

LEASE MANAGEMENT

FDACS-P-02154 Technical Bulletin #05 - Revised December 2025



Photo: UF/IFAS

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Safeguarding the public and supporting Florida's agricultural economy.

This publication is meant to provide a basic overview of the leasing process and operating requirements of a shellfish aquaculture lease. Refer to the variety of fact sheets referenced throughout for more detailed information about specific topics.

Important Resources

♦ [Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#)

Leaseholders must possess a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration at all times, when on the lease or transporting aquaculture products.

♦ [Aquaculture Best Management Practices Manual](#)

Manual for shellfish aquaculture activities, including docks, upland facilities and leases.

♦ [Aquaculture Leasing Process](#)

Guide to the leasing process in Florida and how to nominate a new site.

♦ [Shellfish Harvesting Area and Aquaculture Lease Maps](#)

Interactive map of all harvesting areas, leases and processing facilities in Florida.



Overview of Shellfish Aquaculture

According to the United States Department of Agriculture's 2022 [Census of Agriculture](#), shellfish farming was the second highest valued aquaculture product in Florida in 2022, bringing in \$53.3 million in agriculture value. To date, there are more than 800 shellfish leases covering more than 2,500 acres in Florida.

Shellfish farming is a multistep process, including hatchery production of seed (larvae) by spawning adult broodstock, nursery rearing of juveniles to a size sufficient for planting on leases, growout on submerged land leases to a marketable size and processing at certified shellfish processing facilities. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Division of Aquaculture certifies all commercial aquaculturists, issues and regulates all aquaculture leases and certifies all shellfish processors in the state.

Shellfish Hatcheries and Nurseries

Hatcheries are typically land-based facilities that require an [Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#) and must be annually inspected by Division staff to ensure compliance with all applicable [Aquaculture Best Management Practices](#) (BMPs). Hatcheries can be operated using a saltwater well or intake pipes from waters of the state. Farmers often produce their own live algae to feed larval shellfish. Nurseries can be



Clam seed ready to be transferred to a nursery system.

land-based or on an aquaculture dock and also require an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration. These systems typically consist of raceways or upwellers utilizing nearshore water containing natural algae to cost-effectively grow seed to a size that can then be planted on a lease.

Before clams reach 16 millimeters (approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inch) in shell length or oysters reach 25 millimeters (approximately 1 inch) in shell length, they must be moved to approved waters for growout (see [page 3](#)). Both hatcheries and nurseries must be designed and operated to meet BMPs.

For more information about [aquaculture docks](#) or an aquaculture Letter of Consent for intake or discharge pipes or aquaculture nursery equipment in state waters, please contact the Division.

Lease Audits

Each January, aquaculture leaseholders are required to complete an Affidavit of Audit for [shellfish](#) / [live rock](#) that details plantings and harvesting activities on each lease. Leaseholders must submit copies of all seedstock and cultch receipts, health certificates and proof of broodstock origin for out of state sources (see [page 7](#)) the previous year. The audit allows staff to verify whether the leaseholder has satisfied the minimum cultivation requirements.

Effective cultivation for clams requires planting a minimum of 100,000 clams per acre annually and oysters require planting a minimum of 70,000 oysters per acre annually.

Authorized Users

A leaseholder may allow another individual or company to operate on their lease as an *Authorized User (AU)*. Note that the leaseholder is responsible for the activities of the AU and all lease rules and requirements.

An [AU Acknowledgement application](#) must be completed annually (expires on June 30 each year) for anyone working or selling shellfish in their name or company separate from the leaseholder. All AUs must also possess a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration.

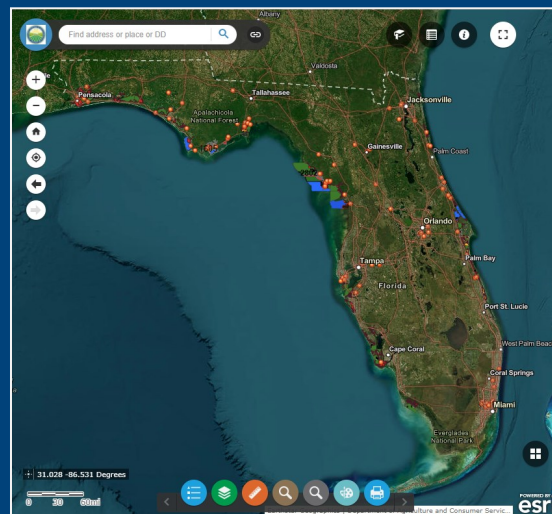
Lease Transfers

Leases may not be transferred for 5 years from the effective lease date. Additionally, to process a transfer, leases must be in compliance and not have been transferred within the last calendar year. Contact the Division for more information.



Submerged Land Leases

All aquaculture leases producing shellfish for consumption, are located in Approved and Conditionally Approved Shellfish Harvesting Areas. The producer's Aquaculture Certificate of Registration number must accompany shellfish being transported from a hatchery or nursery and to and from approved lease areas. Once the shellfish have reached the preferred market size, they are harvested from the leases, tagged and sold to a Florida certified shellfish processing facility. **Direct to retail sales of shellfish is prohibited.** See [page 9](#) for regulations related to retail sales. More information regarding processing can be found on [page 8](#).



An [interactive map](#) of locations and information about all aquaculture leases, shellfish harvesting areas and processing facilities can be found on the Division webpage.

For more information about the leasing process and obtaining an aquaculture lease, please review the [Submerged Lands Leasing Process for Aquaculture](#) fact sheet. To submit an application and view current lease availability, visit the [Aquaculture Portal](#).

