



RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

September 20, 2018

Chairman Bo Rivard
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Chairman Rivard:

Under the direction of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Florida has become a worldwide leader in red tide monitoring, reporting and response. Although the cause of red tide is unknown, we know that the first recording of red tide in Florida was in 1844. Now, because of the focus of FWC and the experts at the Florida Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI), Floridians know that the state has a robust response to mitigate the effects that this natural phenomenon can have on our communities.

Since 2011, we have invested an average of \$2.5 million annually for red tide research and recovery, and since declaring a state of emergency in August, we have invested more than \$14 million to help our communities recover. Our response has also included seeking and securing a disaster declaration from the Small Business Administration to benefit the private sector, providing additional marketing dollars to help the tourism industry recover, investing in the enhancement of our red fish restocking efforts, imposing catch and release restrictions on certain fish populations in specific areas, and bolstering our public outreach. Working with the staff at FWC and our partners, we are also supporting our researchers and their efforts to test cutting-edge solutions to solve red tide.

Working together, we have made tremendous strides in dealing with red tide, however, more must be done. This year's devastating bloom has left no question – we must increase our efforts to find a cause and solution for naturally-occurring red tide. That is why, today, I am asking the Commission to consider the creation of a Florida Center for Red Tide Research. This newly formed Center should be under the direction of a newly-created position, Florida's Director of Red Tide Response. This person should report to the FWC Executive Director and should provide regular updates to the Commission and the public on red tide. This person should serve as the central contact for Florida communities and as a resource for how to minimize the effects of red tide.

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I also urge the Commission to formally request an increase of funding from the Florida Legislature for red tide research and funding for a competitive grant program to find innovative solutions. The Commission should also reconvene the Florida Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force to help combat harmful algal blooms across the state. The funding for red tide has remained consistent throughout my time as Governor, but the Legislature should fully fund these initiatives and continue to provide funding for research to find solutions.

I appreciate the attention that the Commission has paid over recent years to researching the causes of red tide in Florida to ensure that natural habitats and wildlife can flourish. As the dedicated team at the FWRI and your partners continue our response to naturally-occurring red tide and the impacts it has on our wildlife, I urge you to continue to press for answers and solutions. Our communities are relying on the Commission to help fight red tide.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
Governor

cc: Commissioner Robert Spottswood
Commissioner Joshua Kellam
Commissioner Gary Lester
Commissioner Gary Nicklaus
Commissioner Sonya Rood
Commissioner Michael Sole