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FDACS-P-00082

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

2021 Legislative Update

The 2021 state legislative session was a productive year for the aquaculture industry. Two key pieces of legislation were passed – SB 1018 and SB 1634 – expanding production opportunities and public records exemptions for the industry. Note that these rules do not take effect until July 1, 2021.

Florida Largemouth Bass Approved for Food Fish Culture - [SB 1018](#)

Florida largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides floridanus*) can now be grown and sold as a food fish throughout the state. Genetic testing results confirming that stocks are pure Florida largemouth bass must accompany all stocks and be maintained by the farmer for two years. If you would like to learn more about food production of Florida largemouth bass or add the species to your Certificate of Registration, please contact the Best Management Practices program at (850) 617-7600 or by email at Serina.Rocco@FDACS.gov.

Expanded Public Record Exemptions for Aquaculture - [SB 1634](#)

The following individual business records collected and held by the Department are now exempt from the public disclosure requirements of s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I 21 of the State Constitution:

- Shellfish receiving and production records generated by shellfish processing facilities.
- Audit records and supporting documentation required for aquaculture submerged land leases.
- Aquaculture production records and receipts generated by aquaculture facilities.

With this exemption, the Department can protect industry private business information while maintaining compliance with federal partners and documenting the compliance of aquaculture producers with statutory requirements. For more information about what these new exemptions mean for your specific facility, please contact the Division.

USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP2) Application Deadline Extended

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on March 24 that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will begin providing additional financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and producers impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions. Resources for these payments were approved by Congress in fiscal years 2020 and 2021. While the original application period for the second round of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP 2) ended December 11, 2020, the USDA reopened CFAP 2 enrollment for all eligible producers beginning April 5, 2021. There is currently no deadline for applications.

CFAP 2 payments are available for eligible producers of aquaculture commodities, which are categorized as sales commodities. Payment calculations will use a sales-based approach, where producers of eligible commodities are paid based on five payment gradations associated with their 2019 sales.

To learn more about the program, visit: [Farmers.gov/cfap2/aquaculture](https://farmers.gov/cfap2/aquaculture)

USDA Expands Aquaculture Disaster Assistance

On May 13th, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) expanded the eligibility of aquaculture commodities for the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP). While only farm-raised game and bait fish were previously eligible, this policy change greatly expands ELAP aquaculture eligibility to include food fish and other farmed aquatic species.

ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions, including hurricanes, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. Producers can apply to receive ELAP assistance at local FSA service centers within 30 days of a qualified loss.

Aquaculture farmers are also encouraged to apply for a crop insurance policy through the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP). NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops, such as many aquaculture commodities, to protect against natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses or prevent crop planting. To learn more about these programs and to apply, contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit the Florida Service Center Locator at <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.



Restoration Management Agreements Now Available

In response to increasing interest in shellfish restoration activities, the Division has updated language in [Chapter 18-21, F.A.C.](#) to allow Aquaculture Management Agreements to be issued to qualified entities for restoration aquaculture. Sections 18-21.020 and 18-21.021 of the rule outline the aquaculture leasing process in state waters for commercial leases and non-profit management agreements, which historically have been used for research and education purposes. The new rule language expands the use of management agreements to include restoration as well.

Restoration management agreements can now be used to plant and cultivate marine aquaculture species using gear approved within the Division's U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Programmatic General Permit ([SAJ99](#)). This permit is currently limited to live rock, clam and oyster gear such as bottom bags, cover netting, bottom baskets, floating cages and suspended oyster longline. The application, siting and approval process for a restoration management agreement follows the same procedures already in place. If you would like to apply for a restoration management agreement, please contact the Division at (850) 617-7600.

The bullets below outline key provisions for this new management agreement option:

- Qualified entities are limited to state agencies, local governments, educational institutions, research institutions or restoration organizations.
- Restoration management agreements can be located in unclassified or prohibited shellfish harvesting areas.
- Harvested products cannot be sold or used for any purpose other than further restoration activities.
- Bottom leases are exempt from lease marking requirements. U.S. Coast Guard marking requirements apply to water column leases.

