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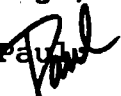
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 17, 1993

Dr. Paul Epstein
Harvard Medical School
The Cambridge Hospital
1493 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

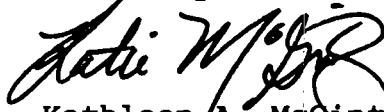
Dear Paul 

Thank you for contacting me regarding your concerns about the findings of the workshop on Emergent Disease, which the Harvard School of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control, and the World Health Organization recently sponsored. It was good to hear from you again.

I certainly appreciate hearing your thoughtful perspective about the emergence and population growth of toxic-bearing marine algae. I share your concern about the environmental and health implications that these findings seem to suggest. I have taken the liberty of sharing your letter and the information you enclosed with Mr. Will Stelle of my staff who is handling issues related to coastal ecosystems. Please feel free to contact Mr. Stelle directly, as I am sure he could benefit from your insight in this regard.

Again, thank you for sharing your concerns with me.

Sincerely,



Kathleen A. McGinty
Director, White House Office on
Environmental Policy

KAM/avl



The
Cambridge
Hospital



1493 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139 (617) 498-1000

November 23, 1993

Kathleen A. McGinty
Director
White House Office on Environmental Policy
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Katie:

The Harvard School of Public Health, in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, has just completed a workshop on Emergent Disease. The information presented to the workshop, when considered with other related recent findings, is cause for concern.

Based on the workshop results it appears that the incidence of marine biotoxic events in coastal ecosystems are on the increase along with the spreading of new toxic-bearing marine algae. Immediately following our workshop, a meeting of marine science and management specialists for coastal seas was held in Baltimore. Reports were presented that indicated harmful algal blooms were becoming an increasing cause of mortality of fish and molluscs in coastal waters around the globe, including the coastal ecosystems of the United States. A brown algae responsible for mass mortalities of scallops in embayments of Long Island have apparently developed a new toxin in association with a virus. In addition, a newly identified dinoflagellate has been causing fish mortalities in coastal waters of the mid-Atlantic states. The relationships among viruses (transferring genetic material), bacteria (associated with toxins), and algae (as vectors for vibrios) are complex, and, collectively have been the cause of significant economic losses to fishery resources as well as a threat to human health.

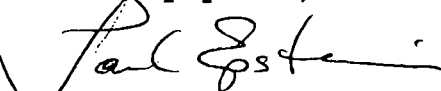
As you know, the National Coastal Monitoring Act requires that NOAA and EPA report to the Congress on the changing-states-of-health of the nation's coastal ecosystems. We are taking steps in the marine scientific and medical communities to ensure that marine scientists, public health scientists, and marine resource managers are cognizant of the rapidly developing problems related to emergent diseases in coastal ecosystems. However, it would be prudent to develop a more structured mechanism, perhaps through your office, to assure that the situation is appropriately assessed, monitored, and reported in a

manner that will allow for appropriate mitigation actions, if warranted.

In this regard, I would like to bring to your attention that an existing infrastructure within the federal government to move forward on this issue is in place. However, some linkages remain to be forged between the effects of climate change and the and the emerging disease issues relating to coastal ecosystem health. The health implications, including the successions of new discoveries of disease-bearing organisms, most recently a variant of Vibrio cholerae (0139 Bengal), can be accommodated into the ongoing national and international programs in support of the UNCED declarations on the coast seas. NOAA and EPA are working toward solutions on the national level, while NOAA and the Global Environmental Facility of the World Bank are moving forward on the international level. However, the full cognizance of the emerging disease problem in coastal marine ecosystems is not as yet a viable component of these efforts.

On behalf of several colleagues, I am writing to request a meeting with you and your staff to discuss these issues and explore ways for extending the implementation of the National Coastal Monitoring Act and NOAA's international Coastal Ecosystems Program with the GEF to include appropriate health parameters and outcomes. We are prepared to meet with you in Washington. Alternatively, we would be pleased to have you join us for a special review session at the Harvard School of Public Health or the Kennedy Center.

Sincerely yours,



Paul R. Epstein, M.D., M.P.H.
Harvard Medical School

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Fax: 617-498-1671

Enclosures: Marine Ecosystems, *The Lancet*
Two conference reports, *The Lancet*