Aquaculture Certification of Registration

Any company or person engaging in commercial aquaculture (leaseholders, sublessees and authorized users) is required to obtain an [Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#) (AQ Certificate) and comply with all applicable [Aquaculture Best Management Practices](#) (BMPs). The AQ Certificate identifies the aquaculturist, their lease, product and/or facility. Personnel employed by a leaseholder are covered under the leaseholder's AQ Certificate number. Persons who are not employees of the leaseholder and are engaged in culturing and harvesting shellfish from leases are considered Authorized Users (see more information about Authorized Users in the box to the left). **The AQ Certificate is valid from July 1, order of issuance, to June 30 and must be renewed annually at a cost of \$100.**

Annual Lease Fees

Aquaculture lease fees are paid annually based on the number of acres leased and the lease type, and are subject to annual adjustment by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund based on the Consumer Price Index established for the previous five years. Current bottom lease fees are \$16.73 per acre and fraction thereof, plus a \$10.00 surcharge per acre and fraction thereof. Water column lease fees are \$33.46 per acre and fraction thereof, plus a \$10.00 surcharge per acre and fraction thereof. **Payment is due on January 1 of each year, and annual billing statements are mailed to each leaseholder approximately 60 days before payment is due.**

Shellfish Harvester Education Training

Each harvester and AQ Certificate holder producing shellfish is required to complete the Shellfish Harvester Education Training (HET), which is an interactive educational video regarding proper handling and harvesting of shellfish product. Following completion, a signed certificate will be issued for submission along with any license or AQ Certificate application. **An application or renewal for an AQ Certificate that includes shellfish as a product will not be processed without a valid copy of your HET.**

The training can be taken online at: LearningMyFWC.remote-learner.net/login/index.php. Contact the Division for assistance taking the training or to attend an in-person training.

Shellfish Harvesting Area Management

The goal of the Division's Shellfish Harvesting Area Classification program is to provide maximum utilization of shellfish resources in Florida waters, while minimizing the risk of shellfish-borne illness. To achieve this goal and be able to ship shellfish nationally and internationally, Florida is a member of the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC). The ISSC is an association of states, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), National Marine Fisheries Service, Environmental Protection Agency and the shellfish industry.

As an ISSC member, Florida must adopt laws and regulations for the sanitary control of the shellfish industry, including surveying harvesting areas, harvesting area classification standards and ensuring that shellfish are grown, harvested and processed in a safe and sanitary manner. Each classification standard reflects a different degree of water quality based on fecal coliform bacteria data. You can learn more about [National Shellfish Sanitation Program requirements](#) and individual area management plans and characteristics by reviewing the [Shellfish Harvesting Area Classification Boundaries and Management Plan](#) publication.



Shellfish Harvesting Area Classifications

Approved: Normally open to shellfish harvesting. May be closed due to extraordinary circumstances such as harmful algal blooms, hurricanes and sewage spills. Appears **BLUE** on maps.

Conditionally Approved:

Periodically closed to shellfish harvesting based on pollution events, such as rainfall or river level. May also close under extraordinary circumstances. Appears **GREEN** on maps.

Restricted/Conditionally Restricted:

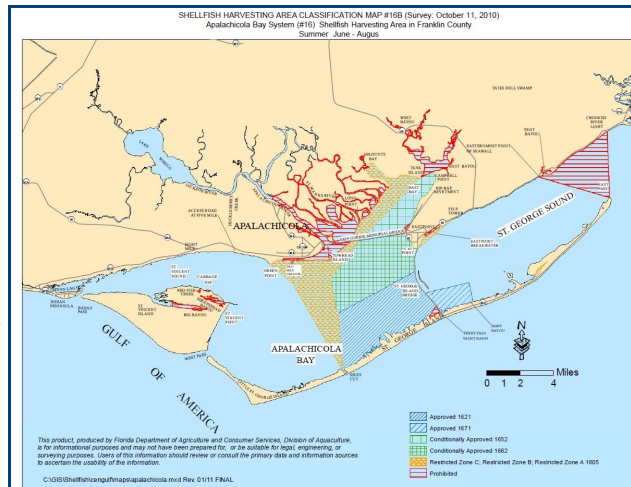
Shellfish harvesting is not permitted in Restricted or Conditionally Restricted areas. Appears **ORANGE** on maps.

Prohibited: Shellfish harvesting is not permitted in a Prohibited area due to actual or potential pollution sources and poor water quality standards. Appears **RED** on maps.

Unclassified: Shellfish harvesting is not permitted because a management plan has not been developed. Areas are often unclassified because little interest in shellfish harvesting exists. Not designated on harvesting area maps.

Temporary Closures Explained

Temporary closures of shellfish harvesting areas are most commonly caused by rainfall events or elevated river levels. These events create stormwater runoff, which is known to transport pollutants and pathogens into surface waters. Shellfish harvesting areas are closed after such events trigger closures, based upon each area's management plan. To reopen an area following temporary closure associated with a rainfall or river exceedance, water sample results must meet the appropriate standards. Public health is protected by allowing shellfish to be harvested only from waters that meet a high quality classification standard (approved and conditionally approved).



Example map of approved (blue), conditionally approved (green), restricted (orange), and prohibited (red) shellfish harvesting areas.

Managing Pathogens in Shellfish

Shellfish are filter feeders, which means that they get food and oxygen by pumping water across their gills. In addition to food particles, shellfish may take in pathogens (bacteria and viruses that can cause disease), harmful algal species or chemical contaminants from the surrounding environment. Pathogens can be concentrated in shellfish digestive systems and tissues at over 100 times the levels in the surrounding water.

Since shellfish are often eaten raw or partially cooked, they may pose a significant health hazard to consumers, especially if the shellfish are harvested from polluted areas or during times when pathogens are abundant (such as after rainfall events). Individuals with compromised immune systems are at an increased risk of illness from eating raw or undercooked shellfish.

To minimize the risk of shellfish borne illness, the Division routinely monitors shellfish harvesting areas for the presence of fecal coliform bacteria. Most of these bacteria do not make people ill, but their presence may indicate that other, more harmful pathogens are also present. Each year, the Division collects and analyzes data from over 1,200 sampling stations in 38 shellfish harvesting areas, encompassing more than 1.3 million acres.

For more information about shellfish harvesting area management, visit [Shellfish Harvesting Area Classification](#).