Expanded Diagnostic Testing at Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory

The Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (BADDL) provides farmers animal disease diagnostic services. The lab was recently approved by the USDA to diagnose the following aquatic diseases:

- Koi herpesvirus disease
- Spring viremia of carp
- *Perkinsus marinus* for shellfish

For more information about how to submit a sample, please visit: [FDACS.gov/Consumer-Resources/Animals/Bronson-Animal-Disease-Diagnostic-Laboratory-BADDL/How-to-Submit-a-Sample-to-the-Bronson-Animal-Disease-Diagnostic-Laboratory](https://www.fgacs.gov/Consumer-Resources/Animals/Bronson-Animal-Disease-Diagnostic-Laboratory-BADDL/How-to-Submit-a-Sample-to-the-Bronson-Animal-Disease-Diagnostic-Laboratory)

Shellfish Water Quality Data Now Available Online

You can now download all Shellfish Harvesting Area (SHA) water quality data on our webpage at: [FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Shellfish/Shellfish-Harvesting-Area-Classification/Area-Information](https://www.fgacs.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Shellfish/Shellfish-Harvesting-Area-Classification/Area-Information)

Simply click on the .csv file in the "Water Quality Data" column to download the specific SHA data you are interested in. SHA water quality files include a variety of data, such as temperature, salinity and dissolved oxygen for each station. Data notes and explanations of the metadata can be found on the same page.

Note: Historical data may not have all the same information as more current data. For questions related to accessing or utilizing this data, please contact the Division.

Free Online Oyster Culture Course Now Available

The first session of an online course for beginning growers and those interested in the prospects of oyster culture in the Gulf of Mexico is now available. Enroll in the FREE course at oyster-culture.teachable.com/.



For more information contact Leslie Sturmer at the University of Florida at Lnst@ufl.edu.



"Mini-System" Aquaponics Education Project Update

The Division's Florida Agriculture In the Classroom (FAITC) Volunteer Grant Project wrapped up in December 2020. This "mini-aquaponics" project kicked off in October 2019 at the Florida Association of Science Teachers (FAST) conference, where small desktop aquaponics systems and a short series of lessons were handed out to 20 elementary and middle school teachers. After a very challenging school year in 2020 we were able to reach about 250 students across the state. According to the data collected, less than a quarter of these students had even heard of aquaculture when starting this program and by the end virtually all of the students were able to correctly define it!

We're looking forward to continuing this "mini-aquaponics" program with FAITC next school year with a similar grant project funded by the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization. The lessons have been edited using teacher comments and expanded to include specific Florida State standards for teachers in grades 3 through 8. The Division and FAITC will be hosting two more workshops at FAST in October 2021 and are hoping to get another 50 volunteer teachers (25 elementary and 25 middle school) to include systems in their teaching plans. Data and comments will be collected and the lessons will be made public at the end of the project in 2022.

Inspector's Corner: Control Structures and Freeboard

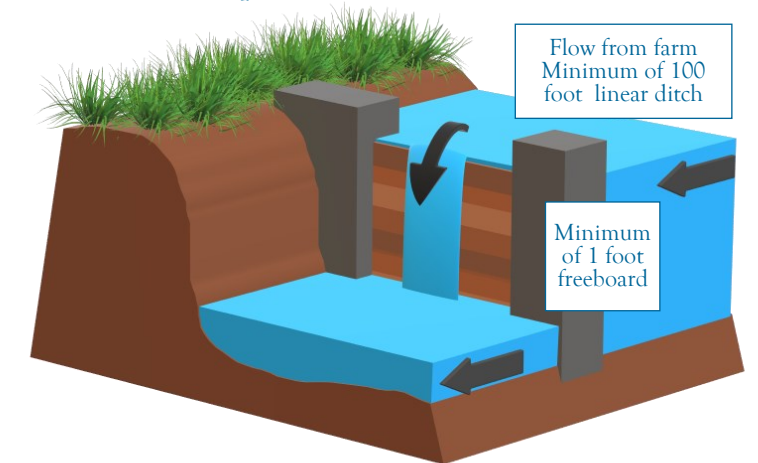
Effluent discharge (production water) from aquaculture systems typically contains suspended and settleable solids, as well as other dissolved compounds as a result of feeding and other farm activities. Properly designed and maintained ditches and control structures regulate the flow of production water during pond pumping or other draining activities, allow ample time for solids settlement and nutrient mitigation and provide protections for onsite containment of aquaculture species.

