Division of Aquaculture

The core responsibilities of the Division of Aquaculture are described in Chapter 597, Florida Aquaculture Policy Act, Florida Statutes, and include:

- Developing and enforcing environmental and food safety regulations governing commercial aquaculture production and shellfish (clams, oysters and mussels) harvesting and processing, respectively.
- Certifying and inspecting shellfish processing plants and classifying and monitoring shellfish harvest areas in accordance with National Shellfish Sanitation Program.
- Leasing coastal state submerged land for aquacultural purposes.
- Certifying and inspecting upland commercial aquaculture facilities for compliance with the Aquaculture Best Management Practices Rule.
- Providing practical and technical assistance concerning regulations, production, financial assistance, or educational programs.

Hurricane Preparation and Recovery Workshops

The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Shellfish Aquaculture Program and the Division of Aquaculture hosted two different workshops to talk about hurricane preparation and recovery for oyster farms. The first workshop on July 31st, Hurricane Prep and Recovery for Oyster Farms, was held at the Florida State University Coastal and Marine Lab in St. Teresa and the UF/IFAS Wakulla County extension office in Crawfordville. Oyster gear management, storm plans and best management practices for shellfish gear were discussed. A new UF/IFAS program, funded by Florida Sea Grant, to provide gear identification tags to oyster farmers was also introduced. Information on the gear tag program and presentations from the workshops on can be found online at: Shellfish.IFAS.UFL.edu/news/hurricane-workshop-presentations-and-market-tag-program/

The second workshop on August 15th, Understanding Financial Assistance Programs for Shellfish Growers, covered information on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, also known as NAP insurance. Presentations from Farm Service Agency (FSA) covered the basics of NAP insurance for oyster and clam farmers and farm loan programs. The Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC) presented information on what farmers need to prepare financial documents and put together a business plan. To learn more about NAP insurance or to enroll, make an appointment with your local FSA office. You can find the office that serves your county by going to Office Locate, USDA.gov/locators/app, click on Florida and then click on your county. Presentations and resources covered during the workshop, including all the documents to get you started on your farm’s business plan, can be found online at: Shellfish.IFAS.UFL.edu/news/financial-assistance-programs-workshop-presentations-and-market-tag-program/

Contact the below FSA and SBDC staff to learn more:

- Heather Boyd, Agricultural Program Specialist
  - FSA State Office
  - Phone: (352) 394-5522
  - Email: Heather.Boyd@USDAGov

- Patricia Sorensen, Farm Loan Officer
  - Madison County FSA
  - Phone: (850) 973-2205
  - Email: Patricia.Sorensen@USDAGov

- Melissa Rodgers, County Director
  - Jefferson County FSA (serving Wakulla County)
  - Phone: (850) 997-2702, ext 2
  - Email: Melissa.Rodgers@USDAGov

- Mark Yarick, Small Business Development Consultant
  - Florida SBDC at University of North Florida
  - North Central Florida Office
  - Phone: (386) 362-1782
  - Email: Mark.Yarick@UNF.edu

- Shelly Sale, Acting County Director
  - Calhoun County FSA (serving Gulf & Franklin Counties)
  - Phone: (850) 674-8388
  - Email: Shelly.Sale@USDAGov

Inside this Issue:
- New construction or modification on your farm: when and what to report to the Division
- ARC revises the Florida Aquaculture Plan and selects top research priorities
- New research grant awarded
- Staff Changes

Contact the Division at:
Aquaculture.Web@FDACS.gov

For the leasing of submerged state lands and shellfish processing certification information, call:
- Port Charlotte Office (941) 613-0954
- Panama City Office (850) 236-2200
- Melbourne Office (321) 984-4890
- Apalachicola Shellfish Center (850) 653-8317

For the open or closed status of Shellfish Harvesting Areas, call:
- Cedar Key Office (302) 543-5181
- Melbourne Office (321) 984-4980
- Panama City Office (850) 236-2200
- Port Charlotte Office (841) 613-9054
- Tallahassee Office (850) 617-7600