Visit the [Shellfish Harvesting Area Status](#) webpage to determine the status of the area your lease is located in. Contact the Division at Aqua_Status_Update@FDACS.gov to be automatically notified when your specific shellfish harvesting area(s) closes and reopens.



Private Aids to Navigation

A water column lease utilizes more than six inches off the bottom on a submerged land lease and requires markers pursuant to a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Private Aids to Navigation (PATON) permit. The PATON communicates the potential hazard to the boating public with a notice to mariners and coastal navigation charts are updated to depict the hazard.

The PATON permit may consist of buoys, signage or lights which are to be installed and maintained by the lessee after the specific configuration and design is approved by the USCG. Each marking situation requires individual and specific review by the USCG. While the USCG considers many variables when determining marking requirements (the type of obstruction, specific location, water depth, vessel traffic and density), types of vessels or marine life are the primary considerations.

The Division coordinates the submission and approval process with USCG on behalf of all leaseholders that require a PATON. Refer to your lease agreement for specific requirements for marking your lease.



Lease Marking Requirements

The exterior boundaries of individual water column leases and Aquaculture Use Zones (AUZ) are designated with corner markers, which have the following requirements:

- 1) A 6-inch or greater diameter pole with a sign installed a minimum of 3-feet above mean high water.
- 2) A 3-foot x 3-foot, yellow diamond sign ($\frac{1}{2}$ -inch medium density plywood or $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch commercial grade aluminum) with 2-inch yellow reflective border.
- 3) A 12-inch black block letter as specified in your lease agreement.
- 4) Corner direction (*i.e.*, NE, NW, SE, SW) and lease or parcel number (*e.g.*, L-123).
- 5) A flashing yellow marine lantern for water column leases.

The boundary of each individual lease is designated by a parcel post or buoy, which have the following requirements:

- 1) **Posts** must be white and have a minimum diameter of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (2-inch PVC pipe is most commonly used).
- 2) International orange bands of reflective tape at the top and bottom, at a minimum of 18-inches above mean high water.
- 3) Corner direction (NE, NW, SE, SW) and lease or parcel number (*e.g.*, L-123) in 1-inch black block characters, providing the parcel's appropriate corner direction (NE, NW, SE, SW) and parcel or lease number.
- 4) **Buoys** must be maintained upright at a minimum height of 14-inches above mean high water mark and also contain the corner direction (NE, NW, SE, SW), and lease or parcel number (*e.g.*, L-123) in 1-inch black block characters.



External boundaries of water column leases are required for oyster farms, which utilize floating cages or suspended long line systems. These leases must be designated with corner markers (see [page 5](#) for more details).

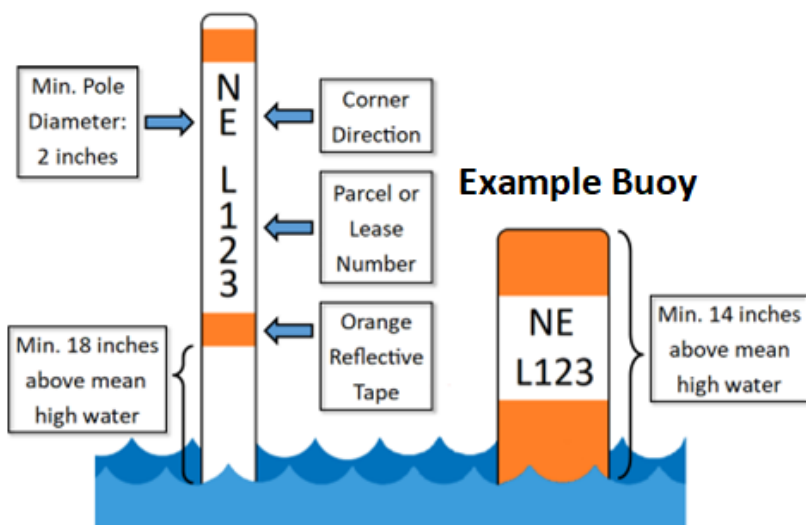
Labeling Suspended and Floating Gear

The leaseholder's identification information shall be attached to all floating or off-bottom culture structures. In the event that floating or off-bottom culture structures become unanchored and lost, gear tags allow the leaseholder's property to be identified and improve the likelihood of being returned to the owner. This can be especially important during severe weather events when multiple leases may lose gear at the same time. The leaseholder is required to retrieve any dislodged structures or equipment from the shoreline, seagrass beds or submerged bottom with minimal damage to the resources affected. Any derelict structures must be removed and properly disposed of or returned to the lease site.

Gear tags come in a variety of types and designs. Contact the University of Florida, Shellfish Extension office at LNST@UFL.edu for more information about gear tags and current suppliers.

