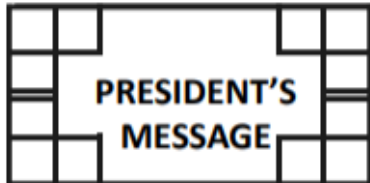




FLORIDA *Aquaculture* ASSOCIATION

Representing the Florida aquaculture industry since 1983.

Winter 2022 Newsletter



I would like to take this time to thank the Florida Aquaculture Association for electing me, Geno Evans, as President at the annual meeting in October of 2021. I look forward to serving the aquaculture community statewide. My passion to advocate for aquaculture runs deep. Our family farm started by my father and will soon pass the 30-year mark.

Our founding members and you all as current members are the foundation of the association. Together we will strengthen the foundation and move forward on challenging issues that our industry faces to provide food and aquaculture products worldwide. Our members routinely demonstrate the power as one unified voice for Florida aquaculture.

In February, I will be speaking at Aquaculture America in San Diego, California. My session will be "20 years Plus Years of One Stop Shop" for state aquaculture regulations. I will speak of the successes and relationship with the state division of aquaculture, problem solving, and how our best management practices work for Florida farms.

The new year brings new beginning of growth and possibilities. I am here to serve our members together we will strengthen our foundation together.

Geno Evans

President

Assessing the Role of Shellfish Aquaculture in Water Quality Improvement Initiatives in Florida

Based on the success of programs in New England and Chesapeake Bay, there is growing interest in incorporating shellfish aquaculture into nutrient trading credit programs in Florida. Yet, differences in environmental condition, cultivation techniques, state policy and economic impact, make it challenging to directly transfer measurements and programs to Florida. A team of research and extension faculty at the University of Florida/IFAS were recently awarded a \$100,000 grant by The Nature Conservancy, as part of the Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration (SOAR) Shellfish Growers Resiliency Fund, which will quantify the capacity of Florida's shellfish aquaculture in regulating nutrients. The project aims to determine how counties and state governments can incorporate the ecosystem benefits of shellfish aquaculture into water quality restoration policy frameworks, such as water quality trading, payments for ecosystem services, and compensatory mitigation. Deliverables include locally relevant measurements of nitrogen removal associated with clam and oyster aquaculture and a roadmap for utilizing aquaculture organisms in water quality restoration initiatives. The economic viability and potential for such a program will be assessed through surveys to evaluate current costs of nitrogen abatement and future willingness to purchase abatement credits from shellfish growers, as well as surveys of shellfish growers about their desire to sell abatement credits or participate in water quality restoration initiatives. In addition, a working group of shellfish growers, local governments, and regulatory agencies (FWC, FDEP, FDACS) will be established to ensure all parties remain involved and up to date throughout the project.



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

Shellfish- Sarah Solano Stokes, Cedar Key, (813)417-9441

Suppliers- Thomas Drury, Maitland, (407)893-1185

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

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

Executive Director- Tiffany Conner (813)438-3522

Upcoming Events

Florida State Fair (FAA Exhibit)

Feb. 10th- 21st

Tampa, FL

Aquaculture America

Feb. 28th- Mar. 4th

San Diego, CA

www.was.org/meeting

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

Florida Aquaculture Legislative Updates from FAA Lobbyist Jim Spratt

Florida's annual 60-day Legislative Session began Tuesday January 11th and is scheduled to conclude on Friday March 11th assuming nothing derails the "proverbial train". Yet, if there ever was a truism in Tallahassee it's nothing is ever a sure thing and we are always one event away from the "train wreck!"

While there are always a bevy of issues which survive the legislative process, the 400 lb. Tuna in the room is legislative redistricting. In Florida, the legislature is required to redraw Congressional, State Senate and House maps based on the decennial census. In order to prevent "gerrymandering" Florida's Constitution contains specific guidance for the legislature to follow when drawing the new district boundaries. While there is probably enough to write a thesis on the art of redistricting, let's leave it with the bottom line fact: Redistricting is the issue where both inter and intra-party squabbles happen and the ripples of those disagreements often impact other seemingly mundane issues.

As this update is written, the Legislature is beginning week 3 of session and there are several bills which should be of importance to FAA members:

SB 1186/ HB 717 Agritourism (Sen. Ben Albritton/ Rep. Josie Tomkow): This legislation further protects agritourism activities by clarifying an agricultural property tax classification can not be denied or revoked solely based on the agritourism activity. In addition, the legislation stipulates non residential farm buildings integral to the farm shall be assessed at their "just" value and added to the value of the agricultural commodity produced.

