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Comment:


I believe it is important for the One Health Harmful Algal Bloom System (OHHABS) to be put in place to keep citizens and the government informed about the effects of harmful algal blooms and what they can do to prevent unnecessary health issues. The reason that this system is important is the severity of the health impacts HABs can have on humans and animals. A 2015 study found that Symptoms associated with HAB exposure can include skin reactions, eye irritation, ear irritation, liver damage, and gastrointestinal, respiratory, and neurologic signs and symptoms (Figgatt). This same study put a similar system to One Health in place in 16 New York State counties to see the possible benefit of a more collaborative method of data collection. Prior to the 2015 study, there had never been more than 10 HAB-related illnesses reported across the entire state of New York in a single year. With the collaborative data collection and reporting system put in place, from June-September 2015, 51 HAB-associated illnesses were reported, including 35 that met the CDC case definitions (Figgatt). This would suggest that HAB-related illnesses are far more common than the current system allows us to see. The CDC case definition requires exposure to water, algae, or seafood and a non-public health assessment to determine if an HAB is the likely cause. On top of this, a collaborative system could also be used to detect and confirm algal blooms significantly earlier than is currently possible. According to a 2008 study on HABs, Recently developed tools and techniques are already improving the detection of some HABs, and emerging technologies are rapidly advancing toward operational status for the prediction of HABs and their toxins (Heisler). As of today, it can take several days to confirm an HAB, and countless people and animals could be exposed in the time from testing to confirmation and closure of the impacted area. But using comments from the public, this time can be cut down significantly. The 2015 study discussed the public comment-oriented method of HAB detection, A program within NYSDEC evaluates bodies of water for HABs in response to reports of possible HABs from the public, various park staffs, and lake associations. NYSDEC notified NYSDOH (New York State Department of Health) of any possible or laboratory-confirmed HABs within 24 hours so that a response (e.g., closing the beach) could be implemented promptly (Figgatt). As opposed to scheduled water testing, any signs of an algal bloom can be reported to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation so that the proper response can be implemented within 24 hours. Overall, due to the severity and time-sensitive nature of HABs, the OHHAB system should be put in place to expedite the process of identifying HABs as well as to better assess the effects post-bloom. Works Cited: Figgatt, M., Hyde, J., Dziewulski, D., Wiegert, E., Kishbaugh, S., Zelin, G., & Wilson, L. (2017). Harmful Algal Bloom-Associated Illnesses in Humans and Dogs Identified Through a Pilot Surveillance System - New York, 2015. MMWR. Morbidity and mortality weekly report, 66(43), 1182-1184. doi:10.15585/mmwr.mm6643a5 Heisler, J., Glibert, P., Burkholder, J., Anderson, D., Cochlan, W., Dennison, W., Gobler, C., Dortch, Q., Heil, C., Humphries, E., Lewitus, A., Magnien, R., Marshall, H., Sellner, K., Stockwell, D., Stoecker, D., Suddleson, M. (2008). Eutrophication and Harmful Algal Blooms: A Scientific Consensus. Harmful algae, 8(1), 3-13. *🌐

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