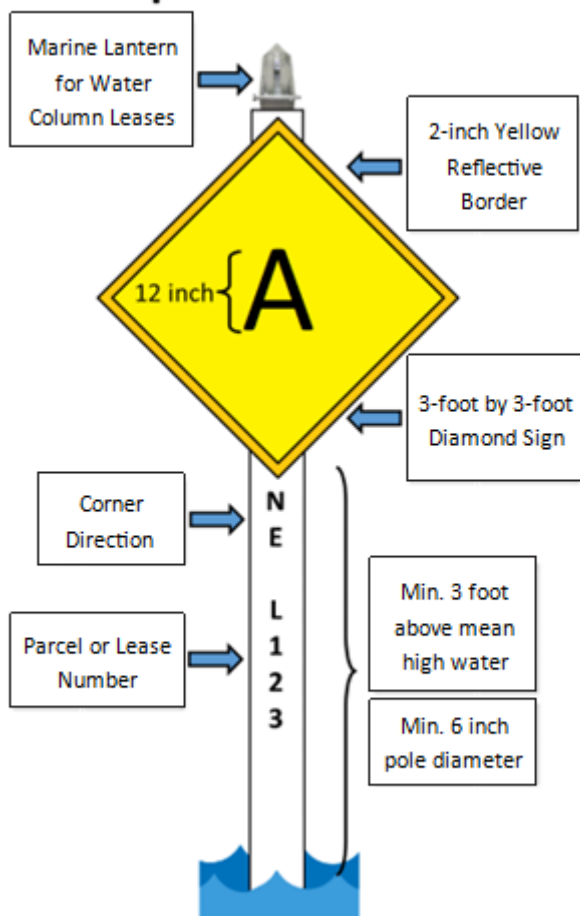


Example Post

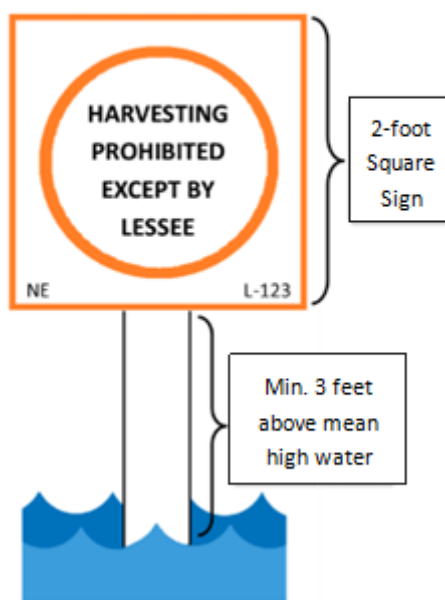


Either posts **or** buoys must be used consistently on the lease corners.

Example Corner Marker



Example Theft Prevention Sign



Optional Theft Prevention Signs include: A 2-foot x 2-foot sign extending 3-foot above mean high water and with: 1) a white field with international orange bands of reflective tape around the perimeter; 2) the "circle symbol" using international orange reflective tape; and 3) the phrase: **"HARVEST PROHIBITED EXCEPT BY LESSEE"**.

Marine Lantern Equipment Suppliers

Marine lanterns, if required, must be U.S. Coast Guard approved. Vendors include, but are not limited to:

Essi Corporation

200 Cummings Road
Broussard, Louisiana 70518
Telephone: (337) 837 3774
Fax: (337) 837 3712
Website: EssiCorp.com

McDermott Corporation

1639 Stephen Street
Ridgewood, New York 11385
Phone: (718) 456 3606
Fax: (718) 381 0229
Website: McDermottLight.com

Sealite USA LLC.

61 Business Park Drive
Tilton, New Hampshire 03276
Phone: (603) 737 1311
Fax: (603) 737 1320
Website: Sealite.com

Tideland Signal Corp.

7100 Business Park Drive
Houston, Texas 77041
Phone: (713) 681 6101
Fax: (713) 681 6233
Website: TideLandSignal.com

Tidal Marine

10 Watertower Road
Saint John, New Brunswick
Canada, E2M 7K2
Phone: (506) 633 7850 x204
Fax: (506) 633 7859
Website: TidalMarine.com

Vendor information does not imply an endorsement by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Vendors not listed are welcome to contact the Division of Aquaculture with their information and this fact sheet will be updated.

Resubmerging Shellfish

Pursuant to [Rule Chapter 5L-1, Florida Administrative Code \(F.A.C.\)](#), sorting or washing of shellfish may be performed by the aquaculturist over their lease or received and cleaned by a certified shellfish processing facility during normal operation hours.

Due to the rapid growth of *Vibrio* bacteria in unsubmerged oysters during summer months, aquaculture oysters larger than 25 millimeters (approximately 1 inch) that are removed from the water during the course of routine oyster husbandry practices for **more than 4 hours during April through October** must be returned to the lease and remain submerged on that aquaculture lease for a **minimum of 14 days before they can be harvested** and sold to a certified shellfish processing facility. Routine oyster husbandry practices include the use of suspended growout containers that may be unsubmerged during natural tidal cycles.

Aquaculture shellfish that are replanted or resubmerged following routine husbandry practices, such as cleaning, must be segregated from other shellfish on the lease and must be clearly identified.

Aquaculturists must maintain a replant log of all replant and resubmergence activities that includes:

- 1) Date of initial removal from water at lease site
- 2) Lease number
- 3) Date of replant
- 4) Replant lease number
- 5) Replant location on lease
- 6) Replant species and quantity

See [page 8](#) for more information on harvest and processing requirements for *Vibrio* control.



Aquaculture Best Management Practices

In order to establish a streamlined regulatory process, FDACS created the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration program and [Aquaculture Best Management Practices](#) (BMPs). **BMPs are required to be followed by all certified aquaculturists.** The Division conducts periodic inspections of each certified aquaculture facility, including submerged land leases, to ensure compliance with BMPs and the lease terms.

As a leaseholder, you are agreeing to comply with all applicable BMPs and the terms of your aquaculture lease agreement. Noncompliance may result in cancellation of the lease agreement and/or the prohibition from acquiring or subletting any new sovereignty submerged lands. **The following BMPs are not all of the shellfish aquaculture rules.** It is your responsibility to ensure you are following all applicable regulations. Refer to the [BMP Manual](#) or contact the Division any time for clarification.

Select Shellfish Aquaculture BMPs

- ◆ All stock placed on leases must be native to Florida.
- ◆ All shellfish nursery or hatchery locations must be listed on the AQ Certificate.
- ◆ All farmed shellfish must be transported or shipped in distinct containers and identified by the producer's AQ Certificate number.
- ◆ Shellfish must be harvested, tagged, transported and processed in compliance with [Rule 5L-1, F.A.C.](#). See [page 8](#) for more information.
- ◆ Activity on aquaculture leases is allowed from sunrise to sunset.
- ◆ Relaying wild shellfish to a lease is strictly prohibited.
- ◆ No vessel of any description shall be moored on or adjacent to a lease for a period exceeding 24 hours, regardless of whether the vessel is periodically moved.
- ◆ Mechanical harvesting is prohibited on aquaculture leases, unless specified in your lease agreement.
- ◆ The leaseholder's identification information shall be attached to all floating or off-bottom culture structures, and it is the leaseholder's responsibility to retrieve any lost gear or structures and properly dispose of derelict gear.
- ◆ Non-natural materials placed in the water or on submerged lands shall be anchored to the bottom. This includes any protective netting used to cover clam bags.
- ◆ All culture materials and equipment must be clean and free of pollutants.
- ◆ Bags, cover nets and/or trays used in the culture operation shall be removed from the water during all mechanical cleaning, maintenance and repair operations.
 - ⇒ During harvest, culture bags and cover nets shall be rinsed/cleaned over the growout area to allow sediments to remain in the lease area.
 - ⇒ Mechanical or hydraulic devices shall not be used below the water for the cleaning of submerged structures.
 - ⇒ Use hand tools for cleaning shellfish, bags and other structures under water.
- ◆ The aquaculturist must remove all equipment, structures and improvements from the lease within 60 days following the date of expiration or termination of the lease.

