



# FLORIDA *Aquaculture* ASSOCIATION

*Representing the Florida aquaculture industry since 1983.*

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## Spring 2020 Newsletter

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For those of you that missed our Annual Membership Meeting last autumn, I'd like give you an update on some changes to our Board of Directors. After decades of service to our Association, both Dan Solano (Cedar Key Aquaculture Farms) and Craig Watson (UF IFAS Tropical Aquaculture Lab) have retired from our Board. I'd like to personally take this opportunity to thank both Dan and Craig for all of the contributions they have made to our Association and our industry over the years. Their enthusiasm, knowledge and wisdom will be missed.

As allowed by our bylaws, your Board voted to expand our Board from 15 to 16 seats, creating a total of 3 vacant seats. Those seats were filled by Heath Davis (Cedar Key Seafarms), Ryan Schelb (Spectrum Brands, Inc) and Michael Mogollon (EarthCare Aquaculture). Incumbents Dan Conner, Jane Davis and Reggie Markham were re-elected by membership. Congratulations and welcome to all.

The FAA participated in the annual Taste of Florida Agriculture event that was held in the Tallahassee Capitol courtyard during the evening of December 19th last year. Despite the fact that this event was held before the 2020 legislative session started, it was well attended and enjoyed by all. Your Association also took the opportunity, along with our lobbyist, to visit with various legislators and educate them on the importance of the aquaculture industry to our State. During these meetings, we emphasized key issues important to our industry. One of those issues was funding the eight recommended Aquaculture Research Council projects. Disappointedly, as the 2020 legislative session comes to a close, no ARC funding was forthcoming. This is the sixth year in a row that the recommended ARC projects were not funded.

Based on the USDA's 2013 and 2018 Census of Aquaculture, the State of Florida Has slipped from a national position of 6th to 9th for total value of aquaculture products sold. Research is an essential contributor to increased aquaculture production. We can do better. We need to do better! Please reach out to your State Senators and Representatives. The old

adage that "the squeaky wheel gets the grease" certainly holds true in politics. The Florida aquaculture industry needs Florida aquaculture research.

I have mentioned in previous newsletters, the tremendous potential that this State has for offshore aquaculture production. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency held a Public Hearing at the Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota, soliciting public comment on the proposed issuance of a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit to Kampachi Farms, LLC for the Vellela Epsilon Pilot Project. This proposed project, located approximately 40 miles off of the coast of Sarasota would produce a single cohort of almaco jack totaling 88,000 lbs. Large amounts of data would be compiled during the course of this project that would assist both the industry and government regulators with future Gulf of Mexico projects. Public Hearing attendees were greeted along the street by placard-carrying protesters, organized by local and national NGO's. Once inside, there were 120 vocal participants, with 50 of us giving public comment. Despite the USEPA rigorous application process and the Federal oversight checks and balances required, the majority of the audience and public comments were against this one-year pilot project. The list of emotional public concerns included red tide, antibiotics, GMO's, impacts on native populations and even global warming. This experience just reinforced my resolve, that as an industry, we need to have science-based facts at the ready. I suspect that many of those protesters were provided with negative information designed to appeal to emotions, not fact. Our industry must continue to proactively educate the U.S. consumer about the positive benefits of domestically raised seafood. The FAA will continue to do so. I ask for all of our industry to do the same.

As I write this message, the COVID-19 impacts on our State and our industry are widespread and increasing. As we receive information, your FAA will continue to collect and pass this on to you via our website, [www.flaa.org](http://www.flaa.org). I urge all of our members to check with our website frequently.

As always, if you have any questions, comments or suggestion, we would love to hear them. You are welcome to contact our Association headquarters or me personally. Wishing all of our members the best during these turbulent times,

