

# Florida Aquaculture

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Division of Aquaculture

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## Aquaculture Review Council Summary

The Aquaculture Review Council met on August 31st to review, edit and finalize the 2021 Florida Aquaculture Plan, the FY 2023-24 Call for Statements of Interest for industry-related research projects and to discuss a potential change to the ARC research project funding process. The 2021 Florida Aquaculture Plan and annual Call for Statements of Interest for research projects can be found on the Division's website ([www.FDACS.gov/About-Us/Advisory-Councils-and-Committees/Aquaculture-Review-Council](http://www.FDACS.gov/About-Us/Advisory-Councils-and-Committees/Aquaculture-Review-Council)).

Research projects submitted in response to the Call must address an industry research priority as identified by the Council. **The deadline for submissions is December 10, 2021 at 5 pm EST.** Late submissions will not be accepted. For more information and to download the full Call for Statements of Interest, please visit the Division website listed above. Questions about research priorities and submissions can be directed to Dr. Marcy Cockrell at [Marcy.Cockrell@FDACS.gov](mailto:Marcy.Cockrell@FDACS.gov).

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## Dylox 420SL Approved for Special Local Need

Based on the cooperative effort of the Florida Tropical Fish Farmers Association (FTFFA) and UF/IFAS Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory, it is now legal to use Dylox 420 SL in ornamental aquaculture facilities in Florida. This product is used to control predacious zooplankton that can harm ornamental fish fry and aquatic plants. In addition to the product label, all instructions on the supplemental label should be followed. If you have any questions concerning the use of Dylox 420 SL please contact the UF/IFAS Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory at (813) 671-5230.

## USDA Pandemic Response and Safety Grant Program Application Period Open

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed a grant program authorized and funded under section 751 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The Pandemic Response and Safety (PRS) Grant Program provides grants to specialty crop producers, including aquaculture, other select producers, meat and other processors, distributors and farmers' markets to respond to coronavirus, including measures to protect workers against COVID-19.

Eligible entities include small business and nonprofits. Grants will cover activities associated with workplace safety, protecting workers against COVID-19, retrofitting facilities, transportation, worker housing and providing health services to protect workers. **The deadline for applications is November 22, 2021.** To learn more about the program, visit: [Pandemic Response and Safety Grant Program - USDA \(GrantSolutions.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/grantsolutions).

## Hurricane Michael Relief for Shellfish Farmers

In August, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) finally received approval from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to proceed with the Hurricane Michael Relief Program. The spend plan for the program, originally submitted in Spring 2019, will provide relief funding to eligible commercial fishing and shellfish aquaculture businesses in Bay, Gulf, Franklin and Wakulla counties, which were heavily impacted by Hurricane Michael on October 10, 2018. A total of \$7.7 million will be disbursed by FWC, with \$1.2 million made available to shellfish aquaculture businesses exclusively. Following FDACS' petitions to NOAA, this is the first time that disaster relief appropriations have been made available to the aquaculture industry by the U.S. Department of Commerce. FDACS, in coordination with FWC, will administer a crop-loss revenue reimbursement program to provide economic recovery funds to the shellfish aquaculture industry. Individual reimbursements for eligible shellfish aquaculture farmers will be calculated at a proportional loss value of the total funding amount. Applications will be directly mailed to all eligible applicants in December. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Hurricane Michael Relief Program, please email [MichaelRelief@MyFWC.com](mailto:MichaelRelief@MyFWC.com).

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[Aquaculture\\_Web@FDACS.gov](mailto:Aquaculture_Web@FDACS.gov)

## 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



## Sea Urchin and Seaweed Permit Modifications for SAJ-99

The Department's Programmatic General Permit (SAJ-99) issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to conduct marine aquaculture activities in state waters, has recently been modified to allow production of macroalgae (seaweed) and sea urchins using marine bivalve mariculture gear. This modification allows interested farmers to start culturing macroalgae and urchins in already approved shellfish gear, such as floating or suspended cages and bottom cages/racks. If you are interested in farming macroalgae or sea urchins on your lease, you must submit an updated production plan to the Division by emailing [Denise.Walsh@FDACS.gov](mailto:Denise.Walsh@FDACS.gov).

For collection of any wild species for broodstock or otherwise, you must contact the FWC Division of Marine Fisheries Management at (850) 487-0554.

Post-harvest processing of urchins and macroalgae may require an additional permit by the FDACS Division of Food Safety. Contact [FoodSafety@FDACS.gov](mailto:FoodSafety@FDACS.gov) or call (850) 245-5520 for more information.

## Craig Watson receives Joseph P. McCraren Award

Craig Watson, long time director of the University of Florida Institute Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Tropical Aquaculture Lab in Ruskin, earned national recognition from the National Aquaculture Association for his achievements in the field over the past 25 years. The recipient of the Joseph P. McCraren Award for Outstanding Contributions and Promoting the Growth of U.S. Aquaculture called the honor "humbling." Watson was named the first director of the Tropical Aquaculture Lab in 1996 and since then has accomplished many feats, including: adding new species to the list of viable aquaculture species; studying disease of hundreds of cases each year; annually obtaining new pesticide labels for farms; and assisting industry and agencies in making decisions on risk management for producing non-native species.



## USDA Farm to School Teacher Training Workshop Update

Through a \$66,000 grant from the USDA Farm to School program, FDACS and UF/IFAS held a three-day workshop in July at the UF/IFAS Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory in Ruskin for K-12 teachers from across Florida who teach science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) or agriculture. The workshop aimed to provide practical knowledge and skills for teachers who want to start or strengthen aquaculture education programs at their schools.