For weir type control structures, boards must be stacked at least 1 foot tall to hold water back behind the control structure, allowing water to flow only over the top (not around or under) the boards.

Similarly, for riser pipe structures, at least one foot of freeboard must be maintained at the discharge point control structure (at least one foot between the bottom of the ditch and the riser pipe outlet).

To ensure ample time for the settlement of solids and nutrient attenuation, Aquaculture Best Management Practices require a minimum of a 100 linear feet of ditch between the production water entry point and the discharge point control structure. The area and vegetation surrounding control structures should be maintained so control structures are clearly visible, and control structures should be inspected regularly to ensure proper function.

Example Weir Control Structure

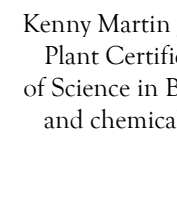


Division Staff Changes



Melanie Cain

Melanie Cain joined the Division in September 2020 as an Environmental Specialist II in the Shellfish Processing Plant Certification and Inspection Program located in the Melbourne office. She attended Stetson University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Aquatic and Marine Biology. Melanie previously worked for FDACS in Plant Inspection as a district inspector and biological technician for U.S. Fish and Wildlife, at Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge. Melanie can be reached in the Melbourne office at (321) 246-8161 or by email at Melanie.Cain@FDACS.gov.



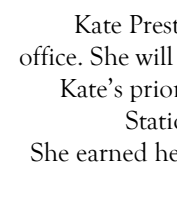
Kenny Martin

Kenny Martin joined the Division in March 2021 as an Environmental Specialist II with the Shellfish Processing Plant Certification and Inspection Program located in the Cedar Key office. Kenny graduated with a Bachelors of Science in Biology from Georgia Southwestern University, and previously worked in the wastewater treatment and chemical plant industry. He also served 20 years in the U.S. Navy. Kenny can be reached in the Cedar Key office at (352) 221-0725 or by email at Kenny.Martin@fdacs.gov.



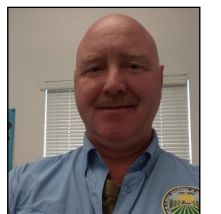
Erin Rowley

Erin Rowley started with the Division in January 2021 as an Environmental Specialist II at the Melbourne office. She will be working on the Shellfish Harvesting Area Classification Program collecting and analyzing data. Erin previously worked with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission conducting research with Diamondback terrapin turtles and Fisheries Independent Monitoring. She earned her BS degree from Florida Tech in Conservation Biology & Ecology, and is beginning her Master of Science degree in Environmental Science at Florida Atlantic University. Erin can be reached at (321) 243-9601 or by email at Erin.Rowley@FDACS.gov.



Kate Preston

Kate Preston joined the Division in November 2020 as an Environmental Specialist II in the Port Charlotte office. She will be working on the Shellfish Harvesting Area Classification Program collecting and analyzing data. Kate's prior experience has included working as staff biologist with International Field Studies at Forfar Field Station on Andros Island, Bahamas and as Brownfields program manager in the City of Ft Lauderdale. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from George Washington University in Biology majoring in Botany and a Master of Science degree from George Mason University in Environmental Biology. Kate can be reached at (941) 613-0954 or by email at Kate.Preston@FDACS.gov.



Kenny Martin



Kate Preston