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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.

For the open or closed status of Shellfish Harvesting Areas, call:

Apalachicola Shellfish Center (850) 653-8317
Cedar Key Office (352) 543-5181
Melbourne Office (321) 984-4890
Panama City Office (850) 236-2200
Port Charlotte Office (941) 613-0954
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 state lands and shellfish processing certification information, call:

Tallahassee Office (850) 617-7600

Florida Aquaculture

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Division of Aquaculture

New Publications & Resources

For easy reference, the Division has consolidated shellfish lease management regulations into a new, single publication, *Shellfish Aquaculture Lease Management*. You can find the publication online at: www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Aquaculture-Submerged-Land-Leasing or contact the Division for a printed copy.

Shellfish aquaculture extension specialists at the University of Florida, Auburn University and Louisiana State University recently released six new fact sheets on hurricane and tropical storm preparedness for off-bottom oyster growers addressing different gear types, land-based operations, workboats and an introductory planning guide. Copies were recently sent to all oyster growers in the Gulf of Mexico region and can be found online at <https://shellfish.ifas.ufl.edu/hurricane-resources>. Please email Leslie Sturmer at UF (Inst@ufl.edu) for additional copies of these fact sheets.



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Inside this issue:

Hurricane Michael crop loss reimbursement program	2
Staff Changes	2
COVID-19 Economic Assistance from USDA and Dept. of Commerce	3

Preliminary Results on COVID-19 Impacts

Preliminary results from a COVID-19 agriculture impact survey conducted by the University of Florida/Florida Sea Grant (<https://bit.ly/UFCOVIDImpacts>), indicated an **average 40% loss of sales revenue and \$121 million loss overall for livestock and aquaculture commodity groups from March to mid-May 2020** as a result of COVID-19 disruptions. **Shellfish aquaculture reported an average of 75% loss in sales revenue, although survey responses ranged from 10-100% loss.** Other commodities included in the survey were field crops, horticultural crops, vegetables, melon, potatoes, fruits and nuts, milk, honey and eggs. Results will be finalized and released as a detailed report in the near future.

Aquaculture Review Council

The Aquaculture Review Council met on June 17th to hear presentations on six research proposals. All six proposals were approved and ranked by the Council for a **total funding request of \$426,327 from the state in FY 2021-22**. This request has been sent to the Commissioner to be included as part of the Department's budget request for the next fiscal year. All funding for research projects submitted to the Council is subject to legislative appropriation. **The next Council meeting will be held virtually on September 24th to discuss revisions to the Florida Aquaculture Plan.** This meeting will be open to the public. The current Aquaculture Plan can be found on the Division website by visiting www.FDACS.gov/content/download/89185/file/Florida-Aquaculture-Plan-2019_FINAL.pdf



Deadline to purchase NAP coverage for 2021

September 1, 2020 is the deadline to purchase USDA Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance (NAP) coverage for plan year 2021. Basic coverage starts at \$325 for the year for shellfish farms. Beginning, limited resource, veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers, including women and minorities, are eligible for a waiver of the service fee and a 50% premium reduction. Sign up through your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. **FSA offices can be located at** www.farmers.gov/service-locator. Learn more about eligibility, coverage and how to apply at www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/noninsured-crop-disaster-assistance/index.

ERICA Funding Update

The Efficiency and Renewable Improvements in Commercial Aquaculture (ERICA) program in the FDACS Office of Energy provided a 75% cost share reimbursement for up to \$30,000 for energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements on commercial aquaculture farms. Projects that qualified included HVAC and climate control upgrades, storage refrigeration upgrades, solar heating systems, LED lights and upgrades or retrofits of water pumps, treatment, disinfection and filtration systems. **To date the program has approved \$1,006,900.29 in funding for 40 applicants and has reimbursed 24 applicants in full.** All available funds for this program have now been allocated.