For Aquaculture Certificate of Registration, Aquaculture Best Management Practices, call:
- Bartow Office (863) 578-1870
- Tallahassee Office (850) 617-7600

For the leasing of submerged land and shellfish processing certification information, call:
- Tallahassee Office (850) 617-7600

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Contact the Division at:
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FDACS P-00082
Florida’s aquaculture industry is an ever-evolving sector of the state’s agriculture economy. Certified aquaculture producers are constantly growing and adapting to their operations to satisfy markets and meet growing consumer demand for aquaculture goods. It is important for producers to keep in mind that some changes to an aquaculture facility or business may impact the Aquaculture Best Management Practices (BMPs) that apply to their operation.

While small facility changes like adding a new production tank may not change the BMPs that must be implemented, larger changes could impact BMPs and may even require Division of Aquaculture review or approval at the time of significant facility changes such as modifying an approved effluent treatment plan, constructing a new building, excavating or filling in ponds or culturing a Restricted Species may require a facility to implement new BMPs that were previously not applicable.

Failure to implement proper BMPs can lead to issues of non-compliance and certificate holders could be subject to enforcement action by the Division or other local, state or federal agencies. It is ultimately the responsibility of the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration holder to ensure their facility is implementing all applicable BMPs at all times. Division staff are happy to assist with reviewing modification plans for compliance. Coordination is critical to ensuring farms don’t make changes that could cost time and resources to correct later.

Before making any significant facility changes, producers are encouraged to contact their local aquaculture inspector to confirm that these changes will impact the BMPs they are required to implement and that there are no additional environmental or permitting considerations. Examples of significant facility changes that should be discussed with an inspector may include (but are not limited to):

- Modifying an approved effluent treatment plan
- New construction (ex. ponds, buildings)
- Constructing within a flood plain
- Constructing near an adjacent wetland area
- Increasing on-site impervious surfaces
- Culturing a Restricted Species or adding species to your production plan
- Water source or use changes (salt vs. fresh, etc.)
- Change of production location.

For more information, visit the Division website at FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Aquaculture-Certificate-of-Registration. If you have any additional questions, please contact Serina Rocco at Serina.Rocco@FDACS.gov or by phone at (850) 617-1600.

**New Research Grant Awarded From USDA**

The Division of Aquaculture, along with partners at University of Florida and Florida State University, were recently awarded $300,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture to develop a biodegradable, plastic-alternative clam cover net. Over the next two years, the new biodegradable material will be turned into cover nets and tested in the field with the help of leaseholders and staff from the University of Florida Shellfish Aquaculture program.

We are excited to share progress on the project as we move forward!

**Offshore Aquaculture Workshop Hosted by Florida Sea Grant**

In June, Florida Sea Grant hosted a workshop on offshore aquaculture at the Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota. The meeting was well attended, with two days of presentations and facilitated discussions. Staff from state and federal agencies and university researchers presented information on site selection, permitting, socio-economic considerations, best management practices, economics and interaction with wild fisheries. Presentations were also given on two ongoing projects in federal waters off Florida’s coast — Manna Fish Farms and Kampachi Velella Epsilon. There was also a tour of Mote Marine Lab’s Aquaculture facilities to wrap up the second day of the workshop. The workshop agenda and presentations can be viewed online by visiting FLSeaGrant.org/aquaculture/openocean/pioneerinaquacultureworkshop/.

**Division Staff Changes**

Dr. Marcy Cockrell joins the Division as a Biological Administrator, after working with FDACS as a Gulf Research Program Science Policy Fellow for the past year. She works on policy and regulation with farmers, K-12 education programs, grant writing and administering the Aquaculture Research Council. Dr. Cockrell earned a Ph.D. in marine science from the University of South Florida in 2018 where she was also a science mentor with Oceanography Camp for Girls. Dr. Cockrell is based in Tallahassee and can be reached by phone at (850) 617-7630 or by email at Marcy.Cockrell@FDACS.gov.

