). Some HABs also have the ability to
10 impact organisms directly through the production of foams, which reduce the waterproofing in
11 waterfowl plumage, resulting in hypothermia and mortality (Jessup et al., 2009). Other species of
12 HABs have morphological adaptations, such as barbed spines, which can cause wildlife mortality
13 when ingested or inhaled (Horner et al., 1997, Glibert and Pitcher, 2005). Specific examples of
14 species impacted by HABs can be found in Appendix C, Examples of Specific Wildlife Impacts.

15
16 Critical habitat is essential to the conservation of a particular threatened and endangered
17 species; alteration and/or loss of that habitat could pose significant consequences to the survival and
18 recovery of that species. Critical habitat has been identified for several species which have been
19 impacted by HABs, and is located in areas where HABs are known to occur. EFH has been identified
20 in areas where HABs are known to occur and for several species that have been impacted by HABs.
21 Depending on the type of EFH present, the impacts from HABs may include those discussed sections
22 4.2.2.1, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation; 4.2.2.5, Coral Reefs; and 4.2.2.6, Benthic Environment.
23 Under the No Action Alternative, advances in HAB science would be limited and slow to develop,
24 leaving EFH and other critical habitat at risk during future HABs.

25 26 *Invasive Species*

27
28 HABs may be transported to new areas via the transplanting or relocation of shellfish, and
29 through ballast water in ships. If ecological conditions are right, as with the spread of other invasive
30 species, the algae could grow and thrive in the new environment. Without effective means to control
31 a bloom, the No Action Alternative may continue to indirectly facilitate the spread of invasive HABs.

32 33 *Coral Reefs*

34
35 HABs can impact coral reefs through direct overgrowth on the reef and by preventing
36 sunlight from penetrating the water column. For example, blooms of the benthic cyanobacteria
37 (*Lyngba* spp.) can form mats that cover and eventually smother coral reefs and seagrass beds (Paul et
38 al., 2005). When stressed, corals expel the photosynthetic zooxanthellae that live within them, a
39 phenomenon known as coral bleaching. If conditions persist and the zooxanthellae do not return to
40 support the symbiotic relationship, the coral will starve, resulting in a reduction in the trophic
41 diversity of the reef community.

42 43 *Benthic Environment*

44
45 The benthic environment is affected by HABs in the same manner as discussed in section
46 4.2.2.3, Protected Species, Wildlife, and Critical Habitat. HABs also have direct effects on benthos,
47 such as causing shell closure and reduced feeding in bivalves. The impact the HAB would have on
48 the bivalve is dependent on both the type of bivalve and type of algae (Hegaret et al., 2007). Some
49 bivalves close their shells when exposed to particular HABs, while others remain open. HABs can
50 also cause a trophic mismatch between benthic filter feeders and the available food source, as each is
51 specially adapted to filter out a specific size range of particles. Typically, when a bloom occurs it is

1 the dominant, and sometimes the only, species present; this can result in a nutritionally inadequate
2 food source. If the algae are too large or too small, then a feeding mismatch can occur. Even if the
3 filter feeder is not killed directly by the bloom, it may experience effects of reduced fitness and stress
4 from reduced feeding rates or poor food quality.

5
6 Additionally, some HAB species can produce cysts that remain in the sediments of the
7 benthic environment and can even pass through the gut of shellfish. Under the proper environmental
8 conditions and resuspension of benthic sediments, the cysts in the sediment and those egested by the
9 shellfish (Hegaret et al., 2008) can germinate and populate the water column with viable algal cells.
10 Cysts can remain dormant for years and are easily transported into new areas when resuspended in the
11 water column.

12
13 As the bloom uses up the local supply of nutrients and dies, the organisms sink to the bottom.
14 There, they provide another pathway for marine toxins to enter the food chain. Bottom foragers, like
15 demersal fish and shellfish, ingest the toxins and are in turn eaten by organisms higher in the food
16 chain. As mentioned previously, the natural decomposition of the algal cells, as well as the
17 decomposition of organisms killed by HABs, use DO, potentially exacerbating existing water quality
18 problems and leaving benthic environment hypoxic or even anoxic. Mobile benthic organisms may
19 be able to relocate to more oxygen rich waters. However, the low levels of DO may be lethal for
20 some of these organisms. Under the No Action Alternative, HABs would continue to negatively
21 impact the benthic environment.

22 23 *Aquaculture*

24
25 Aquaculture, is a growing global industry. As the world's human population increases and
26 global wild stocks of fish and shellfish decline (Pauly et al., 2002; Naylor, 2000), farmed seafood
27 production has been steadily increasing (NMFS, 2013). Global production of farmed fish and
28 shellfish more than doubled between 1985-2000 (Naylor et al., 2000). While aquaculture can reduce
29 fishing pressure on wild stock, there are a number of HAB events that can cause significant impacts
30 within aquaculture settings (Deeds et al., 2002; Chang et al., 1990). Chang et al. (1990) provides an
31 example of the devastating impacts a HAB event can cause within an aquaculture setting. In 1989, a
32 bloom of the toxic red tide alga *Heterosigma* in a New Zealand salmon aquaculture farm resulted in
33 losses of approximately \$17 million (New Zealand dollars). In the Chesapeake Bay, the
34 dinoflagellate *Prorocentrum minimum* has been responsible for aquaculture shellfish kills (Tango et
35 al., 2005). In other situations, HABs of cyanobacteria have been known to cause off-putting flavors
36 and odors in farmed fish (Rodgers, 2008). Yet another concern of the impact of HABs on aquaculture
37 is the introduction of HABs into new environments through the movement of organisms from one
38 location to another (Hegaret et al., 2008).

39
40 The economic impact of HABs on aquaculture is discussed in section 4.1.17, Environmental
41 Justice and Socioeconomics. Under the No Action Alternative, blooms would continue to impact
42 aquaculture operations. These industries would be forced to rely heavily on preventative and
43 mitigation measures in order to reduce losses due to HABs.

