

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Division of Aquaculture
600 South Calhoun Street, Suite 217
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

Portia Sapp, Director
Division of Aquaculture
600 South Calhoun Street, Suite 217
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

Phone: (850) 617-7600
E-mail: Aquaculture_Web@FDACS.gov
Webpage: www.FDACS.gov/Divisions-Offices/Aquaculture

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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

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Aquaculture Certificate of Registration Renewals

All Aquaculture Certificates of Registration will expire on June 30. Applications should be reviewed to verify information, updated as necessary, then signed and dated for return. Any applicant working with shellfish must complete the Shellfish Harvester Education Training for 2024-25, available starting April 1, and submit a printed copy of their completion certificate along with their application.

Applications and fees must be returned to the Department by June 30 to avoid a lapse in certification. They may be submitted via mail to: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) at Post Office Box 6710 Tallahassee, Florida 32314-6710 with a check or money order made payable to FDACS.

Renewal applicants may submit their application, training certificate and payment online at: www.FDACS.gov/Pay-Register-Online.

Online renewals must include a signed application as well as a Shellfish Harvester Education Training Certificate (if applicable) for all persons listed on the application and/or Authorized User Agreement forms (if applicable) as one single attachment.

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Shellfish Processing License Recertification

All Shellfish Processing Certification licenses expire on June 30. Applications may be downloaded from the Division’s website at: www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Shellfish-Processing-Facility-Certification. To ensure timely processing, applications should have been submitted to the Division prior to April 1. Along with the application, shellfish processors must include a copy of a current municipal water bill and/or a copy of their most recent well water analysis within six months. During the certification inspection, Division staff will complete required Dealer Educational Training with each processor and review Rule 5L-1.006, F.A.C., Compliance and Penalties to ensure understanding of the potential penalties associated with repeat violations.

A processing facility’s certification will not be renewed until the following criteria are met: no “critical” deficiencies, no more than two “key” item deficiencies and three “other” item deficiencies. Shellfish processors wishing to participate in rapid cooling of oysters during the months of May through September will be provided a Rapid Cool Agreement that must be signed and returned prior to participation.

Shellfish Harvester Education Training

The required annual Shellfish Harvester Education Training for 2024-2025 was launched on April 1. The Shellfish Harvester Education Training Course is an annual requirement for holders of an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration and Saltwater Products License (SPL) with a shellfish endorsement. No SPL license with a shellfish endorsement or Aquaculture Certificate of Registration (listing shellfish) will be issued without proof of annual training. As a reminder, be sure to update your profile before accessing the training. Shellfish Harvester Education Training can be taken online for the 2024-2025 certificate year at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s website:

<https://learningmyfwc.remote-learner.net/>.

Individuals needing assistance or additional information should contact the Division’s Apalachicola office at (850) 653-8317.



Aquaculture Best Management Practices Manual Updates

On March 3, 2024 the updated Aquaculture Best Management Practices Manual (Revision November 2023) was adopted into Rule 5L-3, F.A.C. Updates include a new method for effluent treatment for systems culturing native filter feeders (i.e. corals, shellfish) found in Section IV. Water Resources and clarifications within Section V. Construction. It is important to note new construction plans should be on file for all upland facilities and changes should be submitted via an updated Facility Plan prior to commencement for review and approval. Section VI. Containment was updated to incorporate the current Conditional or Prohibited Species listed in Rule 68-5, F.A.C. Current certified aquaculture producers must contact the Division prior to adding new species to their facility or lease(s) and submit a plan for approval prior to acquiring new species.

The Health sections for Penaeid Shrimp, Sturgeon and Shellfish were updated to include a new email address to use for submittals prior to movement, when required. Imports into Florida of shellfish and sturgeon and any penaeid shrimp entering a certified facility in Florida must be submitted for review and approval prior to receipt by the Florida facility. Pathogens requiring testing are included within each section. Health certificates (referred to in Florida as Official Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (OCVI)) and diagnostic results must be submitted to FDACS for approval a minimum of two business days prior to shipment. Submit documents to FDACS via email to Aquaculture_Health@FDACS.gov. Submittal of genetic testing documentation for Largemouth Bass authentication must also be sent to this email address for review and approval prior to culture.

Other important additions to Best Management Practices (BMPs) include:

- Aquaculturists must have proof of a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration (original or copy of the certificate or card) available for inspection at all times while transporting aquaculture products or while operating on sovereignty submerged land aquaculture leases, including employees or authorized users.
- Shellfish replant logs (when required) must be maintained and available for inspection by FDACS, when requested.

Please contact the Division’s main office at (850) 617-7600 or your local inspector if you have any questions about the BMPs. The updated manual and information about Aquaculture Best Management Practices can be found on the Division webpage: www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Aquaculture-Best-Management-Practices and a copy of the manual will be sent with all Aquaculture Certificates of Registration renewed for 2024-25.



Aquaculture Review Council Summary

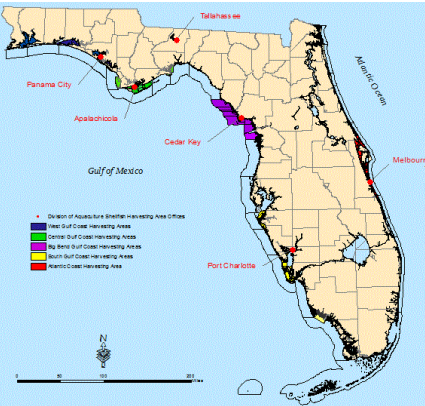
The second quarterly meeting of 2024 was held on April 4 at the FDACS office in Bartow. At this meeting, the Council heard presentations from applicants who were invited to submit a full proposal. A total of \$607,568.30 was requested in state funding from eight proposed projects. After hearing the presentations, the Council ranked the projects and created a prioritized list of projects to receive funding. Six proposed projects were fully approved and one was partially approved.