*Jim Michaels*

President; Florida Aquaculture Association



**FLORIDA**  
*Aquaculture*  
**ASSOCIATION**

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**tiffany@flaa.org**

**Board of Directors**

**PRESIDENT-** Jim Michaels, Sarasota, (941)302-3075

**VICE PRESIDENT-** Geno Evans, Ponce Inlet,  
(386)775-3051

**SECRETARY-** Allen Register, Palmdale, (863)675-0623

**TREASURER-** Jane Davis, Lake Buena Vista,  
(407)560-7534

**PAST PRES.-** Marty Tanner, Plant City, (813)757-0289

**Directors at Large**

Dan Conner, Gibsonton, (813)362-2806

Jane Davis, Lake Buena Vista, (407)560-7534

Geno Evans, Ponce Inlet, (386)775-3051

Reggie Markham, Cedar Key, (352)697-0412

Paul Wills, Ft. Pierce, (772)465-2400

Heath Davis, Cedar Key, (352)262-9449

Michael Mogollon, Weston, (863)599-0603

Ryan Schelb, Riverview, (813)334-8736

**Commodity Representatives**

Alligators- Allen Register, Palmdale, (863)675-0623

Aquatic Plants- Brandon McLane, Davie, (954)472-5120

Food Fish- Joe Cardenas, Ft. Pierce, (561)866-7092

Shellfish- Leslie Sturmer, Cedar Key, (352)543-5057

Suppliers- Thomas Drury, Apopka, (407)992-5601

Tropical Fish- David Rawlins, Lithia, (813)737-3418

Lobbyist- Jim Spratt, Tallahassee, (850)228-1296

Executive Director- Tiffany Conner (813)438-3522

## Upcoming Events

**June 17th-19th**

**FL FFA Convention- FAA  
Education Booth**

**July 9th**

**Board of Directors Meeting  
(tentative)**

## What's on your bumper?

Thousands of dollars have been raised from the sale of the Aquaculture license plate to benefit aquaculture education, research, and development programs. Don't forget- the FAA receives funding from the Florida Aquaculture license plate to carry out important educational programs.

The FAA newsletter is funded with a grant through the HBOI Foundation.

We are grateful for their continued support for the FAA.



**Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation**

## Gov. DeSantis Issues "Safer At Home" Order

On April 1st, 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis issued Florida Executive Order 20-91. This order was issued in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic through out the world. Florida Executive Order 20-91 is an effort to reduce interactions and potentially reduce the spread of COVID-19. This order goes into effect at 12:01 AM on April 3rd and stays in effect until April 30th or until necessary.

Florida Executive Order 20-91 does name essential workers which includes agriculture/ aquaculture workers. For more information and to view a copy of the order please visit

[https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/orders/2020/EO\\_20-91.pdf](https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/orders/2020/EO_20-91.pdf)

### COVID-19

The quick spread of COVID-19 throughout the world has caused major concerns not only here in Florida but through out the world. Here in Florida, FDACS has quickly and effectively prepared many documents to assist agriculture businesses and farmers. Below is a list of documents, websites, and other resources that FDACS and other state and federal agencies have developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

General guidance regarding COVID-19 information directly from FDACS:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Consumer-Resources/Guidance-for-Consumers-on-COVID-19>

US Chamber of Commerce COVID-19 Emergency Loans Small Business Guide and Checklist:

[https://www.uschamber.com/sites/default/files/023595\\_comm\\_corona\\_virus\\_smallbiz\\_loan\\_final.pdf](https://www.uschamber.com/sites/default/files/023595_comm_corona_virus_smallbiz_loan_final.pdf)

US Senate Committee Guide to the CARES Act

<https://www.sbc.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/guide-to-the-cares-act>

FL Executive Order 20-91- 'Safer at Home' and Essential Worker Movement form

<https://www.flaa.org/copy-of-home>

Families First Corona Response Act

[file:///C:/Users/tiffa/Downloads/FFCRA\\_Poster\\_WH1422\\_Non-Federal.pdf](file:///C:/Users/tiffa/Downloads/FFCRA_Poster_WH1422_Non-Federal.pdf)

### COVID-19 Impact Survey

The National Aquaculture Association requests that the US aquaculture community (farms and allied businesses) participate in a 15-minute survey developed by Virginia Tech and The Ohio State universities to assess the direct and indirect effects of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on US aquaculture and to gather input on types of assistance that will be most useful.

The survey is open until April 10th and can be completed via the following link: [VA COVID-19 Survey](#)

## Legislative Report from Jim Spratt- FAA Lobbyist

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we well all going direct the other way- in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.” How correct Charles Dickens was in this excerpt from the classic A Tale of Two Cities. The 2020 Florida Legislative Session concluded with a vote on the budget on Thursday, March 19th. While there were several bright spots which will be outlined below yet, the new challenges faced by the impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic and the cascading economic impacts will leave a mark in every segment of the nation’s and state’s economy.

Below are a few highlights from the 2020 Legislative Session:

### Policy:

**Water Quality Improvement** (SB 712 by Sen. Mayfield and HB 1343 by Rep. Payne)- This significant omnibus legislation was a high priority for FAA all session if, for no other reason, to make sure really bad policy wasn’t added to the legislation. First, FAA wishes to extend a huge thank you to Sen. Debbie Mayfield and Rep. Bobby Payne for guiding the ship in their respective chambers; they spent hours upon hours trying to land this ship and they did a great job. FAA wishes to also thank Rep. Blaise Ingoglia, Rep. Toby Overdorf, Sen. Ben Albritton and Sen. Wilton Simpson for their work on this legislation.