Hurricane Michael Disaster Relief Funding Proposal

A draft Hurricane Michael disaster relief funding proposal has been submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Florida was appropriated \$7.8 million by Congress to assist commercial fishers, wholesale dealers, charter captains, marinas and shellfish aquaculturists with economic recovery. **For shellfish aquaculture, a crop loss revenue reimbursement program has been proposed to provide economic recovery for marine shellfish farmers in Bay, Franklin, Gulf and Wakulla counties. Note that non-marine aquaculture crops, equipment and infrastructure were not eligible for this funding.** The proposed plan will make direct payments to shellfish leaseholders in these counties for crop losses incurred due to Hurricane Michael. Any USDA Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistant Program (NAP) and Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program (WHIP) insurance payments will be deducted from individual payouts. FDACS is coordinating the shellfish aquaculture component of the program with FWC.

To qualify for the aquaculture crop loss program, an applicant must meet the following criteria:

Producer type	Eligibility criteria
Shellfish aquaculture submerged land leaseholders	- Held a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration (AQ certificate) at the time of the storm (FY 2018-2019; July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019) - Must hold a current valid AQ Certificate for FY 2020-2021 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021) - Held an aquaculture lease or Authorized User Acknowledgement for parcel(s) located in Gulf, Bay, Franklin or Wakulla counties at the time of the storm, and currently holds a lease or Authorized User Acknowledgement for those same parcel(s) - Completed a 2018 lease audit for all parcels included in the calculation for Hurricane Michael crop loss reimbursement.
In perpetuity leaseholders, shellfish nurseries and shellfish hatcheries	- Held a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration (AQ certificate) at the time of the storm (FY 2018-2019; July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019) - Must hold a current valid AQ certificate for FY 2020-2021 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021) - Be able to provide cultch planting and/or sales receipts - Be able to provide revenue loss documentation (IRS annual income tax return) to demonstrate a decrease in revenues in 2019 as compared to the previous three years

Once the spending plan is approved by NMFS, applications will be mailed out to eligible entities with a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration using the active mailing address on file with the Division. **If you are eligible for the program based on the above criteria, contact the Division to ensure that your contact information is up to date so you don't miss the application period.**

You can find more details in the draft plan on the FWC website here: <https://myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/michael/>. If you have specific questions about the aquaculture plan, please contact the Division directly.

Division Staff Changes



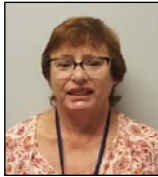
Nicole Martin

Nicole Martin was recently promoted to Environmental Administrator in the Processing Plant Inspection and Compliance Program in July. Nicole has been with the Division since July 2018, where she started as an inspector for the Processing Plant Inspection and Compliance Program. In February 2019, she transitioned to a new position within the Division, working on standardizing operating procedures across programs and improving mission functions for the Division. Prior to working for FDACS, she worked for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission doing oyster research in Apalachicola Bay for three years. Nicole can be reached at (850) 617-7628 or Nicole.Martin@FDACS.gov.

Kieley Hurff was promoted in May to Environmental Supervisor II for the Certification and BMP Program at the Division's Bartow office. Kieley worked as an Environmental Specialist II with the program since May 2017, conducting inspections of upland aquaculture facilities. Kieley graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Marine Science from Eckerd College, and Master of Science in Oceanography and Coastal Science from Louisiana State University. Kieley has previously worked in stormwater regulation for municipalities in Southern California, and as a benthic ecology laboratory technician for Hillsborough County. Kieley can be reached at (863) 578-1872 or Kieley.Hurff@FDACS.gov.



Kieley Hurff



Debra Storck

Debra Storck started with the Division in April 2019 and moved into the Environmental Specialist II position with the Processing Plant Inspection and Compliance Program this past July. In this new role, she will be inspecting shellfish processing plants. She was previously a lab technician in the Division's Apalachicola Shellfish Lab. Debra received her Bachelor of Science from Augusta State University and currently resides in Eastpoint. Debra can be reached at (850) 653-8317 or Debra.Storck@FDACS.gov.

COVID-19 Economic Assistance Programs For Aquaculture

Federal assistance programs from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Commerce have been announced to help offset losses to produces from COVID-19. Details relevant to aquaculturists on both programs are below. Please refer to the websites listed for each program for more information and for details on how to apply.

