



# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Protection

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building  
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Jeanette Nuñez**  
Lt. Governor

**Noah Valenstein**  
Secretary

## Blue-Green Algae Task Force Meeting Staff Minutes

July 29, 2020  
8:30 AM  
Via Zoom Webinar

General subject matter considered: The Blue-Green Algae Task Force met to discuss harmful algal blooms, recreational advisories and related signage.

Attendee Name	Title	Status
<b>Dr. Thomas Frazer</b>	Facilitator	Present
<b>Dr. Evelyn Gaiser</b>	Member	Present
<b>Dr. Wendy Graham</b>	Member	Present
<b>Dr. Michael Parsons</b>	Member	Present
<b>Dr. Valerie Paul</b>	Member	Present
<b>Dr. James Sullivan</b>	Member	Present

1. Secretary Noah Valenstein started off the meeting with agency updates.
2. Congressman Brian Mast made opening remarks focusing on discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers.
3. Chief Science Officer Dr. Tom Frazer facilitated the meeting.
4. Dr. Frazer provided updates on Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs), septic systems, sanitary sewer overflows, stormwater treatment systems, innovative technology, public health, best management practices (BMPs), science-based decision-making, data needs, and monitoring programs.
5. Deputy Division Director David Whiting with the Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration at the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) presented on the EPA recommended cyanotoxin criteria and recreational advisory thresholds and how they were derived. He also summarized DEP's current sampling protocols and how those sampling protocols relate to Department of Health's (DOH) issuance of advisories.

Meeting minutes are not intended to act as a transcript of the meeting. To watch a recording of the meeting, or to see the recommendations of the Blue-Green Algae Task Force, please visit [ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov/state-action/blue-green-algae-task-force](https://ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov/state-action/blue-green-algae-task-force).

6. Task Force members discussed the merits and limitations of EPA's recommended criteria and the difference between implementing the recommended criteria versus the recreational advisory. Task Force questions and comments included evaluation of the benefits of the two approaches presented; toxin detection limits and timeframe for detection; sampling protocols; discharges from Lake Okeechobee; relationship between toxins, algae, and nutrients; public notifications; and the potential for a feasibility study.
7. Dr. Kendra Goff, State Toxicologist with DOH, presented challenges to understanding exposure and exposure pathways and funded studies to look at data gaps. She additionally summarized the current public notification process for issuing swim advisories and health alerts.
8. Dr. Frazer presented drafts of two updated signs – one an educational sign to inform the public about Blue-Green Algae, how to spot it, and how to report it, and the other an advisory sign warning the public that toxins have been detected in the water.
9. Task Force members discussed the two signs as well as the decision to place the signs; where signs could be placed; bilingual signs; language and style suggestions; adding a website address to let the public know where to go to check recent bloom activity; photos and reporting; differences between health alerts and health advisories; thresholds; and the DOH beaches (*E. coli*) rule.
10. Task Force members further discussed EPA's recommended cyanotoxin water quality criteria, including discussion of a feasibility study and relationship between toxins, algae, and nutrients.
11. Task Force Members discussed potential future topics that included:
  - a. Army Corps of Engineers Draft Algal Bloom Risk Metric.
  - b. Biosolids.
  - c. Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs), and how they are monitored.
  - d. Innovative technology.
  - e. Enhanced monitoring and modeling of Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs).
  - f. Progress report on "hot spots."
  - g. Downstream effects of nutrient pollution.
  - h. Reclaimed water – both water conservation and water quantity.
12. There were two public comment periods summarized here. Topics included:
  - a. Concern about biosolids and importance of prevention
  - b. Desire to see better communication between agencies and public
  - c. Desire to see more enforcement and concern about impact of toxins
  - d. Desire to see timely notifications, including in Spanish
  - e. Desire to see nutrients addressed
  - f. Support for Clean Waterways Act
  - g. Disappointment in Clean Waterways Act and desire to see more specific recommendations
  - h. Comments on protocol for criteria

- i. Comments on sampling / monitoring
- j. Comments on impacts of climate change
- k. Comments on Lake Okeechobee discharges
- l. Caution in water quality standard for cyanotoxins
- m. Innovative tech proposal
- n. Concern over Homeowners Associations in working with neighborhoods
- o. Support for Clean Waterways Act and additional leadership in coming sessions
- p. Desire to see signage and more notification
- q. Desire to see Task Force meet more regularly
- r. Concern over toxins in canal systems and concerned with routes of exposure, including aerosol
- s. Recommend recognizing connections between growth and blooms
- t. Recommend DEP adopt EPA's criteria for cyanotoxins.
- u. Concern that signage is not being posted.
- v. Protection of wetlands and concern about fertilizer (urban and agricultural)
- w. Recommend rules for posting signage
- x. Question about neurotoxins
- y. Recommendations on ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov on reporting and additional public health concerns
- z. Recommendations about cyanotoxins and sampling
- aa. Concern about nitrogen reducing septic systems
- bb. Questions about what it would mean to violate a TMDL
- cc. Educate the public on the risks of blue-green algae
- dd. Concern about reclaimed water.
- ee. Concern about nitrogen in Lake Okeechobee
- ff. Interest in seeing Task Force address fertilizer issues
- gg. Interest in seeing Task Force address stormwater treatment systems
- hh. Concern about legacy loads in Lake Okeechobee