44 45 *Fisheries*

46
47 A variety of fish and shellfish species are impacted by HABs. Fisheries feel these impacts
48 when fish are killed directly by HABs or their toxins, or when toxins accumulate in fish and shellfish,
49 causing harvesting bans. Mortality events have been documented for fishery species such as the
50 Pacific oyster, Eastern oyster, herring, Atlantic salmon, menhaden, gar, trout, whiting, cod, and
51 scallop (Van Dolah et al., 2000; Anderson, 2004; Anderson et al., 2008). Both farmed and wild

1 species are affected by uncontrolled HAB occurrences due a variety of HAB species and associated
2 toxins. An outbreak of the PSP causing species *Alexandrium fundyense* off the coast of New England
3 prompted the closure of 40,000 square kilometers of Federal shellfish grounds in 2005 resulting in
4 losses of over \$15 million in Massachusetts alone (Anderson et al., 2005).

5
6 Annual impacts to fisheries in U.S. dollars vary from \$13 to \$25 million with average annual
7 impacts of \$18 million (Hoagland et al., 2002). This figure is likely grossly underestimated because
8 not all states document the acreage closed or the value of the resource that was not harvested due to a
9 HAB-related closure. This estimation is further complicated by the transfer of shellfishing efforts
10 from closed areas to areas that remained open and by fishermen switching to the fishing of other
11 species from fisheries that were not closed. In addition, the estimates do not include the value of wild
12 fish kills or of lost opportunities for harvesting untapped shellfish resources (Anderson et al., 2000).
13 The ultimate causes of fish kills are often unclear as state officials cannot always indicate which
14 events were caused directly by HABs and which were due to other causes, such as low DO as a result
15 of several variables. Under the No Action Alternative, fisheries would continue to decline and
16 experience economic loss due to HAB occurrences.

17 **4.2.3 Cultural Environment and Tribal and Native Communities**

18
19
20 Many tribal and native communities have a strong relationship with coastal resources, both
21 from a subsistence and cultural perspective. HABs, particularly those causing human health issues,
22 can have significant impacts on native communities. For example, the Quinault Indian Nation have a
23 strong cultural relationship with razor clam, which are harvested from exposed tidal flats in the
24 Pacific Northwest. Razor clams in this region are highly susceptible to harbor domoic acid, which
25 causes amnesic shellfish poisoning (see section 4.2.8, Human Health), leading to closures of shellfish
26 beds and significant cultural and economic losses. Additionally, the Swinomish people, are not able
27 to rely on fish and shellfish at a subsistence level, as guaranteed by treaty, due to the concern over
28 toxins in the food supply, some of which are caused by HABs (Swinomish Indian Tribal Community,
29 2006). Under the No Action Alternative, these quantifiable economic losses would continue.

30 31 32 **4.2.4 Marine Protected Areas**

33
34 HABs have the potential to directly and indirectly affect MPAs by negatively impacting coral
35 reefs, spawning and nursery grounds, threatened species, and cultural resources. MPAs are specific
36 geographical areas which contain a wide array of habitat and as such, may be impacted by HABs
37 through the effects discussed in sections 4.2.2.1, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation; 4.2.1.1, Water
38 Quality; 4.2.2.2, Wetlands; 4.2.2.3, Protected Species, Wildlife, and Critical Habitat; 4.2.2.5, Coral
39 Reefs; and 4.2.2.6, Benthic Environment. Under the No Action Alternative, HABs would continue to
40 grade the value of these aquatic resources.

41 42 **4.2.5 Recreation**

43
44 Due to increased light, water temperatures, and water column stability, HABs are more
45 frequent in summer months when water-dependent recreational activities are at their peak. Human
46 exposure to HABs can cause a wide array of health problems, detailed in section 4.2.8, Human Health
47 and as such, recreational activities such as swimming, boating, or beach walking, may be restricted
48 during blooms. Many coastal areas have HAB response plans that would close beaches and other
49 waterways when HABs pose a threat to human health. In Florida, for example, recurrent red tides
50 have been estimated to cause over \$20 million in tourism-related losses every year (Anderson et al.,

1 2000). Under the No Action Alternative, HABs would continue to directly degrade the amenity value
2 of many of our Nation's coastal resources.

3 4 **4.2.6 Land Use**

5
6 The land use of a particular area can contribute to the development of HABs by warming
7 surface waters through point source effluent releases, through changes in hydrology, or by increasing
8 nutrient input to surrounding waters. HABs in turn can have an impact on land use, including
9 vacation destinations, commercial fishing areas, wildlife refuges, commercial shipping destinations,
10 military operations, aquaculture sites, and educational and research sites. HABs can result in the
11 closure of commercial fishing areas and restrictions on aquaculture sites. Fish and other organisms
12 killed by HABs can wash ashore during and after a bloom, reducing the amenity value of beaches and
13 other recreational areas, further resulting in socioeconomic impacts for the area, as discussed in
14 section 4.2.7, Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics. The location of commercial shipping
15 destinations and naval military operations may also be more prone to HABs, as ballast water is known
16 to spread blooms to new areas. As such, land use could potentially introduce HABs to an area where
17 they may not otherwise occur.

18
19 An emerging concern is the impact of HABs on desalinization plants, which can have two
20 effects: one, the presence of a large algal biomass can cause operational problems by fouling the
21 reverse osmosis membranes that filter and desalinate the water; and two, the type and concentration
22 of the toxin can determine how effective reverse osmosis membranes are at removing toxins. Due to
23 the uncertainty in the ability of the treatment process to remove some HAB toxins, large HAB events
24 have cause desalinization plants to shut down during blooms (Caron et al., 2010). The desalinization
25 and pretreatment process can also concentrate HAB toxins in the brine (byproduct of the
26 desalinization process). Without treatment of the brine, discharge back into the waterbody could
27 impact the surrounding environment. Analysis for the presence of HAB toxins is costly and methods
28 may not be available to test for all toxins. Under the No Action Alternative, advances in HAB
29 science would be limited and slow to develop, without development of these techniques HABs may
30 continue to impact surrounding land uses.

31 32 **4.2.7 Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics**

33
34 Socioeconomic impacts are those impacts on society due to an economic change. The
35 economic ramifications of HABs have been felt nationwide, primarily due to impacts on fisheries,
36 aquaculture, human health, and recreation/tourism. HABs cause shellfish fishery closures, wild and
37 farmed fish mortalities, and consumer avoidance of seafood. While adverse health effects and lost
38 sales of fishery products are direct costs, "constrained development or investment decisions in coastal
39 aquaculture due to the threat from outbreaks of toxic algae are examples of poorly understood or
40 poorly quantified indirect or hidden costs" (Anderson et al., 2000).