Total in person attendance was 19 with an additional six teachers participating over Zoom. As part of the USDA funding, ten schools from throughout the state received Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) with an aquaponics grow-table, water testing supplies and aquaculture lesson plans and activities. Response to the workshop was overwhelmingly positive! Division education staff Katrina Bayliss and Dr. Marcy Cockrell along with UF/IFAS partner Eric Cassiano have been diligently working with teachers on getting the RAS up and running at the awarded schools and data from the first lessons have already been reported. Preliminary assessments show that the program will directly reach approximately 400 students and indirectly, hundreds more.

Read the article highlighting the workshop from the August edition of *In The Field* Magazine here: [https://issuu.com/inthefield/docs/august2021\\_hillswater/50](https://issuu.com/inthefield/docs/august2021_hillswater/50).

Recordings of presentations given at the workshop can also be found on the UF/IFAS YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWh9EXK\\_OLoy-qx2TTjd3mfxOThCIsAK](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWh9EXK_OLoy-qx2TTjd3mfxOThCIsAK).

For more information on aquaculture education visit our Education Resource Page: [www.FDACS.gov/Education/Aquaculture-Educator-Resources](http://www.FDACS.gov/Education/Aquaculture-Educator-Resources).



## Tilapia Name Change

Tilapia is both a common name for a large group of cichlids from Africa and the Middle East and a genus within this group (tilapia vs. *Tilapia*). Historically, cichlids from three genera have been recognized based on their reproductive mode—*Oreochromis* (material mouthbrooders), *Sarotherodon* (paternal or shared mouthbrooders) and *Tilapia* (bi-parental substrate spawners). Regulations under FWC and FDACS for tilapia in Florida are based on this taxonomic scheme.

Blue tilapia (*Oreochromis aureus*), Nile tilapia (*O. niloticus*) and hybrids of the two species may be farmed without a special permit in [four FWC designated regions](#): North Central, Northeast, South and Southwest. Mozambique (*O. mossambicus*), Wami tilapia (*O. urolepis*) and hybrids of the two species are designated by FWC as conditional species, and require a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration with a Restricted Species Authorization letter to produce. All other tilapia species are prohibited.

Research on tilapia genetics has resulted in considerable changes to taxonomy of the genus *Tilapia*. The main changes are the restriction of *Tilapia* to seven species and the elevation of three subgenera into full genera. Two of Florida's established non-native tilapia have had name changes. Spotted Tilapia is now *Pelmatolpia mariae* and Zebra Tilapia is now *Heterotilapia buttkoferi*. Changes were not made to *Oreochromis* or *Sarotherodon*. **Despite the name changes, regulations for aquaculture and the aquarium trade in Florida have not changed.** Taxonomic successors remain under their original regulations. The name changes did not make *Cpotodon*, *Heterotilapia* or *Pelmatolpia* legal for ornamental culture or sale.

For more information on Florida conditional species: [MyFWC.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/conditional-species-list/](http://MyFWC.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/conditional-species-list/).

For more about Florida prohibited species: [MyFWC.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/prohibited-species-list/](http://MyFWC.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/prohibited-species-list/).

For more about aquaculture regulations for food fish: [www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Food-Fish](http://www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Food-Fish).

For FDACS Aquaculture BMPs: [www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Aquaculture-Best-Management-Practices](http://www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Aquaculture-Best-Management-Practices).

## Register to be included in the next USDA Census

The 2022 *Census of Agriculture* is right around the corner and the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, or NASS, is making every effort to count all aquaculture producers in the United States. If you produce any aquaculture products and want to make sure that you are counted in the 2022 *Census of Agriculture* and the 2023 *Census of Aquaculture*, please sign up your operation using this online form: <https://www.agcounts.usda.gov/cgi-bin/counts/>.



Please keep these items in mind to better understand how USDA NASS counts aquaculture production:

- To be counted as an aquaculture farm, some form of intervention in the rearing process, such as seeding, stocking, feeding or protection from predators, must be done by the producer. **Aquaculture is defined as the farming of aquatic organisms, including baitfish, crustaceans, food fish, mollusks, ornamental fish, sport or game fish, algae and sea vegetables and other aquaculture products.**
- Fish, shellfish and other aquatic products which are caught or harvested by the public from non-controlled waters or beds without intervention, or input costs, are considered wild caught and not included in the USDA count of aquaculture farms.

All information you provide will be held confidential under penalty of federal law. There is NO sharing of individual farm financial data with other federal agencies other than the final compiled reports that are publicly available. Remember, participating in the 2022 *Census of Agriculture* and the 2023 *Census of Aquaculture* is **Your Voice, Your Future, and Your Opportunity**.

To learn more about the *Census of Agriculture* and *Census of Aquaculture*, visit [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov). If you have any questions, contact Tony Dorn at [tony.dorn@usda.gov](mailto:tony.dorn@usda.gov) or (202) 690-3223.

## Division Staff Changes



Ruth Owens

Ruth Owens joined the Division in May 2021 as a Staff Assistant for the Tallahassee Office, and was recently transferred to Staff Assistant for the Certification and BMP Program. She is attending Tallahassee Community College working toward her A.S. in Office Administration. Ruth previously worked as a part-time Lab Assistant at the FDACS Conner Complex located in Tallahassee. She can be reached at (850) 617-7613 or by email at [Ruth.Owens@FDACS.gov](mailto:Ruth.Owens@FDACS.gov)

Sarah Fernandez joined the Division in May 2021 as an Environmental Health Aide in the Submerged Land Lease Program located in the Apalachicola office. She attended Stetson University and graduated in 2019 with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and Geography with a minor in Public Health Studies. Sarah previously served as a Peace Corps volunteer and worked as a COVID-19 contact tracer. Sarah can be reached in the Apalachicola office at (850) 756-2220 or by email at [Sarah.Fernandez@FDACS.gov](mailto:Sarah.Fernandez@FDACS.gov)



Sarah Fernandez