

Florida Department of Agriculture and
Consumer Services
Division of Aquaculture
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Contact the Division at:
Aquaculture_Web@FDACS.gov

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

March 2025
Issue No. 115

Aquaculture Certificate of Registration Renewals

All Aquaculture Certificates of Registration will expire on June 30. **Beginning April 15, certificate holders may review, update and submit their renewal application(s) and payment(s) online via the Aquaculture Portal at aquacultureportal.FDACS.gov.**

Renewal application information listed should be reviewed to verify information, updated as necessary, then signed and dated for submission. Shellfish Harvester Education Training 2025-2026 Certificates can be uploaded with the renewal application for all persons listed on the application that work with molluscan shellfish. The training is available starting April 1, 2025, at learningmyfwc.remote-learner.net/.

Applications and fees must be remitted to the Department prior to June 30 to avoid a lapse in certification. For faster processing, payments may be made directly via the Aquaculture Portal under the “Invoices” section after submitting the online renewal application.

Authorized User Agreements expire annually with Aquaculture Certificates of Registration. 2025-2026 Authorized User Agreements may be completed online via the Aquaculture Portal directly from the lease record or completed forms may be mailed to the Division by June 30 to avoid a lapse in authorization.

For more information, visit the Division website at FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Aquaculture-Certificate-of-Registration or contact the Division at (850) 617-7613 or Aquaculture_Certificate@FDACS.gov.

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Shellfish Processing Facility Certification Renewals

All Shellfish Processing Facility Certificates expire on June 30. Renewal packets including a reminder letter that lists renewal requirements and an application were mailed the first week of March. Facilities that are certified to receive oysters from harvesters also received a Rapid Cool Letter for the 2025 calendar year.

Applications should be completed, including any updates to the facility name, management team or contact information. Completed applications should be submitted to the Division prior to April 30, 2025.

Part of the renewal process is confirmation that the wholesale license has been renewed for the upcoming year. This means either the License to Wholesale Saltwater Products (WDL) from FWC or the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration must be successfully renewed before June 30. A current HACCP plan will also be collected from the facility which must show it has been reviewed for use in the upcoming year.

In addition to the paperwork all facilities must undergo a successful re-certification inspection. No facility certification will be renewed until all outstanding Administrative Fines have been paid. All paperwork should be submitted via mail to: FDACS Division of Aquaculture, Attn: Jesse Fields, 600 South Calhoun, Suite 217, Tallahassee, Florida 32399 before June 30 in order to avoid a lapse in certification.

For more information, visit the Division website at FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Shellfish-Processing-Facility-Certification or contact the Division at (850) 617-7617 or Aqua_PPCIP@FDACS.gov.



Maintaining Compliance with the Best Management Practices

Florida’s aquaculture industry is a constantly growing and evolving sector of the state’s agriculture economy. Certified Florida aquaculture producers are adapting their operations to satisfy markets and meet growing consumer demand for aquaculture goods. It is important for producers, whether submerged land leaseholders or land-based facility operators to keep in mind that some changes to their aquaculture operation may impact the Aquaculture Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are applicable to their Aquaculture Certificate of Registration approval.

While small facility changes like adding a new production tank or a new species of tropical fish to your land-based farm may not change the BMPs a facility must implement, larger changes may require Division of Aquaculture review or advanced approval. 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. Source documentation should be obtained and retained for all new stock or seed brought to the farm.

Likewise, submerged land leaseholders have specific approvals for species, culture plans and methods (bottom vs. water column, etc.) for each lease or management agreement. Failure to implement and follow 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 aquaculture operation is compliant with applicable BMPs at all times.

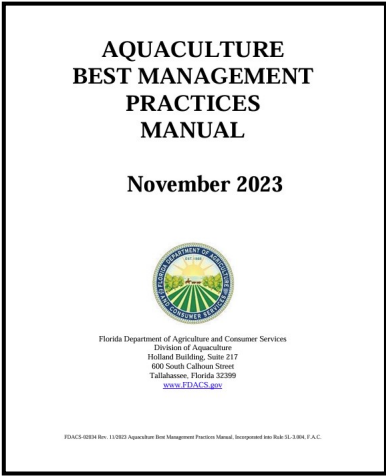
Prior to making any changes, certified aquaculture producers are encouraged to contact the Division to confirm how these changes might impact the BMPs they are required to implement and if there are any additional environmental or permitting considerations.

Examples of significant facility changes may include:

- Modifying an approved effluent treatment plan
- New construction (ex. ponds, buildings)
- Species changes where species have specific requirements for culture approval
- Increasing on-site impervious surfaces
- Culturing a Restricted Species
- Water source or use changes (salt vs. fresh, etc.)
- Change of production location

Examples of Lease changes:

- Species or gear/method changes
- Adding an Authorized User to a lease
- Seed/stock sources (any shellfish being imported from another state requires approval PRIOR to **each batch** being imported to Florida).