41
42 The 2008 Fisheries Economics of the U.S. report by NOAA (NMFS, 2010) indicates the
43 commercial seafood industry in Maryland and Virginia alone contributed \$2 billion in sales, \$1
44 billion in income, and more than 41,000 jobs to the local economy. Fishery-associated economic
45 losses in the Chesapeake Bay are primarily due to overharvesting and poor water quality in-part due
46 to HABs. In one year alone, *Pfiesteria* outbreaks in the Chesapeake Bay cost Maryland fisheries and
47 seafood markets \$43 million dollars (Lipton, 1998). It is estimated that the value of Virginia's
48 seafood harvest declined by 30% from 1994 to 2004 (CBF, 2012). With declines this severe,
49 watermen in the Chesapeake Bay have had to seek alternative sources of income, often breaking from
50 generations of tradition as a waterman.

51

1 The Chesapeake Bay region is not alone in its losses. The oyster, Dungeness crab, and razor
2 clam fisheries in Washington are cumulatively valued at \$72 million/year for local economies and are
3 important for commerce, recreation, and the culture of local tribes. In 2002-2003, high levels of
4 domoic acid in razor clams along the Pacific Coast resulted in a season long closure of the fishery to
5 protect human consumers from ASP (NOAA NCCOS, 2013). The threat of HAB toxins and
6 population declines due to overharvesting have impacted recreational razor clam harvesting on
7 Washington state beaches. Historically, this recreational fishery was open seven days a week for nine
8 months a year, but this fishery has been reduced to just 15-35 days per year due to a combination of
9 environmental impacts. Similar incidents have occurred around the country, resulting in revenue
10 losses not only for the fishery, but also for local economies due to reduced travel. Blooms of *Karenia*
11 *brevis* off the Florida coast are estimated to have an economic impact of at least \$15-\$25 million/year
12 (Steidinger et al., 1999). Similar blooms of *Karenia brevis* off the Texas coast have been estimated to
13 cause an economic impact of at least \$9.9 million in one county alone, due to commercial fishery
14 closures, lost tourism, and costs of cleanup (Evans and Jones, 2001).

15 16 **4.2.8 Human and Child Health**

17
18 There are several exposure pathways in which human health can be impacted by HAB toxins;
19 one of which is the inhalation of toxins aerosolized by wind and wave action. Aerosolized toxins can
20 cause acute respiratory problems, particularly for asthmatics. In 2001, a HAB off the coast of Tampa,
21 Florida caused a 54% increase in emergency room visits due to respiratory problems (Kirkpatrick et
22 al., 2006). Similarly, in Sarasota County, Florida, emergency room visits for respiratory illness
23 caused by blooms of *Karenia brevis* were estimated to cost \$500 thousand to \$4 million dollars per
24 year, depending on bloom severity (Hoagland et al., 2009).

25
26 The most well documented pathway for exposure to HAB toxins is through the consumption
27 of contaminated fish or shellfish. Consuming contaminated fish or shellfish can result in a variety of
28 illnesses, some of which are listed below.

- 29
- 30 • **Ciguatera fish poisoning**—Produces gastrointestinal, neurological, and cardiovascular
31 symptoms. Generally, gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, and
32 abdominal pain occur first, followed by neurological dysfunction including reversal of
33 temperature sensation, muscular aches, dizziness, anxiety, sweating, and a numbness and
34 tingling of the mouth and digits. Paralysis and death have been documented from CFP,
35 but symptoms are usually less severe although debilitating (Miller, 1991). CFP, the most
36 commonly reported HABs illness globally, affects an estimated 25,000 people per year
37 (Wang, 2008), and can be quite common in areas where people regularly consume reef
38 fish, like the Pacific Islands. CFP occurs commonly enough in the U.S. to have prompted
39 public health campaigns (Friedman et al., 2008).
 - 40 • **Diarrhetic shellfish poisoning**—Produces gastrointestinal symptoms, usually beginning
41 within 30 minutes to a few hours after consumption of contaminated shellfish (Woods
42 Hole Oceanographic Institute, 2012). DSP, which is not fatal, is characterized by
43 incapacitating diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and chills. Recovery
44 occurs within three days, with or without medical treatment.
 - 45 • **Neurotoxic shellfish poisoning**—Produces an intoxication syndrome nearly identical to
46 that of CFP in which gastrointestinal and neurological symptoms predominate. In
47 addition, formation of toxic aerosols by wave action can produce respiratory asthma-like
48 symptoms.

- 1 • **Amnesic shellfish poisoning** —Can be a life-threatening syndrome that is characterized
2 by both gastrointestinal and neurological disorders. Gastroenteritis usually develops
3 within 24 hours of the consumption of contaminated shellfish; symptoms include nausea,
4 vomiting, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea. In severe cases of ASP, neurological
5 symptoms also appear, usually within 48 hours of contaminated shellfish consumption.
6 These symptoms include dizziness, headache, seizures, disorientation, short-term
7 memory loss, respiratory difficulty, and coma.
- 8 • **Paralytic shellfish poisoning** —Is a life threatening syndrome. Symptoms are purely
9 neurological and their onset is rapid. The duration of effects generally lasts a few days in
10 non-lethal cases. Symptoms include tingling, numbness and burning of the perioral
11 region, ataxia, giddiness, drowsiness, fever, rash, and staggering. The most severe cases
12 result in respiratory arrest within 24 hours of consumption of the contaminated shellfish.
13 In 1927, PSP from *Alexandrium cantenella* made 102 people sick and killed six, and
14 episodes and toxins causing PSP have continued to be reported ever since (Wang, 2008).

15
16 HABs in freshwater reservoirs and other storage locations may provide exposure to toxins
17 when the waters are used recreationally for boating or skiing, etc. However, direct ingestion of the
18 toxin through contaminated drinking water is the primary pathway for exposure in these areas.
19 Conventional water treatment methods may only be partially successful at removing HAB toxins
20 from drinking water supplies. Developing research has illustrated additional pathways for exposure
21 through the consumption of contaminated crops and aerosolization of toxins through spray irrigation.
22 An agricultural operation using irrigation water from a freshwater source that is experiencing or has
23 experienced a HAB can transfer the toxins to the plant. Some crops are capable of taking up the
24 toxins directly, posing a human health risk (Peuthert et al., 2007).

