



Update on Gulf of Mexico Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) Process

December 8, 2021

Andrew Richard
Regional Aquaculture Coordinator
NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Region

Lauren Bennett
National Environmental Policy Act Specialist
contractor with Ocean Associates

Overview

- Refresher on Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs)
- What is a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement?
- Vision for Gulf AOA PEIS process
- Timeline
- Stakeholder and public involvement



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Refresher on AOAs

- Executive Order 13921, “Promoting Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth” in 2020
- Section 7 of EO directs NOAA to identify at least 2 geographic areas suitable for commercial aquaculture & complete a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for each area to assess the impact of siting aquaculture facilities there
- NOAA Fisheries has conceptually defined AOAs as “small, defined geographic areas that are economically, ecologically and socially appropriate for aquaculture.”
- Federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico and southern California were selected as the first two regions in which AOAs would be identified



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Refresher on AOAs

- Aquaculture Atlases were developed to inform the AOA planning process
- Atlases are one source of information for NOAA Fisheries, other federal agencies, stakeholders and the public to consider in identifying AOAs
- Next comes the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement Process



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What is a PEIS?

- A broad or high level environmental review document that assesses the impacts of proposed policies, plans, programs or projects
- Typically considers impacts to ecological, socioeconomic, cultural and historical environment, as well as impacts to public health and safety, climate change, environmental justice communities, and cumulative impacts.
- PEISs consider a reasonable range of alternatives, including a no action alternative
- PEISs rely on feedback from stakeholders and the public throughout their development



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Vision for Gulf of Mexico AOA PEIS

- Envision working with other federal agencies
- Envision exploring a range of potential locations and analyzing the potential impacts of siting a variety of aquaculture types in those locations
- We want to hear more from public and stakeholders about their vision for what an AOA could be during public scoping



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PEIS Timeline - Goal is 2 years

- Notice of Intent in Federal Register and Formal Public Scoping Period
- Consider Public Comments
- Develop Draft PEIS
- Notice of Availability of Draft PEIS in Federal Register and Formal Public Comment Period
- Consider Public Comments
- Publish Final PEIS
- Publish Record of Decision (30-day waiting period)



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Stakeholder and Public Involvement

- Notice of Intent in Public Register and **Formal Public Scoping Period**
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Coordination with GMFMC and APs

- Regular briefings throughout PEIS process for GMFMC and Advisory Panels
- Formal Public Comment at start of PEIS
- Formal Public Comment when draft PEIS released
- Follow-up and present once PEIS is finalized



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Questions?



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Contact Information

Andrew Richard

Regional Aquaculture Coordinator

Southeast Regional Office

NOAA Fisheries | U.S. Department of Commerce

Office: (727) 551-5709

Andrew.Richard@noaa.gov



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