The next ARC meeting is scheduled for August. When the meeting is set, you will be able to find meeting information at www.FDACS.gov/About-Us/Advisory-Councils-and-Committees/Aquaculture-Review-Council.

For more information contact ARC@FDACS.gov.

Inspector’s Corner: Shellfish Harvesting Area Open/Close Status

The SHAC Program initiates temporary closures of harvesting areas based on a variety of factors, including excessive rainfall, elevated river levels, wastewater spills, hurricanes/tropical storms and harmful algal blooms. Area closures take effect at sunset the day the notification is posted. Staff collect water samples from closed areas as soon as possible, given environmental conditions. Area openings take effect at sunrise the day after the notification is posted. It is the harvester’s responsibility to be aware of the Shellfish Harvesting Area’s status before harvesting. Area status can be found here: www.Shellfish.FDACS.gov Click on one of the cities to see a list of areas in that district. More information about the program and harvesting areas can be found at the following location: www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Shellfish-Harvesting-Area-Classification. Harvesting area status can also be found by calling the district offices and listening to the pre-recorded message. The pre-recorded messages are updated whenever the Shellfish Harvesting Area’s status changes.



Hurricane Preparedness

As we approach the beginning of hurricane season, set to start on June 1, there are a few ways you can be prepared for severe weather. Please review the Division’s Preparation and Recovery from Hurricanes publication which can be found at: www.FDACS.gov/content/download/5695/file/FDACS-P-01461PrepandRecoveryfromHurricanes_%28TB%2302%29.pdf. Additionally, if you have any needs during or immediately following a hurricane, you can contact your local Emergency Operations Center. You can find your local office by going to www.FLSART.org and clicking the link for “County Contacts”.



When a hurricane warning is issued by the National Weather Service, Division staff will precautionarily close shellfish harvesting areas (SHA) included in the warning. If the hurricane does not strike the area and the anticipated damage does not occur, then SHAs will be reopened the following day at sunrise. However, if SHAs are impacted, Division staff will systematically collect water and shellfish meat samples for testing to reopen SHAs to ensure only safe product enters the marketplace.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, also known as NAP insurance, is also available to farms. NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters. Eligible aquacultural species include: any species of aquatic organism grown as food for human consumption; fish raised as feed for fish that are consumed by humans and ornamental fish propagated and reared in an aquatic medium. 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 <https://Offices.SC.egov.USDA.gov/locator/app>, click on Florida and then click on your county. Resources about NAP insurance can be found online at <https://Shellfish.IFAS.UFL.edu/news/Financial-Assistance-Programs-Workshop-Presentations-and-Handouts/>.

The USDAs Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP) is also available to farms. ELAP assistance is provided for losses not covered by other disaster assistance programs such as losses not covered by the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). Similarly to NAP insurance, you can find out more about ELAP coverage or enroll by making an appointment with your local FSA office.

2025 Aquaculture Plan Survey

The Division included a survey for contributions to the 2025 Aquaculture Plan in this year’s Certificate of Registration renewal packet. The Aquaculture Plan and Research and Development Priorities are revised annually by the ARC and used to provide guidance on future research and development projects. Please complete the survey, by returning the completed printout or through the online link on the Division’s main webpage, www.FDACS.gov/Divisions-Offices/Aquaculture. The deadline for submitting comments is July 12, 2024.

FAA Industry & Educator Workshop

The Florida Aquaculture Association is hosting an immersive workshop, on June 20-21 at IRREC in Ft. Pierce Florida, with multiple learning sessions and farm tours for both aquaculture educators and farmers! Visit www.FLAA.org for more information. Register by May 10 to attend.

Division Staff Changes



Kevin Geraghty

Kevin joined the Division of Aquaculture in November 2023 as an Environmental Specialist II in the Shellfish Harvesting Area Classification Program. He is a US Coast Guard veteran and a graduate of Western College University in Gunnison, Colorado. He has a Bachelor’s degree in Geology and a background working in environmental and marine sciences, oil and gas and horticulture. He can be reached at (850) 631-0464 or by email at Kevin.Geraghty@FDACS.gov.

Ethan joined the Division in November 2023 as an Environmental Specialist II. Prior to joining the team, he worked at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute with the aquaculture program and as a marine science educator with Broadreach Adventure Programs. Ethan earned his Bachelor’s degree in Marine Science at University of Florida and a Master’s degree from FAU. He can be reached at (850) 617-7629 or Ethan.Weber@FDACS.gov.



Ethan Weber



Jacob Long

Jacob joined the Division’s Shellfish Harvesting Area Classification Program as an Environmental Specialist II in February 2024. Before taking this position, he was an infantryman in the U.S. Army for five years. Afterwards, he received his Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Conservation and Management from Fort Lewis College in Colorado. He has experience as an arborist and has previously worked for Colorado Parks and Wildlife performing wildlife management practices. Jacob can be reached at (941) 613-0954 or Jacob.Long@FDACS.gov.