



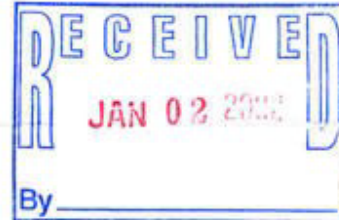
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GEORGE D. LAPOINTE
COMMISSIONER

December 27, 2001

Dr. David W. Townsend
Professor of Oceanography, and
Director, School of Marine Sciences
5741 Libby Hall
University of Maine
Orono, ME 04469



Dear David,

I am writing in support of your proposal for further development of predictive models for the toxic *Alexandrium* blooms in the Gulf of Maine that are responsible for paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP). As you are well aware, the protection of public health from toxic algal blooms is the responsibility of the Maine Department of Marine Resources. John Hurst and others on my staff have partnered with you and others on the ECOHAB Gulf of Maine program over the past several years during which you have developed coupled physical biological models for toxic blooms. I see a tremendous need to take this project to the next step to make the models useful to managers within the region. We have recently completed a web-based project to make real-time shellfish closure information available on an Internet Map Server, along with sample information for PSP and phytoplankton monitoring. I see the development of a toxic bloom forecasting model that can be used along with our sampling programs as a desirable step in our ability to better manage shellfish closures and protect public health.

I recognize that this is a significant challenge for you and your colleagues, but I fully support your efforts and strongly endorse your proposal to the funding agencies. Please keep me informed and involved as you develop the implementation plan that will set the stage for us to take over the model and to use it, not only for toxic bloom forecasting, but for related issues that would benefit from a real-time predictive capability in the coastal Gulf of Maine.

Sincerely,

Dr. Linda P. Mercer, Director
Bureau of Resource Management



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