To recap, the bill which passed the both chambers includes: (1) transfer of the septic tank program from the Department of Health to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; (2) creates a water quality grant program for local government and utilities to transition septic tanks to sewer and other water quality projects; (3) requires water management districts to update their storm water rules; (4) directs the Department of Environmental Protection and appropriate water management districts to conduct of study of bottle water withdraws in spring sheds; (5) requires the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to conduct BMP implementation verifications every 2 years with a specific focus on the Indian River Lagoon and Lake Okeechobee watersheds; (6) authorizes the development and cost-share of regional agricultural water quality projects; (7) requires the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to adopt updated Biosolids rules; (8) prohibits any local government ordinance, rule, charter or other action from granting rights to nature or the natural system, this language addresses the growing movement of “Rights of Nature”.

### Employment Verification (SB664 by Sen. Lee and HB 1265 by Rep. Byrd)

Quite simply, these bills didn’t even start moving until the halfway point of session and were energized by Gov. Desantis’ comments regarding his desire to have Florida employers comply with E-Verify. Thankfully, in its final form, the bill provides employers to options to verify potential employees, the employer may use the E-Verify system, or they may elect to follow and utilize the Federal I 9 process.

This issue, lingered until the last week of the 2020 session and, several times the fate of this legislation was unclear, some days were good news and some days were tense yet, a huge part to the successful outcome of this legislation was the absolute commitment from every business group to remain in lock step on this issue. On several occasions, there were opportunities to separate from the flock on this legislation yet, correctly we all stuck together, and the

**Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (SB 1514 by Sen. Albritton and HB 921 by Rep. Brannan)**

This legislation which started as purely a department package, was amended and ultimately became a vehicle which helped a few different items make it through the legislative gauntlet. Three provisions of importance contained in this bill include: (1) expands the exemption for the movement of agricultural products to or from a farm or harvest site on roads with a posted speed limit off 65 mph or less. Currently to be exempt from covering the load you cannot travel more than 20 miles, this legislation removes the 20 mile limitation; (2) Extends the sunset of the pest control trust fund until 2024; (3) made some necessary amendments to Florida's Hemp Law specifically, refining the definition of hemp extract, clarifying the labeling requirements for retail sale and increase the age of purchase on any inhaled products containing Hemp extract to 21.

**Budget:**

At this point, Gov. DeSantis has not acted on the budget so, the items listed below are still subject to line item veto. It is also important to note, COVID 19 is having a significant impact on the state's economy, FAA members' economy and all of our personal economies. Given the impacts of the virus, it wouldn't be surprising to see the Legislature back this summer or early fall for a special session to plug budget gaps created by the loss in tax revenues as well as potential ways the state can assist as business and residents recover.

**Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services:**

Rural and Family Lands Program- \$8.6 million

Fresh from Florida \$4.5 million (base budget)

**UF/IFAS**

Workload \$3.8 million-

This is a huge win for UF/IFAS as this was a fully funded request with a majority of the money being recurring dollars. Workload dollars allow UF/IFAS to fund research, upgrade equipment and facilities as well as potentially plug holes in programs and services.

UF/IFAS Quarantine Facility \$540,000

Lake Watch \$500,000

It is also worth noting, UF/IFAS spearheaded an effort to get a certain new tag (I support 4H) added into the "License Plate Reform" legislation. While it may seem a little odd to say reform and also mention adding new plates, there is a method to the madness, sort of! The bill capped the total number of specialty plate options available in Florida to 150, currently the state has around 135. The bill also creates annual review of the plate sales and automatically rolls a plate off the list is the minimum number of sales aren't met. So, if you don't already have a specialty plate, it might be time to get one!

**Aquaculture Review Council:**

Although we had very productive meeting in Tallahassee and we had some industry partners also advocating for ARC funding, the line item was again not funded. Given some of the specific conversations FAA members had with legislators, the lack of funding is disappointing and surprising. Yet, there is no denying the potential impacts from the COVID 19 pandemic forced the obligation of state dollars which was unplanned earlier in session. Regardless of the circumstances, given the lack of legislative interest in funding ARC projects, the summer offers an opportunity to sit down and repackage the funding request. The summer also provides the opportunity to identify legislative champions for the funding request.

## COVID-19

The state budget directs \$52.5 million in state and federal dollars to purchase necessities related to COVID-19. The 2020-21 budget also directs an additional \$300 million into state reserves. State reserve funds can be utilized when the Governor has declared a state of emergency in order to provide immediate resources to combat the economic fallout of a natural disaster, health epidemic, or any other state emergency. This additional enhancement brings the total state reserves to nearly \$4 billion.

For business that have experienced economic losses or have been directly impacted by the COVID-19. The Department of Economic Opportunity is conducting business damage assessments. The information collected is being used as the state put together different options to help our businesses survive the storm. The link to the survey is below:

DEO is currently surveying businesses throughout the state of Florida who have been impacted by COVID-19. Businesses and non-profits can access the Business Damage Assessment survey at [FloridaDisaster.BIZ](https://floridadisaster.biz) Select "COVID-19" from the drop-down menu on the [survey page](#) . Response to the Business Damage Assessment survey is not an application for assistance.