25
26 Human illness from eating contaminated seafood results in lost wages and workdays. Costs
27 of medical treatment and investigation are also an important part of the economic impact caused by
28 such events. Cases of illness and death from contaminated shellfish are probably the most clearly
29 documented among the different types of HAB impacts, since these cases are recorded by public
30 health agencies in individual states as well as at the Federal level. In addition, children are likely more
31 susceptible to the impacts of HABs, given their relatively smaller body weight and high likelihood of
32 being exposed.

33
34 It is estimated that the average public health impact due to shellfish poisoning from HABs
35 was approximately \$22 million per year (Anderson and Hoagland, 2000). Effective state monitoring
36 keeps infected fish products off the market, thus lowering the potential effect to human health. These
37 figures represent approximately 45% of the total economic impacts from all causes. Under the No
38 Action Alternative, HABs would continue to impact human health.

39 40 **4.3 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES**

41
42 Implementation of the No Action Alternative would not bring the U.S. any closer to
43 controlling HABs. Natural resource managers and event responders would remain limited to
44 prevention measures for curtailing the spatial and temporal scales of HABs, and would have to rely
45 on mitigation measures to reduce the impacts from HABs. The No Action Alternative would
46 inherently result in continued adverse impacts to the environment.

47
48 Under the Proposed Action, the field demonstration of HAB control methods would advance
49 research in HAB science. Table 4-1 provides a comparison by listing the direct effects HABs have on
50 the environment, and what impact the Proposed Action would have on those effects. The effects

1 caused by the various control methods are discussed in detail throughout section 4.1, Environmental
 2 Consequences, The Proposed Action, and listed in Appendix A. Demonstration phase projects would
 3 advance scientific knowledge and bridge the gap between laboratory and field research. As such, the
 4 Proposed Action meets the program need and objective.

5
 6
 7 **Table 4-1.** Impact of the Proposed Action versus the No Action Alternative on the demonstration
 8 environment
 9

| Affected Environment | No Action Alternative | Proposed Action |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Submerged Aquatic Vegetation | Prevent photosynthesis; suffocate SAV; mortality; epiphyte/SAV toxicity. | The Proposed Action is excluded from use over or within 100 meters of SAV, as such there would be no change in effects from the No Action Alternative. |
| Water Quality | Increased turbidity; decrease in DO; increase pH; toxins. | Potential localized reduction in the turbidity caused by a HAB; decrease in the magnitude and extent of changes in DO and pH; potential to sequester and/or neutralize toxins. |
| Wetlands | No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects. | The Proposed Action is excluded from use on and within 100 meters of wetlands, as such there would be no change in effects from the No Action Alternative |
| Navigable Waters | Spread of HABs in ballast water. | Reduced potential for spread of HABs. |
| Wildlife | Bioaccumulation and biomagnification of HAB toxins; hypothermia; mortality. | Possible localized reduction in quantity of HAB toxins and potential neutralization of toxins; reduction in mortality for those planktonic organisms which are preyed upon by HABs. |
| Affected Environment | No Action Alternative | Proposed Action |
| Coral Reefs | Stressed coral leading to bleaching; mortality. | The Proposed Action is excluded from use over and within 100 meters of coral reefs, as such there would be no change in effects from the No Action Alternative. |
| Benthic Environment | Hypoxic/anoxic areas. | Potential for localized decrease in magnitude and extent of hypoxic/anoxic areas; decrease in toxin accumulation. |
| Aquaculture | Mitigate economic losses. | Decrease magnitude of impacts within the facility or surrounding area. |

| | | |
|--------------|--|---|
| Recreation | Areas closed to recreation; exposure to toxins. | Decrease in length of localized closures; potential neutralization of toxins and decreased risk of exposure. |
| Human Health | Illness and mortality from inhalation and ingestion of toxins. | Potential for minor reduction in the magnitude, extent and duration for potential exposure to toxins; potential neutralization of toxins. |

1

5.0 MITIGATION AND MONITORING REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of mitigation is to avoid, minimize, or eliminate negative impacts on affected resources, to some degree. Part 1508.20 of the CEQ Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA states that mitigation includes: “avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action; minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation; rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment; reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.”

5.1 GENERAL MITIGATION MEASURES

The particular control method to be applied would be chosen with the particular water body and environmental conditions at the project site in mind. Only the most appropriate method after taking all of these conditions into consideration would be chosen. All field demonstrations of physical and chemical control methods are required to obtain the appropriate Federal, state, and local permits and comply with the conditions listed therein. The conditions and standards set forth by those permits act as mitigation measures; and therefore, supersede the general mitigation measures described in Table 5-1. Additional project-specific mitigation measures may be imposed as a condition of the grant award.

Table 5-1. General mitigation measures.

| Potential Impacts | Mitigation Measure |
|------------------------------|--|
| Impacts to Protected Species | Apply all of the above measures, as applicable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Adhere to local Time of Year Restrictions. b) Use appropriate screening over the intake of water withdrawal devices to avoid organism entrainment. c) Divide the project area into sections for treatment to allow motile organisms a better chance to leave the treatment area and reduce the opportunity for hypoxia development. d) Use only the minimum amount of control necessary to achieve success. e) Use biodegradable chemicals when demonstrating a chemical control method. f) Use mitigation measures detailed in the SEIS-APM (2001), as applicable, to prevent impacts to aquatic resources from the use of copper. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Avoid the use of copper in waters where salmon and trout are present. Even at recommended dosage concentrations, copper is toxic to all live stages of these fish. o Avoiding the use of copper in waters with a low calcium carbonate content and low pH. Each of these variables increases the toxicity of copper. g) NOAA developed Sediment Quality Guidelines through its National Status and Trends Program. To mitigate the toxic effects of copper, all projects using this control method must test for background levels of copper in the sediments to ensure that the project does not exceed the established ERL value. |