Kyle Brennan joins the Division as an Environmental Health Aide at the Apalachee Shellfish Center. He served six years in the United States Coast Guard before earning his Associates Degree this past Spring in Aquaculture Technology from Carteret Community College in North Carolina. He collects water and shellfish samples and assists with submerged lands lease inspections. Kyle can be reached by phone at (850) 323-6803 or by email at Kyle.Brennan@FDACS.gov.

Mikayla Allison is joining the Division in the Bartow office as an Environmental Specialist II. She conducts upland facility inspections to ensure compliance with Best Management Practices. Mikayla is a Bartow native and a recent graduate from the Agriculture Studies Program at Warner University. She has been working with the Best Management Practices program in the FDACS Office of Agricultural Water Policy in Okeechobee for the past year. Mikayla can be reached by phone at (863) 578-1876 or by email at Mikayla.Allison@FDACS.gov.

Jesse Fields is joining the Division as a Shellfish Processing Plant Specialist II. He is assisting in conducting processing plant inspections. Before joining the Division, Jesse was a Laboratory Technician IV in the FDACS Division of Consumer Services Metrology Lab, and graduated from Princeton University with a degree in ecological and evolutionary biology. Jesse is based in Tallahassee and can be reached by phone at (850) 617-7617 or email at Jesse.Fields@FDACS.gov.

**ARC Revises Florida Aquaculture Plan & Selects Research Priorities**

The Aquaculture Review Council (ARC) held its fourth quarterly meeting on September 25th at the new Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Kissimmee. The Council elected a new Chair (Marty Tanter) and Vice-Chair (Geno Evans) for the 2020 term, finalized the 2019 Florida Aquaculture Plan (FAP) and selected top research priorities for the annual Call for Statements of Interest (SOI). The FAP is revised each year to reflect current and emerging industry needs, and helps drive research that is directly informed by and useful for farmers.

The SOI for FY 2021-22 funding was released in mid-October and can be found online by visiting the Division’s homepage under “Popular Links.” The complete list of research priorities considered for funding can be found at FDACS.gov/Aquaculture/Research-Development/.

Three new ARC members were appointed at the June meeting: Curt Hennem (Bay Shellfish Co., Shellfish Representative), Carlos Martinez (Horse Creek Aqua Farm – As-Large Representative) and John Skidmore (Golden Pond Tropics, Inc. – Tropical Fish Representative). The next ARC meeting will be held in Tallahassee on December 16, 2019. For a full list of industry representatives and additional information about the ARC and the FAP, visit FDACS.gov/Business-Services/Advisory-Councils-and-Committees/Aquaculture-Review-Council.

**Select Research Priorities for FY 2021-22 funding (see the SOI for a full list):**

- Regular biosecurity training for growers and hatcheries, in both English and Spanish
- New or alternative feed ingredients and dietary formulations for food fish
- Protocols to replace or reduce the use of live feeds during larval culture of commercially valuable ornamental fish species
- Research to support use of methyl testosterone for ornamental fish species
- Research to support 24/7, Special Local Need Labeling of Dylux 420L for the non-food aquaculture and aquatic plant industry
- Techniques for optimal growth and propagation of commercially important aquatic plant species
- Protocol for rearing alligators to increase growth rates and reduce scarring from bites
- Methods for improving genetics of commercially farmed bivalves, which improve production characteristics
- Create a tetraploid oyster broodstock line that can be provided to Florida hatcheries
- Development of technologies to address red tide issues in commercial bivalve farming
- Methods to control aquatic plant predators

**Dr. Marcy Cockrell**

Dr. Marcy Cockrell joins the Division as a Biological Administrator, after working with FDACS as a Gulf Research Program Science Policy Fellow for the past year. She works on policy and regulation with farmers, K-12 education programs, grant writing and administering the Aquaculture Review Council. Dr. Cockrell earned a Ph.D. in marine science from the University of South Florida in 2018 where she was also a science mentor with Oceanography Camp for Girls. Dr. Cockrell is based in Tallahassee and can be reached by phone at (850) 617-7630 or by email at Marcy.Cockrell@FDACS.gov.

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