Importing Aquaculture Seed or Stocks from Out-of-State

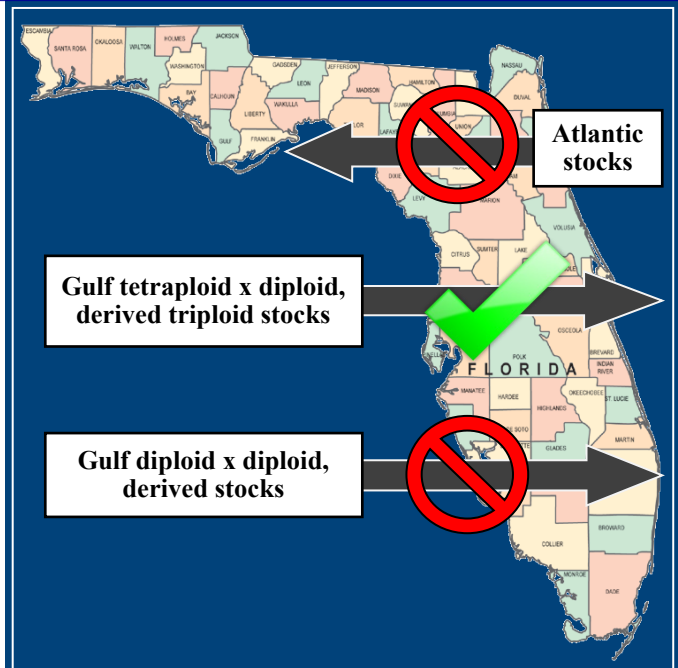
Note: These rules apply to shellfish seed or stocks intended for aquaculture purposes, not shellfish imported following processing for commercial sale.

All shellfish seed or stock intended for aquaculture imported from out-of-state must be accompanied by the following documentation:

- 1) **Diagnostic results**, from an accredited laboratory, that identify the pathology test performed, test results and the dates of such testing.
- 2) A valid **Official Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (OCVI)** made on an official form from the animal's state of origin, issued and signed by a veterinarian licensed and accredited in the state of origin. **An OCVI is valid for 30 days following issuance.**
- 3) **Documentation of broodstock origin.**
- 4) **Ploidy verification, if applicable** (*i.e.* triploid oyster stocks), that documents:
 - ◆ The methods utilized to create the triploids (*i.e.* tetraploid x diploid cross, heat shock or chemical induction);
 - ◆ The methods utilized to verify ploidy;
 - ◆ Ploidy test results from a representative sample of the stock.
- 5) Diagnostic results and the OCVI must show that no evidence of the following pathogens were detected:
 - ◆ Quahog Parasite Unknown (QPX) in clams;
 - ◆ *Haplosporidium nelsoni* (MSX), *Perkinsus marinus* (Dermo) and *Bonamia exitiosa* in oysters;
 - ◆ Additional pathogens as identified by the State Veterinarian, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services or the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) list may require additional testing.

When Purchasing Shellfish Seed or Gametes From an Out-of-State Hatchery:

- 1) Request an OCVI and diagnostic results on the shellfish stocks you wish to import into Florida. Each hatchery should be working closely with a licensed veterinarian that can provide diagnostic services and an OCVI.
- 2) OCVIs and diagnostic results must be submitted to the Division a minimum of two business days prior to shipment for approval via email at Aquaculture_Health@FDACS.gov.
- 3) After receiving written/email approval from the Division, the order may be imported into Florida.
- 4) **At time of delivery, request an invoice and copies of documentation** from the seller detailing the following information:
 - ◆ Date of entry/receipt
 - ◆ Date of shipment
 - ◆ Name and address of seller
 - ◆ Name and address of buyer
 - ◆ Buyer's AQ Certificate number
 - ◆ Species
 - ◆ Total number and average size of animals
 - ◆ Ploidy results (if applicable, *i.e.* triploid seed)
 - ◆ Copy of diagnostic test results
 - ◆ Copy of OCVI
 - ◆ Broodstock origin documentation
- 5) After receiving the order, **maintain all health records and receipts on file for a minimum of two years.** Records must be available for inspection by the Division upon request.



Oyster movement restrictions are depicted above. Requirements are based on both genetic and disease concerns.

Shellfish Movement Rules

- ◆ Documentation of broodstock origin must be obtained from the hatchery and retained for two years.
- ◆ In state and out of state aquaculturists who intend to sell or use **clam seed stocks** for further growout in the State of Florida (including at certified upland facilities) must use broodstock which originated from Florida waters in their genetic selection program.
- ◆ Oysters, including all triploid seed, produced from oysters in Atlantic coast waters can only be utilized for growout in Atlantic coast waters.
- ◆ Growout of Atlantic derived oysters in Gulf coast waters is prohibited due to differences in genetics and the presence of the parasite *Haplosporidium nelsoni* also known as MSX, in the Atlantic Ocean.
- ◆ Oysters, with the exception of tetraploid derived stocks, produced from oysters in Florida Gulf coast waters can only be utilized for growout in Gulf coast waters.
- ◆ For triploid oyster seed **derived from a tetraploid x diploid cross**, oyster broodstock must originate from Gulf coast waters and seed may be grown in any waters of the state.
- ◆ For out of state triploid oyster seed **derived from a diploid x diploid cross** (*i.e.*, heat shock method), oyster broodstock must originate from the water body (Florida Gulf of America or Florida Atlantic Ocean) where they will be grown.