| Potential Impacts | Mitigation Measure |
|------------------------------------|--|
| | <p>This value represents a concentration, below which effects are rarely observed.</p> <p>i) When using whole macroalgae, only use native or naturalized species.</p> <p>j) Apply any other such measure that would preclude impacts.</p> |
| Impacts to Water Quality | <p>Apply all of the above measures, as applicable, and:</p> <p>a) Use turbidity curtains where necessary to limit the spread of turbid water beyond the project area.</p> <p>b) Practice velocity reduction techniques when depositing dredge spoils in order to precipitate solids and constrain turbidity.</p> <p>c) Develop disposal plans for dredged spoils, harvested cells, and HAB toxins.</p> <p>d) In near-shore tidal environments, only use flocculation on ebb tides to limit the effects on increased turbidity on more sensitive near shore environments.</p> <p>e) Do not perform sediment disturbing activities in or within 100 meters of areas known to contain contaminated sediments.</p> <p>f) Use biosurfactants that biodegrade into non-toxic byproducts.</p> <p>g) Apply any other such measure that would preclude impacts.</p> |
| Impacts to Human Health | <p>Apply all of the above measures, as applicable, and:</p> <p>a) Characterize contaminated soils and develop a mitigation plan for their use, isolation, treatment or disposal.</p> <p>b) Temporarily restrict access to the project area.</p> <p>c) Use deflectors to avoid overspray of chemical controls.</p> <p>d) Apply any other such measure that would preclude impacts.</p> |
| Impacts to the Benthic Environment | <p>Apply all of the above measures, as applicable, and:</p> <p>a) Maintain a shallow angle for the slope of the walls in sediment removal areas to assist in benthos recolonization.</p> <p>b) Use sediments of similar grain size and composition. All sediments used in HAB control methods should be free of toxins and foreign material.</p> <p>c) Apply any other such measure that would preclude impacts.</p> |
| Impacts to Aquaculture | <p>Apply all of the above measures, as applicable, and:</p> <p>a) Obtain approval from pertinent stakeholders and regulatory agencies.</p> <p>b) Apply any other such measure that would preclude impacts.</p> |

1

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As a means of mitigation, projects occurring in or within 100 meters to several resource areas are excluded from field demonstration of PCM HAB methods. All projects will be required to supply information (e.g., resource location maps and/or other supporting information) that proposed demonstration locations are not within or 100 meters to these excluded resource areas. Resource areas excluded are:

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- Coral Reefs;

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- Cultural and Historic Resources;

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- Wetlands, and;

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- SAV beds.

Marine Protected Areas and Designated Critical Habitat Areas are generally excluded, absent specific approvals and required permits from appropriate Federal, state, and local authorities. All projects will still be required to supply information, such as resource location maps and/or other supporting information. In addition

5.2 MONITORING REQUIREMENTS

- All projects must analyze zooplankton and phytoplankton abundance and density pre- and post-treatment, as well as record details on the spatial extent of the bloom, cell density, and toxin concentration.
- All projects must record water quality and hydrology parameters pre- and post-treatment. Parameters include, but are not limited to temperature, pH, turbidity, DO, total nitrogen, total phosphorus, calcium carbonate, conductivity, current direction and speed, and flow regime.
- All projects must determine the abundance and composition of the benthic community pre- and post-treatment.
- All projects using chemical control methods must test after treatment to ensure desired chemical levels were achieved.
- Those projects which require project-specific mitigation would require monitoring to ensure mitigation is successful.
- Projects demonstrating sediment resuspension in areas of unknown sediment contamination are required to do an initial screening for legacy industrial compounds, metals, and pesticides in consultation with state or local regulatory agencies. These compounds include, but are not limited to, DDT, lindane, PCBs, PAHs, mercury, and lead.

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APPENDIX A—SUMMARY OF THE EFFECTS FROM THE PROPOSED ACTION

PHYSICAL CONTROL METHODS

| | Flocculation | Sediment Burial, Resuspension, and Removal | Cell Harvesting | Water Column Mixing |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Submerged Aquatic Vegetation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedimentation preventing photosynthesis • HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia, anoxia, and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality • Temporary turbidity increase inhibiting photosynthesis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uproot and/or burial • Turbidity inhibiting photosynthesis • Temporary turbidity increase inhibiting photosynthesis | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benthic withdrawal- increased turbidity and change in localized water circulation patterns |
| Water Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary turbidity increase • Nutrient increase/decrease from flocculants and decomposing HAB cells • HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia, anoxia, and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary turbidity increase • Decrease nutrient concentration/transformation at sediment-water interface • Release of contaminants/heavy metals/toxins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alter nutrient concentrations by changing phytoplankton community make up temporarily | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical Mixing—isothermal conditions with uniform salinity, nutrients, and dissolved oxygen • Activities with benthic withdrawal activities increase turbidity • Horizontal Mixing—increased DO in surface waters |
| Wetlands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect through water quality effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect through water quality effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect through water quality effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect through water quality effects |
| Wildlife | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced clearance rates and reduced shell and tissue growth in bivalves • Coughing in fish • Decreased feeding activity of visual foragers • Entrainment of non-target plankton • Indirect through water quality effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction of fish to treatment area due to suspended macroinvertebrates • Capture and burial of non-target species resulting in mortality • Loss of prey species and decrease in benthic diversity • Indirect through water quality effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrain non-target species resulting in mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical Mixing—isothermal conditions resulting in discontinuity in thermal refuge • Vertical Mixing—buoyancy disruption of non-target phytoplankton |
| Coral Reefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedimentation/turbidity preventing photosynthesis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedimentation/turbidity preventing photosynthesis • Abrasion of coral • Removal or burial of coral | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of zooxanthellae • Removal or damage to coral • Removal of food source | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities with benthic withdrawal activities increase turbidity and change in localized water circulation patterns |
| Benthic Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia, anoxia, and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality • Bioavailability of sequestered toxins, trophic transport • Indirect through water quality effects • Accumulation of flocked HABs • Burial of sessile organisms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resuspension of interred cysts which are more toxic; initiate bloom • Burial of sessile organisms | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities with benthic withdrawal activities increase turbidity and change in localized water circulation patterns |
| Aquaculture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as discussed in SAV, wildlife, and benthic environment • Indirectly through water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resuspension of nutrients, antifouling paint/trace metals, biosolids, and biocides • Same as discussed in SAV, wildlife, and benthic environment • Indirectly through water quality • Temporary turbidity increase | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of beneficial phytoplankton/ food source species • Increased turbidity and potential for sedimentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities with benthic withdrawal activities have same effect as burial and resuspension |
| Recreation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement of equipment within waterbody | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement of equipment within waterbody | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement of equipment within waterbody | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement of equipment within waterbody |
| Human Health | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible resuspension of contaminants into the water column | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benthic withdrawal- resuspension of trace metals and biocides below aquaculture- health effects |

