

# VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

## Consent to Take Part in a Research Study

### Title of research study:

*Assessing the Economic Benefits and Costs of Red Tide Control and Mitigation Strategies Along the South Florida Gulf Coast*

### Principal Investigator:

Klaus Moeltner

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**Key Information:** The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form.

This study is funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a federal agency. It is a collaboration between researchers at Virginia Tech, Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota, Florida, and Florida Gulf Coast University in Ft. Myers, Florida. We want to learn about the potential benefits to residents and businesses along the Florida Gulf Coast of taking actions to control and mitigate red tide harmful algal blooms. “Control” means to neutralize the harmful algal cells before they arrive at the shoreline. “Mitigation” means reducing the impact of red tide once it hits the coast, for example by quickly removing dead fish before they accumulate on beaches and in inlets and bays. This research will allow us and policy makers to see how expected benefits of such interventions stack up against expected costs, and where along the coast such interventions might be most effective and beneficial.

As a starting point for this research, we are organizing focus group sessions with local businesses that are located along the coast, and / or rely on a clean coastal environment. These sessions will help us learn more about local businesses’ experiences with red tide, and needs and opinions regarding different types of control and mitigation. What we learn in these sessions will guide the next steps in our research, such as broader surveys given to a larger sample of similar businesses in the area.

**Detailed Information:** The following is more detailed information about this study in addition to the information listed above.

### Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team at Virginia Tech via e-mail ([moeltner@vt.edu](mailto:moeltner@vt.edu)) or phone (540-231-8249).

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may communicate with them at 540-231-3732 or [irb@vt.edu](mailto:irb@vt.edu) if:

- You have questions about your rights as a research subject
- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team
- You cannot reach the research team

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- You want to talk to someone besides the research team to provide feedback about this research

### **How many people will be studied?**

We plan to include about   8   people in each focus group session. There will be three sessions in total. Each session will be in a different location along the central and southern Gulf Coast (approximately St. Petersburg / Clearwater to Naples).

### **What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?**

We invite you to participate in a 90 minute discussion session (“focus group”), along with seven other participants (business owners or managers). The session will be moderated by Professors Klaus Moeltner and Florian Zach, experienced social scientists at Virginia Tech. Like yourself, focus group participants will be owners or managers of coastal businesses along the central and southern Gulf Coast, at least 18 years of age, and proficient in English.

The focus group session will be held at [specific location, as given in the reminder email]. Parking is available [detailed parking information, as given in the reminder email]. Should you agree to participate, we would ask you to arrive at the venue at least 10 minutes prior to the official start of the session, as given in the invitation e-mail you received.

Refreshments will be provided (snacks, water, soft drinks). The session will last no longer than 90 minutes. Dr. Zach and Dr. Moeltner, who will moderate the session, will ask a few questions regarding red tide, how it has affected your operations, and what types of control and mitigation measures might be helpful to your business. However, the discussion will generally be allowed to flow freely. You are free to participate to any extent you wish, though we certainly hope that you will contribute to the discussion, should you agree to participate in the session.

Should you agree to participate, you will only be asked to attend this single session. You will not be asked to be involved any further in this research.

The moderators may show you maps of the research area on a large screen to help with the discussion. They will also audio-record the entire session, and later produce a written summary based on the recording, to be shared only with the research team at VT and collaborators at ML.

You will receive \$75 in cash for your participation at the end of the session.

### **What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?**

You can leave the focus group session at any time, for any reason, and it will not be held against you. If you decide to leave the session early, we will compensate you in a prorated fashion, approximately \$12 for every 15 minutes you participated.

Your contribution to the discussion up to the point of withdrawal will still be recorded and used to inform future research steps, such as the design of survey instruments.

### **Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me? (Detailed Risks)**

We do not anticipate any risks related to your participation in this focus group. You are free to take breaks to use the restroom or simply to stretch your legs at any time during the session. You will

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have access to snacks and refreshments throughout the session.

There are also no risks to your privacy from participating in these sessions. Should you be willing to participate, Dr. Moeltner or Dr. Zach will collect your signed consent form and give you a copy of your signed form. They will store the signed form separate from the audio files and transcripts of the session in a locked cabinet at VT. During the session, you will be asked to refer to each other only by first name (there will be name tags), such that no participant can be identified from the audio recording or transcript. You will also be asked to NOT mention your business by name or describe its exact location. Therefore, your participation will remain completely anonymous. Your e-mail response agreeing to participate will be deleted within a week following the session.

The audio recording and transcript will be stored at Dr. Moeltner's password protected and firewall-secured PC, and also on a password and firewall-protected server at VT, for sharing with the VT project team.

### What happens to the information collected for the research?

The information we collect during the focus group session will be stored safely as described above. It will be shared only with the VT project team. Overall, your feedback on the issues discussed during the session will help us design survey instruments to be given to a broader sample of Gulf Coast businesses. We may also present information collected during the session in summarized and completely de-identified form at presentations or as part of future reports and publications.

### What else do I need to know?

This research is being funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a federal agency.

As mentioned above, you will also receive \$\_\_75\_\_ for your time and effort, or a prorated amount if you choose to leave the session early.

### Signature Block for Capable Adult

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research. We will provide you with a signed copy of this form for your records.

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Signature of subject

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Date

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Printed name of subject

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Signature of person obtaining consent

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Date

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Printed name of person obtaining consent