Harvest Vessel Sanitation

Vessels must be registered and comply with U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) vessel requirements including:

- ◆ A marine sanitation device;
- ◆ Clearly displayed registration number and decal;
- ◆ A vessel certificate of registration onboard;
- ◆ USCG approved flotation device for each person onboard;
- ◆ A marine use fire extinguisher;
- ◆ A sound producing device;
- ◆ 3 daytime/nighttime signals;
- ◆ Boats longer than 16 feet must also have a USCG approved throwable flotation device.

Vessels must be constructed and maintained to also protect shellfish from contamination including:

- ◆ All boats must have false bottoms and fore and aft bulkheads to prevent shellfish from coming in contact with any bilge water, fuel or other contaminants.
- ◆ No dogs or other animals are allowed on the boat at any time.
- ◆ Boats must have a portable toilet or other sewage disposal receptacle with a tight fitting lid that will not spill onboard.
- ◆ Shellfish must be covered/shaded with burlap, an awning or other breathable material which prevents direct sunlight, allows air circulation and promotes evaporative cooling. **Plastic tarps are not allowed.**

Please contact the Division at Aqua_PPCIP@FDACS.gov if you have any questions regarding shellfish harvesting, processing or sales requirements.



Harvesting and Transporting Farmed Shellfish

Aquaculture shellfish must adhere to the same sanitary harvesting and handling requirements as wild harvested shellfish. **No wild shellfish can be relayed to a lease under any circumstances. Shellfish must be:**

- ◆ Harvested from open shellfish harvesting areas (see [page 3](#)).
- ◆ Properly identified with a completed aquaculture tag **at all times** following harvest. Tags must be attached to shellfish containers while on the water during harvest **in all circumstances**.
- ◆ Graded, tumbled and/or cleaned over the lease area or delivered to and received by a certified shellfish processing facility for cleaning. Refer to [page 6](#) for information about replanting shellfish following cleaning.
- ◆ Delivered directly to a certified shellfish processing facility by the time listed in the Refrigeration Requirements table below **during the same day as harvest**.

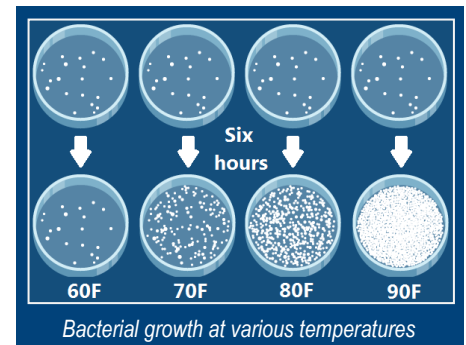
Refrigeration Requirements for Shellfish to a Certified Shellfish Processing Facility

Refrigeration/cooling of shellfish after harvest is critical for reducing pathogen growth and protecting consumer health. **Shellfish must be delivered to a certified shellfish processing facility the same day as harvest.** Rapid delivery and cooling of product is critical during *Vibrio* control months (April through October). Shellfish must be received and refrigerated in a cooler that is at or below 45°F by a certified shellfish processing facility based on the time specified in table below.

Oysters					Clams
(Times listed in the table are when oysters must be placed in a cooler at a certified shellfish processing facility)					
Month	Traditional Cooling ¹	Rapid Cooling ²	On-board Cooling ³	Restricted Use Only ⁴ (Green Tag)	Delivery to processor (same day of harvest)
November	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.
December	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.
January	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.
February	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.
March	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.
April	11:00 a.m.	1:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	4:00 p.m.	12 Hours
May	Not permitted	11:00 a.m.	3:00 p.m.	4:00 p.m.	12 Hours
June	Not permitted	11:00 a.m.	3:00 p.m.	4:00 p.m.	10 Hours
July	Not permitted	11:00 a.m.	3:00 p.m.	4:00 p.m.	10 Hours
August	Not permitted	11:00 a.m.	3:00 p.m.	4:00 p.m.	10 Hours
September	Not permitted	11:00 a.m.	3:00 p.m.	4:00 p.m.	10 Hours
October	11:00 a.m.	1:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	4:00 p.m.	12 Hours

- 1) **Traditional Cooling (Oct-April):** Oysters must be in the cooler of a certified shellfish processing facility by time specified the day of harvest and cooled down to 55°F or less in 8 hours.
- 2) **Rapid Cooling:** Oysters must be in the cooler of a certified shellfish processing facility by time specified the day of harvest and cooled down to 55°F or less in 2 hours.
- 3) **On-board Cooling:** Oysters cooled on the harvesting vessel must use an approved method validated by the Division of Aquaculture. Oysters must be cooled down to 55°F or less and in the cooler of a certified shellfish processing facility no later than 3:00 pm.
- 4) **Restricted Use (Green Tag):** Oysters that do not meet the Rapid Cool or On-Board Cooling requirements must be tagged for shucking only by a certified shellfish processing facility or for Post-Harvest Processing (PHP) only.

Learn more information concerning shellfish processing on the [Shellfish Processing Facility Certification](#) page.



Bulk Aquaculture Tags

BULK AQUACULTURE TAG

ALL SHELLFISH CONTAINERS IN THIS LOT HAVE THE SAME DATE AND AREA OF HARVEST

Cooling option (circle one): Traditional Rapid Cool On-Board Cool

HARVESTER SPL # OR AQ #: Aquaculture Certificate of Registration # (AQ0000000)

DATE OF HARVEST: _____ TIME OF HARVEST: _____

TIME OF REFRIGERATION, IF APPLICABLE: _____

LEGAL HARVEST AREA NAME OR #: (4 Digit Code)

SPECIFIC HARVEST LOCATION NAME OR #: (Aquaculture Lease #)

TYPE OF SHELLFISH: _____ QUANTITY OF SHELLFISH: _____

Product consigned to certified shellfish processor #: FL ####-SS

THIS TAG IS REQUIRED TO BE ATTACHED UNTIL CONTAINER IS EMPTY OR IS RETAGGED AND THEREAFTER KEPT ON FILE, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, FOR 90 DAYS.