CHEMICAL CONTROL METHODS

| | Macroalgal Isolates & Whole Macroalgae | Barley Straw | Copper | Hydrogen Peroxide | Biosurfactants | Isolated Algicidal Compounds | Silica | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Submerged Aquatic Vegetation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia, anoxia, and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia, anoxia, and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bioaccumulation in plant and roots HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia, anoxia, and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia, anoxia, and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia, anoxia, and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia, anoxia, and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia, anoxia, and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality | |
| Water Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cell lysis- release toxins Increase in nutrients from decomposing or lysed HAB cells HAB cell decay leading to localized/short-term hypoxia/anoxia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased turbidity from soluble organic compounds Cell lysis- release toxins Increase in nutrients from decomposing or lysed HAB cells HAB cell decay leading to localized/short-term hypoxia/anoxia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water soluble heavy metal/toxin Cell lysis- release toxins Increase in nutrients from decomposing or lysed HAB cells HAB cell decay leading to localized/short-term hypoxia/anoxia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cell lysis- release toxins Increase in nutrients from decomposing or lysed HAB cells HAB cell decay leading to localized/short-term hypoxia/anoxia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cell lysis- release toxins Increase in nutrients from decomposing or lysed HAB cells HAB cell decay leading to localized/short-term hypoxia/anoxia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cell lysis- release toxins Increase in nutrients from decomposing or lysed HAB cells HAB cell decay leading to localized/short-term hypoxia/anoxia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indiscriminate growth of existing diatom community Cell lysis- release toxins Increase in nutrients from decomposing or lysed HAB cells HAB cell decay leading to localized/short-term hypoxia/anoxia | |
| Wetlands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indirectly through water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indirectly through water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indirectly through water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indirectly through water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indirectly through water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indirectly through water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indirectly through water quality | |
| Navigable Waters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement of equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement of equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport from treatment area Placement of equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement of equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement of equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement of equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement of equipment | |
| Wildlife | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kill non-target phytoplankton Release of toxins cause mortality HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia resulting in mortality Attract zooplankton, fish and other wildlife as food source and refuge Inhibit growth of non-target phytoplankton | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bales provide habitat for aquatic invertebrates which attract fish and waterfowl Waterfowl may roost on straw masses Release of toxins cause mortality HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia resulting in mortality Kill non-target phytoplankton | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toxic to non-target organisms- disruption in hormone activity, reduction in growth rate, respiratory distress Release of toxins cause mortality HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia resulting in mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Release of toxins cause mortality HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia resulting in mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Release of toxins cause mortality HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia resulting in mortality | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indiscriminate growth of existing diatom community |
| Coral Reefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inhibit zooxanthellae | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inhibit zooxanthellae | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inhibit zooxanthellae | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interferes with retake of zooxanthellae | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interferes with retake of zooxanthellae | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interferes with retake of zooxanthellae | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interferes with retake of zooxanthellae | |

| | Macroalgal Isolates & Whole Macroalgae | Barley Straw | Copper | Hydrogen Peroxide | Biosurfactants | Isolated Algicidal Compounds | Silica |
|----------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| Benthic Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality to benthos Accumulation of toxic HAB cells increased toxins in benthic environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality to benthos Accumulation of toxic HAB cells increased toxins in benthic environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality to benthos Accumulation of toxic HAB cells increased toxins in benthic environment Aquatic sediments a sink for copper | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality to benthos Accumulation of toxic HAB cells increased toxins in benthic environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality to benthos Accumulation of toxic HAB cells increased toxins in benthic environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality to benthos Accumulation of toxic HAB cells increased toxins in benthic environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB cell decay leading to hypoxia/anoxia and hydrogen sulfide toxicity resulting in mortality to benthos Accumulation of toxic HAB cells increased toxins in benthic environment |
| Aquaculture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as discussed in wildlife, benthic environment, and water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as discussed in wildlife, benthic environment, and water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toxic and bioaccumulates Same as discussed in wildlife, benthic environment, and water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as discussed in wildlife, benthic environment, and water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as discussed in wildlife, benthic environment, and water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacteria contaminates fish and shellfish harvests Same as discussed in wildlife, benthic environment, and water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as discussed in wildlife, benthic environment, and water quality |
| Recreation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation temporarily restricted from treatment area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation temporarily restricted from treatment area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation temporarily restricted from treatment area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation temporarily restricted from treatment area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May cause foaming in high energy environments Recreation temporarily restricted from treatment area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation temporarily restricted from treatment area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation temporarily restricted from treatment area |
| Human Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lysed cells release toxins causing respiratory distress and poisoning syndromes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lysed cells release toxins causing respiratory distress and poisoning syndromes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lysed cells release toxins causing respiratory distress and poisoning syndromes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lysed cells release toxins causing respiratory distress and poisoning syndromes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lysed cells release toxins causing respiratory distress and poisoning syndromes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lysed cells release toxins causing respiratory distress and poisoning syndromes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lysed cells release toxins causing respiratory distress and poisoning syndromes |

APPENDIX B—LIST OF RECIPIENTS

(To be completed following public comment period)

APPENDIX C—SPECIFIC HAB SPECIES AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION

Some of the specific types of the more common HABs and their locations are summarized below.