Gov. DeSantis activates Small Business Bridge loan program. The program which is administered through the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) allows business to secure no-interest loans to cover business expenses. Businesses interested in the bridge loan program can apply by visiting the following link: <https://floridadisasterloan.org/>

In addition, there are some potential opportunities for assistance withing the collection of federal assistance packages which have been approved over the past 2 weeks. FAA will do our best to update members as information and applications are available for these assistance programs

Notwithstanding the policy and budget success of the 2020 session, there is no avoiding the impacts the Coronavirus has already had and will have on the state's economy. As we look forward to the summer months it is unclear the challenges we will face as an industry and as individuals but, we will get through this together.

Jim Spratt

FAA Lobbyist

### **FAA Commodity Representatives**

Commodity Representatives serve on the FAA Board to ensure that all aquaculture commodities and sectors are represented. We also recommend reaching out to your commodity representative with questions or concerns. If you are unsure about which commodity you would fall into or if you do not fit into one of the following commodities, please reach out to Tiffany Conner at [Tiffany@flaa.org](mailto:Tiffany@flaa.org) or 813.438.FLAA (3522).

**Alligators:** Allen Register, 863.675.0623, [allen@gatorama.com](mailto:allen@gatorama.com)

**Aquatic Plants:** Brandon McLane, 954.472.5120, [brandon@floridaaquatic.com](mailto:brandon@floridaaquatic.com)

**Food Fish:** Joe Cardenas, 561.866.7092, [joe@aquacofarms.com](mailto:joe@aquacofarms.com)

**Shellfish:** Leslie Sturmer, 352.543.5057, [lnst@ufl.edu](mailto:lnst@ufl.edu)

**Suppliers:** Tom Drury, 844.946.4272, [druryt14@gmail.com](mailto:druryt14@gmail.com)

**Tropical Fish:** David Rawlins, 813.737.3418, [rawlins@ij.net](mailto:rawlins@ij.net)

## **Important Information on the FAA Website**

**Please visit [www.FLAA.org](http://www.FLAA.org) and under the 'News' section you will find the most up-to-date information.**

# Florida Aquaculture Association

The mission of the Florida Aquaculture Association is to provide a unified voice for the Florida aquaculture industry that ensures its sustainability, protects its profitability, and encourages its development in an environmentally responsible manner.

## What we do for Florida aquaculture:

- **Keep industry guidelines up-to-date**
  - FAA's advice is sought for updating the FL Aquaculture Best Management Practices Manual and provides updates for the FL Aquaculture Plan
- **Work with lobbyists and legislatures to support aquaculture**
  - Funding for research and extension services, tax exemptions, and federal insurances are all faught for by FAA lobbyists
- **Provide support for the future of aquaculture**
  - Partner with aquaculture educators throughout the state to provide them with the resources necessary to properly educate students about the aquaculture industry in Florida and help them prepare for the FL Aquaculture Technician Certification.



## Benefits of Membership:

- Networking opportunities with other aquaculture professionals
- Access to the 'Members Only' forum on the FAA website
- Fresh and current news about Florida aquaculture
- Direct information from the NAA, FDACS Division of Aquaculture, and other aquaculture organizations.

*Pictured: FL Ag Commissioner Nikki Fried and FAA Board Member, Barry Hurt discussing FL Aqua at the Fresh From Florida Ag Breakfast at the FL State Fair*



## FAA Member Events:

- Taste of Florida Agriculture Reception in Tallahassee
- Fresh from Florida Agriculture Breakfast at the Florida State Fair
- FAA Annual General Membership Meeting

## Membership Application

Please send the application and dues to P.O. Box 2974 Riverview, FL 33578

Check must be made payable to the Florida Aquaculture Association.

You can also join online at [www.flaa.org/join-now](http://www.flaa.org/join-now)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company/ Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you prefer to receive your quarterly newsletter?

Printed     Email     Both

**Active Membership (\$150):** Only persons, companies, or organizations actively cultivating aquaculture products within the State of Florida are eligible to become active members. **FDACS AQ#:** \_\_\_\_\_

Commodity Group (Check all that apply):  Alligators  Aquatic Plants  Shellfish  Food Fish  Tropical Fish  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Associate Membership (\$100):** Any individual or entity engaged in providing equipment, supplies, materials, or services used in Florida's aquaculture industry or any individual with an interest in Florida's aquaculture and who shares the objectives of the FAA. Check all that apply:  Consultant  Education  Extension  Manufacturer  Research  Service  Supplier

**Affiliate (\$50):** Any person, firm, or organization interested in Florida Aquaculture.

**Sudents (\$20):** Any individual currently enrolled in an accredited educational institute.