Dimensions: 5 1/4" x 2 5/8"

Shellfish Harvest Tags must be affixed to all harvested shellfish. The tag must be waterproof, 5¼-inch by 2⅝-inch minimum size and follow the requirements of [5L-1.007 F.A.C.](#) For more information about all shellfish tag types, see the [Shellfish Tagging Requirements](#) fact sheet. Bulk Aquaculture Tags (pictured above) are similar to typical harvester tags, but indicate that all shellfish were harvested from the same aquaculture lease on the same day and the specific processor to which the product will be delivered.

Tags must list all of the following information:

- ◆ Leaseholder or Authorized User's Aquaculture Certificate of Registration number (AQ#), even if the product is being transported by an employee. Saltwater Product License numbers (SPL#) **cannot** be listed on tags for aquaculture shellfish.
- ◆ Shellfish Harvesting Area number (four digit code);
- ◆ The specific lease (00-AQ-000) or parcel (X-000) number where the product was harvested;
- ◆ Date and time of harvest (when the first shellfish was removed from the water for that specific lot or container);
- ◆ Type (oysters or clams) and quantity of shellfish;
- ◆ Certified shellfish processing facility number that the product was consigned/sold to.
- ◆ Time and type of refrigeration, *if applicable*;
- ◆ The following statement: **"All shellfish containers in this lot have the same date and area of harvest"**.

Retail Sale of Aquaculture Products

All farmed shellfish must be received and processed by a certified shellfish processing facility. Once processed and re-tagged with a processor tag that includes the AQ#, aquaculturists can then buy back their shellfish and sell directly to retail establishments, such as seafood markets, restaurants and individual consumers. **If you plan to sell farmed shellfish by setting up a tent, catering business, food truck, farmers market booth or similar outlet, additional licenses are required.**

For permit and licensing information related to **retail sales of raw seafood at farmers markets, roadside stands, etc.**, contact the Division of Food Safety at (850) 245-5520 or Foodinsp@FDACS.gov or visit www.FDACS.gov/Business-Services/Food-Establishments/Mobile-Food-Vendors. For permit and licensing information related to **retail sales at temporary events such as festivals, football games, etc., or retail sales of prepared or cooked seafood**, contact the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Division of Hotel and Restaurants at (850) 487-1395 or DHR.info@MyFloridaLicense.com.

See the [Retail Sales of Farmed Shellfish](#) fact sheet for more information.

Receipts and Container Labels

Aquaculture products must be identified with an AQ# while possessed, transported or sold from harvest to point of sale.

Receipts, bills of sale, bills of lading or other such manifest must show:

- ◆ Date of sale
- ◆ Name and address of seller (harvester, processor, etc.)
- ◆ Name and address of purchaser (processor, distributor, etc.)
- ◆ Seller's Aquaculture Certificate of Registration number (AQ#)
- ◆ Shellfish common name and quantity

Farmed shellfish cannot be transported in the same boat as wild shellfish at any time.

Aquaculture shellfish products must be transported in containers that separate aquaculture products from wild stocks. Shellfish containers must be identified by tags or labels which are securely attached and clearly displayed.

Facilities must maintain records of all live purchases and/or all live sales of shellfish. **These records must include:**

- ◆ Date of shipment
- ◆ Name, address and AQ #(s) of the supplier and the recipient if to another Florida aquaculturist

Records must be retained by the hatchery or farm and available for inspection by Division staff upon request. Invoices or bills of lading containing the above information is sufficient.

Technical Assistance Contacts

Shellfish Production

Leslie Sturmer

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(352) 493 8340

Shellfish Reproduction

Dr. Huiping Yang

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(352) 294 0671

Aquaculture Economics

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Seafood Processing

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Shellfish Ecology and Physiology

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Shellfish Extension

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(813) 671 5230

Panhandle

Erik Lovestrand

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(850) 653 9337

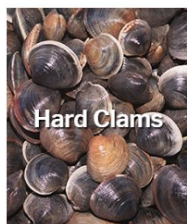
Shellfish Aquaculture Research and Extension Program

An integral part of the University of Florida [Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences](#) (UF/IFAS), the [Shellfish Aquaculture Research and Extension Program](#) is a university-based program that supports integrated research, education and extension to develop, sustain and enhance economic opportunities for the shellfish aquaculture industry in Florida.



UF/IFAS taps into the expertise of scientists of various disciplines located within the university's 20 departments and schools. The statewide UF/IFAS extension specialists lead highly relevant programs including seafood safety, aquaculture economics and business management, invertebrate physiology and ecology, shellfish reproduction, soil and water sciences and more. The Division's extension, education and outreach programs are often done in partnership with UF/IFAS Extension, [Florida Sea Grant](#) and coastal counties of Florida.

SHELLFISH



Hard Clams



Oysters



Sunray Venus

TOPICS



Water Quality



Environmental Benefits



The Shellfish Extension webpage (Shellfish.IFAS.UFL.edu) has a large variety of Florida specific shellfish aquaculture information, publications and videos available to assist farmers with all aspects of shellfish aquaculture.

You can also contact UF/IFAS Shellfish Extension at (352) 543-5057.

The resource webpage for Florida shellfish aquaculture serves as a one-stop shop for technical assistance for your shellfish farm, including:

- ◆ Fact Sheets and How-to Guides
- ◆ Financial and Risk Considerations
- ◆ Applied Research Projects
- ◆ Supplier Lists for Gear and Seed
- ◆ Workshop Videos
- ◆ Up-to-Date News

Aquaculture Tax Exemptions

As an aquaculture farmer possessing a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration, you qualify for the same agricultural tax exemptions offered to other forms of agriculture. **Many common items, such as boats, trailers, motors, gas, diesel, generators, feed, electricity, pumps and more, are exempt from sales tax in Florida.**

For more information and to download purchaser exemption certificates, see the [Aquaculture Tax Exemptions](#) fact sheet or visit Florida Farm Bureau's tax exemption website at: www.FloridaFarmBureau.org/agricultural-sales-tax-exemptions-in-florida/.



