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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
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Southwest Florida Shelf

To Whom it May Concern:

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the Florida Commercial Watermen's Conservation plan to establish a fishermen monitoring program on the Southwest Florida shelf. Fishermen have a vested interest in ensuring the health of this region and making their communities more resilient to future Harmful Algal Blooms, while scientists need sustained 4-dimensional monitoring of the water column on the west Florida shelf to better understand red tides and other algal blooms. Moreover, commercial fishermen frequently transect the west Florida shelf while in transit to their fishing grounds. By providing fishermen with robust scientific instruments and an easy method to download and transmit the data to scientists, we can accomplish the objectives of both fishermen and scientists while simultaneously providing a number of other benefits to both communities. The goal of the sample design will be to quantify the environmental and oceanographic conditions before, during, and after red tide blooms to better understand their dynamics and provide timely decision-support to increase the resilience of fishermen and fishing communities on the west coast of Florida to red tide events.

AOML is committed to: 1) provide advice and guidance on the instruments to purchase, location of stations, and sampling frequency, 2) working with the fishermen to establish sampling protocols, including Standard Operating Procedures, 3) establishing a centralized database and interface for fishermen to upload data, 4) QA/QC of all data and making the database publicly available, 5) analyzing nutrient and chlorophyll *a* samples that will be collected by the fishermen, 6) modifying our ongoing research cruise to sample the area surrounding Charlotte Harbor every other month, 7) ecological analysis of the data, and 8) communicating back to project participants when events of interest are observed and conveying their likely impact to potentially affected communities.

We hope and believe that this program will transform how marine science is conducted in a way that is mutually beneficial to scientist, fishermen, and coastal communities.

Sincerely,

Christopher Kelble