



MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
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MERI Lecture to Focus on Toxic Red Tides in the Gulf of Maine

BLUE HILL—“Red Tides in the Gulf of Maine” will be presented by Dr. David Townsend, Director of the School of Marine Resources, University of Maine, Orono on Thursday, April 27 at 7 p.m. at the Marine Environmental Research Institute (MERI) in Blue Hill. During his presentation, Dr. Townsend will talk about his ongoing research on red tide events in the Gulf of Maine, including last year’s massive outbreak, the worst in New England in more than 30 years. His presentation is part of MERI’s 2006 Ocean Environment Lecture Series.

Prior to the lecture, at 6 p.m., a reception and art opening featuring the photography of Ilya Askinazi of Bangor and Cullen Schneider of Penobscot will be held in MERI’s new Ocean Art Gallery. All works on exhibit are for sale and a portion of the proceeds go to MERI research and education programs.

“Large scale red tide outbreaks are a serious threat to the region’s economy and public health,” says MERI Executive Director Dr. Susan Shaw. “For the past two years, MERI has been part of the state’s early warning system and helped identify the massive blooms in 2004 and 2005.”

Harmful algal blooms (HABs), or red tides as they are more commonly called, are a regular occurrence in Maine waters. Last year’s red tide event proved to be the worst in New England since 1972, forcing the closure of shellfish beds from Maine to Massachusetts, and ultimately costing the shellfish industry tens of millions of dollars in lost income. Over the past two decades the intensity of red tide events has increased significantly and researchers predict this trend will continue into the future.

Since 1998, Dr. Townsend has served as a principal investigator for an ongoing research project known as *ECOHAB-GOM: The Ecology and Oceanography of Toxic Alexandrium Blooms in the Gulf of Maine*. Through this multi-institutional effort, Dr. Townsend and his colleagues study physical oceanography, nutrient chemistry, and abundances and distributions of *Alexandrium* – the species causing paralytic shellfish poisoning, or PSP – in the coastal and offshore waters of the northern Gulf of Maine. During his presentation, Dr. Townsend will share what he has learned from this project and explain what appears to be the cause of major outbreaks, such as the 2005 event.

Dr. Townsend has served as Director of the School of Marine Resources since 2001 and as Professor of Oceanography since 1993. He was previously Executive Director of the Gulf of Maine Regional Marine Research Program at the University of Maine, Orono and a research scientist at the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in Boothbay Harbor, and. Dr. Townsend received an M.S. in Marine Science from Long Island University in New York and a Ph.D. in Oceanography from the University of Maine at Orono in 1981.

The Marine Environmental Research Institute (MERI) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the marine environment and human health through research and education. To reserve seats for the lecture, call 374-2135 or e-mail info@meriresearch.org. For further information on MERI programs, visit us online at www.meriresearch.org.