	Department of Commerce NOAA Fisheries Assistance	U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP)
Funding Authority	\$300 million from the CARES Act, to be dispersed to states, Tribes and territories through the interstate marine fisheries commissions - Florida to receive \$23.4 million to divide among all industry groups	Total of \$16 billion in funding from the CARES Act and Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)
Intended Use	Direct or indirect fishery-related losses as well as subsistence, cultural or ceremonial impacts related to COVID-19	Relief from COVID-19 market disruptions and revenue losses, including price declines, disruptions in supply chains and additional marketing costs
Eligibility	- Privately-owned aquaculture growing operations in marine waters and the hatcheries that supply them, including seaweed and molluscan shellfish operations - Must have a 35% or greater revenue loss - Businesses farther down the supply chain, including restaurants or seafood retailers, are not eligible	- Privately-owned aquaculture businesses that grow and harvest from controlled environments (including raceways, ponds, tanks, and recirculating systems). - Eligible commodities are: catfish, crawfish, largemouth bass and carp sold live as food fish, hybrid striped bass, red drum, salmon, sturgeon, tilapia, trout, ornamental/tropical fish and recreational sportfish. - Molluscan shellfish and live rock producers are not eligible. They will be covered under the NOAA program.
Payment mechanism	- Single direct payment to eligible producers - Payment amounts will be proportional to losses based on all applications received - Any amount received from the SBA EIDL or PPP loan programs will be deducted from eligible payout amount	- Single direct payment to eligible producers based on actual losses - Payment rates are determined based on sales and market-size inventory that could not be sold from Jan 15 to April 15, 2020. See the table below for payment rates.
Can I Apply Now?	NO. Applications will be developed as part of the final state spending plan and are not yet available. It's anticipated that applications will be mailed out in Sept. 2020. Contact the Division to make sure your mailing and email address are to up date to receive more information about the program.	YES. Applications are being accepted for eligible aquaculture commodities by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) from Aug 17th through Sept 11th. Submit online or call ahead to make an appointment with your local FSA office. If you submitted a CFAP application previously, and the application was disapproved, submit a new application through your local FSA office.
For More Information	The Florida draft spending plan is available at: https://myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/caresact For more information about Dept. of Commerce CARES Act funding and NOAA Fisheries COVID-19 response visit: www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/noaa-fisheries-coronavirus-covid-19-update	For more information on the program, including payment rates and how to apply, visit: www.farmers.gov/cfap/aquaculture. FSA service centers can be located by going to: www.farmers.gov/service-locator. You can also contact the Florida FSA headquarters for assistance with locating your regional office by calling (352) 379-4500.

Note: This table is for informational purposes only. These programs are subject to change and all information should be verified with the appropriate entity before applying for assistance. The Department makes no guarantees about any program eligibility, payments or availability of funds.

CFAP payments for eligible commodities will be based on the sum of the below rates:					
Commodity	CARES Act Rate*	CCC Rate**	Commodity	CARES Act Rate*	CCC Rate**
Crawfish	\$0.65/lb	\$0.05/lb	Salmon	\$1.14/lb	\$0.31/lb
Catfish	-	\$0.07/lb	Sturgeon	-	\$0.29/lb
Hybrid Striped Bass	-	\$0.25/lb	Trout	-	\$0.11/lb
Red Drum	-	\$0.24/lb	Tilapia	-	\$0.16/lb
Recreational Sportfish	-	\$0.27/lb	Ornamental/	-	\$0.03/piece
Largemouth Bass and Carp sold as food fish	\$0.51/lb	\$0.39/lb	Tropical Fish		

*Multiply the rate by product sales between Jan 15, 2020 and April 15, 2020
**For fish: multiply rate by inventory that was not sold but was market size and available to be marketed between Jan 15, 2020 and April 15, 2020.
For crawfish: multiply rate by inventory that was not sold as of April 15, 2020 due to lack of market and will not be sold in calendar year 2020.