For more information, visit the Division website at [FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Aquaculture-Certificate-of-Registration](https://fdacs.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Aquaculture-Certificate-of-Registration) or contact the Division at (850) 617-7600 or Aquaculture_Certificate@FDACS.gov.

Aquaculture Review Council Summary

The Aquaculture Review Council held its first quarterly meeting of the year on January 15th at the FDACS Office in Bartow. The Council reviewed the twenty-four FY25-26 Statements of Interests (SOIs) submitted. The Council will review the twelve full proposals submitted at the second quarterly meeting of the year on March 18th at the FDACS Conner Building in Tallahassee.

The next ARC meeting will be held on March 18 at 9:00 AM EST at 3125 Conner Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399 to review and hear presentations from the twelve full proposals submitted. The Council will vote on which proposals will be eligible for funding.

For more information, contact ARC@FDACS.gov.

The New Aquaculture Portal

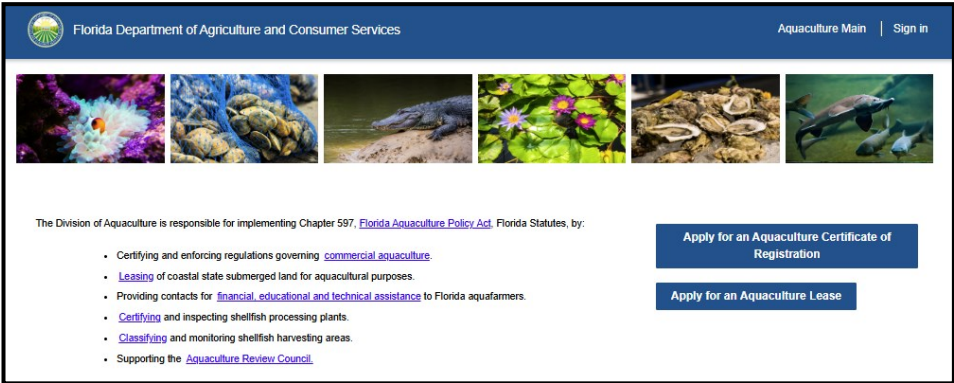
The Aquaculture Portal is a customer-facing feature of the new database for the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration and Submerged Land Leasing programs for application, renewal and payment needs.

Via the portal, new customers can apply for an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration or submerged land lease. Current certificate holders and leaseholders may use the Aquaculture Portal to review or download a copy of their Aquaculture Certificate of Registration, view information about their lease(s) and view Lease Agreement documents, apply for a new submerged land lease, apply for additional Aquaculture Certificates of Registration and annually renew active certificates. Leaseholders may also begin the process for renewing lease agreements every ten years, initiate the lease transfer process, pay annual rental fees and much more. Leaseholders may initiate Authorized User Agreements via the portal, and the intended user(s) can complete the Agreements via the portal.

Using the Aquaculture Portal has many benefits. One benefit is that much of the lease or Aquaculture Certificate of Registration information is now accessible for the customer. Another benefit is the faster processing times for payments, applications, modifications and renewals.

To visit the Aquaculture Portal and access your documents or initiate an application or modification, go to Aquacultureportal.FDACS.gov. When logging into the Aquaculture Portal, be sure to use the email the Division has on file. If unsure which email is on file, please contact the Division at (850) 617-7600 prior to visiting the Aquaculture Portal.

The Division has created multiple Guidance Documents to assist customers in navigating the Aquaculture Portal and its various features. For more information, visit the Division website at FDACS.gov/About-Us/Publications/Aquaculture-Publications or contact the Division at (850) 617-7600 or Aquaculture_Web@FDACS.gov.



Division Staff Introductions



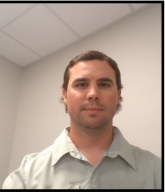
Curtis Donaldson

Curtis joined the Division of Aquaculture in October 2024 as an Environmental Specialist II in the Processing Plant Compliance and Inspection Program in the Tallahassee office. He grew up in Washington State, where he was later stationed aboard the USS John C. Stennis. After his service in the Navy, he moved to Tallahassee working in food distribution for several years. His experience provides him enhanced knowledge of processing and food regulation which aids him in his daily job at FDACS. He may be reached at (850) 694-3991 or by email at Curtis.Donaldson@FDACS.gov.

Corey joined the Division of Aquaculture in October 2024 as an Environmental Specialist II with the Shellfish Harvesting Area Classification Program in the Melbourne office. He earned a degree in Coastal and Marine Biology from the University of North Florida, studying American eel populations in the Guana River System. He may be reached at (863) 632-9531 or by email at Corey.Hymel@FDACS.gov.



Corey Hymel



Travis Pickett

Travis joined the Division of Aquaculture in January 2025 as an Environmental Specialist II with the Shellfish Harvesting Area Classification Program in the Port Charlotte office. He earned a degree in Business Marketing from the University of South Florida. He also has his United States Coast Guard Captain’s License. Before working with the Division, he was a guide for fishing charters and wildlife tours as well as a commercial fisherman. He may be reached at (850) 631-0464 or by email at Travis.Pickett@FDACS.gov.