



Live Rock Aquaculture: Rules and Regulations

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Aquacultured live rock consists of geologically distinct substrate placed on the ocean bottom to attract colonizing plant and invertebrate species. The rock is collected after several years of culture and sold in the marine aquaria trade.

To commercially culture live rock in Florida waters, a person must possess a sovereign submerged land lease and a valid [Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#) from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS).



Dry rock to be deposited

Leaseholders and upland facilities landing live rock are subject to [Aquaculture Best Management Practices](#) including periodic facility compliance inspections.

To culture live rock in the federal Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), a federal Live Rock Aquaculture Permit, issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service, is required.

For more information visit the [NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Region Marine Aquaculture Page](#) or contact NMFS.SER.Aquaculture@NOAA.gov.

Artificial and natural rock substrate used in live rock culture must be approved by FDACS prior to deposition on any state submerged land lease. The substrate utilized must be geologically distinguishable from any rock surrounding the lease.

A lithographic description provided by a geologist and a sample of the substrate to be deposited must be provided to the Division for inspection **before the rock is planted**. Rock deployment and harvest should minimize environmental impacts, including sedimentation and turbidity, both on and off the lease site.

The harvest or use of wild live rock is prohibited.

Aquaculture live rock substrate often recruits sea fans, hard or stony corals, fire coral and other restricted marine species. Attached marine life species, except federally listed species (*see list below*), may be possessed, cultured, harvested and sold by certified aquaculturists so long as the live rock and/or marine life product is identified as an aquaculture product pursuant to [Chapter 597, Florida Statutes \(F.S.\)](#).

Harvest of the following federally listed, endangered coral species is prohibited:

- Staghorn (*Acropora cervicornis*)
- Elkhorn (*A. palmata*)
- Rough Cactus (*Mycetophyllia ferox*)
- Pillar (*Dendrogyra cylindrus*)
- Lobed Star (*Orbicella annularis*)
- Mountainous Star (*O. faveolata*)
- Boulder Star (*O. franksi*)

Pursuant to [68B-42.009, Florida Administrative Code \(F.A.C.\)](#), the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Law Enforcement must also be notified **at least 24 hours in advance** of the transportation of any aquacultured live rock colonized by any sea fan, hard coral or fire coral species or species of the subclass Octocorallia through, in or on waters of the State.



Live rock on a submerged land lease

Live rock can also be cultured in upland aquaculture facilities utilizing saltwater pools or closed recirculating systems. If culturing live rock from substrate that contains any non-native aquatic organisms, the live rock must be grown in upland facilities that sterilize all offsite discharge or utilize a closed re-circulating system with no offsite discharge.

For information about certification or to [apply](#) for a Certificate, please visit: [Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#)

For information on state and federal regulations pertaining to live rock see: [Rule 68B-42.008, F.A.C.](#), [Rule 68B-42.009, F.A.C.](#) or [50 CFR part 622 subpart D](#).