- ***Pseudo-nitzschia* species (spp.)**—Several species of the diatom genus *Pseudo-nitzschia* produce domoic acid, which is known to cause amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP) in humans when contaminated shellfish is consumed. Species of this genus can be found worldwide, with toxic species having been documented on the northeast coast of Canada, off the coast of North Carolina, in the Gulf of Mexico, and on the Pacific west coast from Alaska to Mexico (Lewitus et al., 2012).
- ***Gambierdiscus toxicus***—This species (Figure 1-1) produces ciguatera toxin and maitotoxin, which are known to cause ciguatera fish poisoning (CFP) in humans through the consumption of contaminated fish. This dinoflagellate is known to occur in tropical and subtropical regions around the world, including the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean (Bagnis et al., 1980).
- ***Dinophysis* spp.**—These dinoflagellates produce okadaic acid, which is believed to cause diarrhetic shellfish poisoning (DSP) in humans through the consumption of contaminated shellfish. These organisms are found worldwide, including the northeast coast of the U.S., the Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific coast from British Columbia to Mexico (Lewitus et al., 2012; Landsberg, 2002).
- ***Alexandrium* spp.**—Some species of the dinoflagellate genus *Alexandrium* produce toxins, including saxitoxin. Saxitoxin is known to cause paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) in humans through the consumption of contaminated shellfish. Species of this genus can be found worldwide, with toxic species having been documented on the northeast and west coasts of the U.S. and in the Canadian Maritime Provinces (Moore et al., 2011).
- ***Karenia brevis***—This species of dinoflagellate produces brevetoxins that cause neurotoxic shellfish poisoning (NSP) through the consumption of contaminated shellfish. *Karenia brevis* is also known for blooming in such high densities as to discolor the water and form what are known as red tides. In addition to the ability to cause NSP, brevetoxins can aerosolize from wind and wave action, resulting in respiratory irritation. *Karenia brevis* is known to occur in the Gulf of Mexico and along the southeast coast of the U.S., as far north as North Carolina. (Landsberg, 2002; Erdner et al., 2008; Hoagland et al., 2009).
- ***Cyanobacteria***—The major HAB forming species of cyanobacteria is *Microcystis*, which produces the toxin microcystin. Cyanobacteria are known to produce a variety of other toxins that cause illnesses in both humans and wildlife. Health effects caused in humans include rashes, as well as more serious gastrointestinal and neurological symptoms. Cyanobacteria are also known for extreme bloom sizes and densities which cause various ecological problems. Blooms of cyanobacteria occur in freshwater and low salinity brackish environments, including the Great Lakes and numerous estuaries (Carey et al., 2012; Reardon, 1989; Landsberg, 2002; Erdner et al., 2008; Lopez et al., 2008; Jewett et al., 2008; Pelaez et al., 2010; Paerl et al., 2011; O’Neil et al., 2012).
- ***Brown tide***—Brown tides are caused by blooms of algae that color the water brown. Brown tides have occurred in relatively enclosed waters of southern New England, particularly Long Island, New York, and in Texas. *Aureococcus anophagefferens* is responsible for brown tides in southern New England and a similar species, *Aureoumbra lagunensis*, blooms in Texas bays and lagoons (Anderson et al., 2008; Bricker et al., 2008).

APPENDIX D—EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC WILDLIFE IMPACTS

A variety of species protected under the ESA, MMPA and MBTA would be directly and indirectly impacted by HABs under the No Action Alternative. The general impacts of HABs discussed in sections 4.2.2, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation; 4.2.1, Water Quality; 4.2.2, Wetlands; 4.2.2, Coral Reefs; and 4.2.2, Benthic Environment can result in degraded water quality and habitat for many protected species. Listed below are a few of the well-documented effects HABs have on protected and ESA species. The species protected under the ESA, MMPA and MBTA need protection for a variety of reasons, including reduced populations, destruction of habitat and accidental bycatch in fishing operations. Combined with threats of overharvesting and habitat degradation from other sources, the No Action Alternative would continue to impact protected species.

- **Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)**—Over a five-week period in 1987, 19 endangered humpback whales washed onshore in Cape Cod Bay, Massachusetts (Figure 4-1). Upon examination, it was determined that the whales were healthy immediately prior to their deaths but had consumed mackerel contaminated with saxitoxin, a PSP toxicant from red tides, resulting in mortality (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, 2007).



Figure C-1. A humpback whale killed from consuming mackerel contaminated by saxitoxin (photo credit, G. Early from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, 2007).

- **North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*)**—Research indicates PSP toxin, saxitoxin, is a contributing factor preventing the recovery of the endangered North Atlantic right whale. The whale has been protected for over 60 years; however, the species is not recovering and has experienced a significant decline in reproductive success over the last 20 plus years. Numerous whales, as well as the co-occurring zooplankton assemblage, have tested positive for PSP toxins (Doucette et al., 2006).
- **West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*)**—In 1996, 149 West Indian manatees were killed in Florida during a bloom of *Karenia brevis* (formerly *Gymnodinium breve*). It is believed that mortality resulted from three potential routes for toxin exposure, including inhalation of aerosolized toxins, ingestion of contaminated SAV, and ingestion of

contaminated seawater (Bossart et al., 1998; Trainer and Baden, 1999; Landsberg and Steidinger, 1998). Figure 4-2 shows a dead manatee from a similar event in 2006. From January – April 2013, 267 manatees have been killed by or suspected to be killed by a bloom of *Karenia brevis*, which has persisted in the waters of southwest Florida since September 2012 (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 2013).

- **Shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*)**—In 2009, 13 individuals associated with a severe bloom of *Alexandrium* spp. and high saxitoxin levels were found dead in Maine. Evidence of saxitoxin exposure was found in liver and gill tissue as well as in stomach contents. Consumed clams high in saxitoxin suggested that sturgeon exposure occurred through dietary trophic transfer (Fire et al., 2012).



Figure C-2. Scientist Andy Garrett views a manatee dead from algal toxins. Photograph by Rick Loomis (Weiss, 2006).

- **Southern sea otter (*Enhydra lutris nereis*)**—Research shows that freshwater blooms of cyanobacteria are impacting marine species at the land/sea interface. In 2007, 11 Southern sea otters were discovered dead or dying in the Monterey National Marine Sanctuary in California. The otters were suffering from liver failure as a result of the hepatotoxin microcystin, produced from cyanobacteria. Research confirmed the presence of microcystin in local lakes and rivers which tributary to Monterey Bay, as well as in the coastal marine environment. A large portion of the sea otter diet is marine invertebrates such as clams and mussels. These filter feeders are known to bioaccumulate microcystin and are likely the cause of the sea otter mortality (Weiss, 2010).
- **California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*)**—A bloom of *Pseudo-nitzschia australis* along the California coast in 1998 is believed to have caused the death of 400 California sea lions, as well as many other birds and marine mammals. During the bloom, high concentrations of domoic acid were found in anchovies and sardines, a principal food source for sea lions (Scholin et al., 2000).
- **Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)**—In the spring of 2004, 107 bottlenose dolphins washed up on the shores of Florida beaches. Though there was not a HAB in the area at that time, upon examination it was found that the dolphins had consumed menhaden, a filter

feeding fish, contaminated with brevetoxin. This finding indicates how the effects of HABs can be delayed and last beyond the actual bloom (Flewelling et al., 2005).



