

OPENING STATEMENT

**Ranking Member Brad Miller
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment**

**Legislative Hearing on
Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control
Amendments Reauthorization Act
June 1, 2011**

Thank you Chairman Harris. I want to also welcome the witnesses to today's hearing. Harmful algal blooms (HAB) and their hypoxic effects may not be something that most of us think about every day, but it is an important issue that affects many of our districts.

For the past two years this Subcommittee and Committee has discussed the effect of harmful algal blooms and the resulting hypoxia on our coastlines and in freshwater. HABs pose a serious threat because of toxins they can produce and because they reduce oxygen and sunlight in the water. These threats alter the ocean's food web, affect human health, and create economic losses for communities and commercial fisheries.

In addition to hearing about the effects of Harmful Algal Blooms, we will also discuss the draft legislation for the reauthorization of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act.

Because of the 1998 Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act and the 2004 reauthorization, we have made

significant advances in our research findings and have taken important steps to solve some of the problems created by harmful algae blooms. However, numerous reports and assessments, required by this law, have revealed an increase in the number, frequency, and type of hypoxic events and blooms in recent years. We need to continue this valuable research and implement strategic national and regional plans.

In 2010 Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act authorization expired. We passed a reauthorization in the House last year but the Senate did not act on it. It appears that there remains some interest in ensuring that HAB research continues with the draft legislation we are discussing today.

I am a little disappointed, however, that we are holding a legislative hearing on this new draft HABs reauthorization without the witnesses having sufficient time to review and comment on the draft. I understand that the witnesses did not receive the discussion draft until last Tuesday night. Therefore, the two agency witnesses' written testimonies do not include official comments on the bill.

Witness testimony was invaluable in developing the 2010 version of this bill. I understand that your draft is almost the same as the previous version, but contains a number of word changes, and in its current form does not include the freshwater HABs and authorization levels sections. While I understand you intend to add these sections later in the process, it would be very helpful if our expert witnesses

could review them and provide comments so that we can create the best bill possible. These excluded sections could affect the results and success this program has seen in the past. While there will be opportunity for technical comments later from these folks, a primary purpose of legislative hearings like this one is to discuss technical questions. I hope as we move forward with this bill that we can work together better and with more consideration for everyone's time. Reducing HABs can and should be a bipartisan effort, as it has been in the past; and I hope that will be the case this time around.

We must continue to invest in a way that will move this research forward and advance our understanding of these blooms and the hypoxic events they cause. We need to monitor, mitigate, and control these occurrences better and to prevent them, if possible.

We have a distinguished panel of witnesses here today, and considering the circumstances, I hope they will offer us their best testimony possible on how we can move forward together in responding to this problem.

Again, I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today. And, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the balance of my time.