Additional Resources

The Division has a variety of publications that may be useful to you as a shellfish farmer. All of these fact sheets can be accessed through the Division's webpage at:

www.FDACS.gov/About-Us/Publications/Aquaculture-Publications. You can also contact the Division to have hard copies mailed to you free of charge.

Fact Sheets

- ♦ [List of Certified Hatcheries and Nurseries](#)
- ♦ [Shellfish Aquaculture Gear Management](#)
- ♦ [Preparation and Recovery from Hurricanes](#)
- ♦ [Aquaculture Technical Assistance Contacts](#)
- ♦ [Guide to Importing and Exporting Aquaculture Products](#)
- ♦ [Guide to Shellfish Net Coatings](#)
- ♦ [Background and Monitoring Program for Florida Red Tide](#)
- ♦ [Aquaculture Business Resources Webpage](#)
- ♦ [Aquaculture Tax Exemptions](#)
- ♦ [Administrative Fees and Deadlines](#)

Crop Insurance

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency offers disaster insurance options for both oysters and clams, [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) or [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish](#) (ELAP). NAP insurance provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops for natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses or prevents crop planting. Basic NAP coverage is affordable and can provide needed financial assistance if your crop is lost due to a severe weather event or other disaster. ELAP provides funding for losses that are not covered under other programs such as NAP. Eligible adverse weather conditions include hurricanes. Contact your [local Farm Service Agency office](#) for details and to apply for a NAP or ELAP policy. The state office can be reached at (352) 379-4500.

Aquaculture Loan Program

The [Agriculture and Aquaculture Producers Emergency Recovery Loan Program](#) has been established within the FDACS to make low-interest or interest-free loans to agricultural and aquaculture producers who have experienced damage from a declared emergency.

Financial and Business Consulting

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) can provide free one-on-one business consulting and training to assist you with a variety of topics including loan access, state and federal financial resources and marketing plans. As Florida's principle provider of business assistance, SBDC aims to ensure the viability of Florida's farm businesses while meeting the challenges of tomorrow. The [Florida SBDC webpage](#) or call (866) 737-7232 for more information.



TEAM Card

The Florida Farm Tax Exempt Agricultural Materials (TEAM) Card is a sales tax exemption card intended for use by qualified farmers to claim applicable sales tax exemptions provided in [Section 212.08, Florida Statutes \(F.S.\)](#), on items purchased for agricultural use. A qualified farmer desiring to obtain a TEAM Card must complete an [application](#) for a Florida Farm Tax Exempt Agricultural Materials (TEAM) Card (Form DR-1 TEAM). If your application is approved, the Department of Revenue will notify

Shellfish Aquaculture Associations

Florida Aquaculture Association

www.FLAA.org
(813) 438 3522
geno@evansfishfarm.com

Florida Shellfish Aquaculture Association

(850) 524 0916
flshellfishaa@gmail.com

Cedar Key Aquaculture Association

(352) 543 5057
cantwellrr@bellsouth.net

East Coast Shellfish Growers Association

ECSGA.org
(401) 783 3360
bob@ecsga.org

National Aquaculture Association

www.theNAA.net
(850) 216 2400
naa@thenaa.net



Reporting Illegal Activities



Law enforcement officers of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) are responsible for enforcing all shellfish resource and aquaculture laws in the state. Marine patrol officers are available in every county of the state and can respond to situations that are reported by farmers or the general public. Illegal harvesting of shellfish or improper harvesting sanitation or handling may result in shellfish illnesses which can close harvesting areas for all users, including leaseholders.

To protect public safety and your farm, FWC should be contacted anytime you suspect illegal activities.

Report Illegal activities to the Wildlife Alert Hotline anytime at:
(888) 404-FWCC
(888) 404-3922



Aquaculture Review Council



The Aquaculture Review Council (ARC) was established in Florida statute ([Chapter 597.005, Florida Statute.](#)) to provide a means of communication between the aquaculture industry and FDACS. The council consists of eight members appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture. These eight members represent the industry groups and include an alligator farmer, a food fish farmer, a shellfish farmer, a tropical fish farmer, an aquatic plant farmer, a representative of the commercial fishing industry and a representative of the aquaculture industry at-large. **The ARC has public meetings quarterly and the responsibility to recommend rules and policies governing the aquaculture industry to the Commissioner of Agriculture.** The ARC annually submits a list of recommendations for short-term research projects designed to address research priorities as identified in the [Florida Aquaculture Plan](#). The Council reviews and discusses problems that act as barriers to the growth and development of aquaculture and has been key in the continued growth of the aquaculture industry in Florida. For more information about the ARC, see the [ARC webpage](#) or contact ARC@FDACS.gov.

Wild Shellfish Harvesting Information

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is responsible for enforcement of wild shellfish harvesting regulations. Information on licenses required to engage in recreational or commercial harvest, harvest seasons, gear or bag limits for wild harvest can be obtained by visiting MyFWC.com/fishing/saltwater/ or by calling the Division of Marine Fisheries Management at (850) 487-0554. Wild shellfish harvesting is also subject to FDACS temporary closures, which can be found at [Shellfish Harvesting Area Status](#).

Division of Aquaculture Contact Information

Headquarters - Tallahassee (850) 617-7600 600 South Calhoun Street, Suite 217 Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2009	Western Gulf (850) 236-2200 4408 Delwood Lane Panama City Beach, Florida 32408-7492
Big Bend Gulf (352) 543-5181 11350 Southwest 153rd Court Cedar Key, Florida 32625-5700	Atlantic Coast (321) 984-4890 1220 East Prospect Avenue, Suite 216 Melbourne, Florida 32901-7396
Central Gulf (850) 653-8317 260 Dr. Frederick S. Humphries Street Apalachicola, Florida 32320-1336	Southern Gulf (914) 613-0954 1720 El Jobean Road, Suite 208 Port Charlotte, Florida 33948