Figure C-3. Bottlenose dolphins killed by brevetoxins in a red tide event in Florida (Photo from WHOI, 2004).

- **Seabirds**—In 2007, a widespread seabird mortality event occurred concurrently with a red tide of *Akashwio sanguinea*, in Monterey Bay, California. In total, 550 birds were stranded or killed during the bloom, including 14 different species of migratory seabirds, such as northern fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*), scoters (*Melanitta* spp.), and western grebes (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). Among other symptoms, the birds were covered in a slimy yellow-green foam which reduced waterproofing on their feathers, resulting in hypothermia. It was determined that the foam was derived from organic matter of the red tide and contained surfactant-like proteins. A similar event occurred in 1997, although the relationship was unknown at the time (Jessup et al., 2009)

APPENDIX E—GLOSSARY

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Algicidal | Resulting in algal mortality. |
| Algistatic | Inhibiting the growth of algae. |
| Allelochemical | Naturally occurring polyunsaturated fatty acids, phlorotannins, or secondary metabolites (not required for growth or reproduction of the species) produced by an organism that influence the growth, survival, and/or reproduction of another organism. Allelochemicals occur in terrestrial and marine plants and can have both beneficial and harmful effects on other organisms. |
| Anadromous Fish | Those fish species that migrate from the ocean, upriver to spawn. |
| Anoxia | Having no dissolved oxygen. |
| Benthic | Located at the bottom, sediment surface, or sub-surface at the bottom of a waterbody. |
| Bioaccumulation | When organisms sequester toxins or other substances within their tissues at higher concentrations than occur in the surrounding environment. |
| Biochemical Oxygen Demand | The amount of dissolved oxygen needed for the microbial decomposition of organic material. |
| Biodegrade | Decomposed or broken down by the action of living things. |
| Biomagnification | The magnification of toxins through a food web as lower order organisms are consumed by higher order organisms. Lower order organisms, such as plants, shellfish, and fish, bioaccumulate toxins within their tissues. The higher order organisms that feed upon them ingest accumulated toxins from multiple sources. |
| Biosurfactant | Surfactants produced from living things such as bacteria and yeast. Surfactants aid in the emulsification and breakdown of hydrocarbons by lowering the surface tension of a liquid. |
| Chelation/ Chelated | The formation of a bond between an organic compound (chelator) and a heavy metal. This bond inactivates the metal so it is not free to react with other elements or ions. Chelated copper allows the copper ion to remain in an available form in the water column for a longer period of time to achieve algal control. |
| Demersal | Living and/or feeding at the deepest part of a waterbody. |
| Demonstration | The minimum level of field application of a control method anticipated to produce a quantifiable reduction in the magnitude (i.e., intensity, duration, size) or toxicity of a HAB. |

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Dissolved Oxygen | The oxygen dissolved into a liquid. |
| Epilimnion | The upper most layer in a thermally stratified waterbody. A lack of mixing within a waterbody can result in thermal stratification, with the epilimnion being warmer and typically experiencing higher levels of dissolved oxygen and fewer nutrients than the deeper hypolimnion. |
| Flocculation | Flocculation is the process of removing suspended particles from a liquid using a flocculant, such as a chemical or other substance. Through repeated collisions and adhesion between the suspended particles and the flocculant, large, rapidly-sinking aggregates (or flocs) are formed and settle out of the water column. |
| Harmful Algal Bloom | A term used by the scientific community to describe a diverse array of both microscopic and macroscopic algae which produce toxic effects on humans and other organisms, physical impairment of fish and shellfish, nuisance conditions from odors and discoloration of water, or overwhelming effects on ecosystems such as severe oxygen depletion or overgrowth. |
| Humic | A general term referring to the organic matter which results from the decay of plant material. |
| Hypolimnion | The bottom layer in a thermally stratified waterbody. A lack of mixing within a waterbody can result in thermal stratification, with the hypolimnion being devoid of oxygen, cooler, and with more nutrients than the epilimnion. |
| Hypoxia | Dangerously low level of dissolved oxygen. |
| In situ | In place; to examine something where it occurs. |
| Isothermal | Equal, constant, or uniform temperature. |
| Lignin | An organic polymer present in the cell wall of plants. |
| Lysis/ Lyse | The rupture, destruction, or decomposition of a cell or other substance by a specific action. |
| Mariculture | Aquaculture in the marine environment. |
| Mesocosm | Experimental water enclosures in which environmental factors can be realistically manipulated. Mesocosms are designed to provide a limited body of water with near natural conditions. |
| Photic Zone | The depth of water that is exposed to sufficient sunlight for photosynthesis to occur. |
| Phytoplankton | Phytoplankton are autotrophic plankton, meaning they are capable of using energy from light or inorganic chemical reactions to produce their own food. |

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| Planktonic/ Plankton | Small or microscopic organisms that float in the water and are subject to movement or drift by wind and water currents. Some organisms spend their entire lives as plankton, while others, such as oysters, only experience a single life stage in planktonic form. |
| Stratification | A vertical layering of a waterbody where the layers do not mix and over time develop different properties from one another. Stratification can be caused by differences in salinity or temperature. The longer the layers remain stratified, the differences between them become greater, making mixing of the layers more difficult. |
| Submerged Aquatic Vegetation | Sometimes called seagrass, these are aquatic plants that grow in clear, shallow, sub-tidal regions of bays, rivers, and coastal lagoons. These are typically vascular, rooted plants that can grow to the water's surface. Algae and floating plants are generally not considered to be submerged aquatic vegetation. |
| Thermotaxis | A behavior in which an organisms moves based upon a temperature gradient. |
| Turbidity | A measure of the loss in transparency of water due to suspended particles. Sediment and particulate matter increases the turbidity of water, decreasing the amount of light penetrating through the water column. |
| Zooplankton | Plankton that cannot produce their own food, as phytoplankton can. |