SB 732/ HB 887 Heat Illness Prevention (Sen. Anna Maria Rodriguez/ Rep. Kevin Chambliss): This legislation requires employers to train and inform employees how to protect themselves from heat related illness; provide preventative and first aid measures to address signs and symptoms of heat illness; provide sufficient amounts of cool drinking water; ensure each employee gets a 10 minute break for every two hours of work in an outdoor environment under high heat conditions; provides accessibility to shade; conducts annual training. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in partnership with the Florida Department of Health are tasked with adopting rules to implement this program. The real meat of this bill is the definition of "outdoor environment", which is defined in this legislation to mean:- a location where work is conducted outside. The term includes locations such as sheds, tents, greenhouses and other structures where work is conducted inside but the temperature is not managed by devices that reduce heat exposure and aid in cooling, such as air conditioning systems.

SB 864/ HB 1013 Cost-Share program for Agriculture, Shellfish Aquaculture and Silviculture Operations (Sen. Lorraine Ausley/ Rep. Andrew Learned) This legislation would authorize the Florida Department of Agriculture to develop rules to compensate producers for the environmental benefits which they provide.

SB 404/ HB0148 Aquaculture Land Valuations (Sen. Anna Maria Rodriguez/ Rep. Kaylee Tuck): This legislation is a repeat of legislation filed in 2021. As drafted, the bill creates guidance for the taxation of structures and equipment used in Aquaculture production. Specifically, the bill would require the property appraiser to consider the value of the structures and equipment as part of the agricultural crop value. The bill further contemplates these structures and equipment having no separate contributor value.

SB 1612/ HB 1289 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Sen. Lorraine Ausley/ Rep. Ramon Alexander): This legislation is an omnibus package for the Florida Department of Agriculture. While there are myriad of sections to this bill, one of particular interest would amend chapter 597.004 to read: culture, possession, transport and sale of all aquaculture products is exempt from all Florida Fish and Wildlife statute and rules.

Other legislation which FAA is currently monitoring include a Sea Grass Mitigation bill which is intended to help reestablish coastal seagrass, and legislation which would eliminate Florida's Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Lastly, the state is in a much better fiscal environment than many other states. To this end, the legislature will have a significant amount of money to fund many programs in Fiscal Year 21-22. FAA continues to spend our time working on several budget items including funding priorities of UF/IFAS, funding for the Division of Aquaculture and funding for the Aquaculture Review Councils priority project list.

As you can see FAA continues to stay focused in on the issues which are important to our members and their businesses bottom line.

Commodity Reports

Suppliers- Tom Drury

There have been wholesale manufacturing and supply chain disruptions within plastics industries, especially within filter & pump manufacturing. Resin shortages, labor issues, and logistics disruptions have become common causing lead time extensions and significant price increases. Some products' costs have risen 10% or more over the course of a year. On average, manufacturing lead times have increased roughly 25%. It is recommended to stock items essential to an operation. There is constant demand for equipment, but supply issues will continue within the foreseeable future. Major efforts by most companies to stabilize pricing and lead times are underway.

Shellfish- Sarah Solano Stokes

A \$100,000 grant has been awarded through a partnership between a scientist at UF/IFAS and UF research and extension faculty. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has granted this award as a part of the new Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration (SOAR) Shellfish Growers Resiliency Fund. This grant is to assist farmers that had to be shut down due to the pandemic and can potentially assist in funding for red tide shutdowns. The grant will be based upon research done by Ashley Smyth (an assistant professor of biogeochemistry and soil and water sciences at UF/IFAS Tropical Research and Education Center in Homestead) and team. They will measure nitrogen removal by shellfish farmers, "conduct a policy analysis and survey credit buyers and shellfish growers to determine costs of credits by: conducting a survey of shellfish farmers around the state, sampling water at shellfish aquaculture farms along the gulf coast, and reviewing the current policies around payments for ecosystem services and nutrient trading credits." (UF/IFAS, 6JAN22). This research is going to bring in significant data that truly shows how important shellfish is to our ecosystems.

On December 8th, Nikki Fried and FDACS launched the field portion of its newest aquaculture education program. Nikki Fried commented that, "This program is a great opportunity for young Floridians to learn about the oyster industry and how to become responsible stewards of our natural resources. By teaching these students the importance of shellfish aquaculture, we are also working to restore the Apalachicola Bay oyster population and ensure that Florida oysters can be enjoyed for generations to come. This is a great partnership for Florida's future". (FDACS, 8DEC21). Launching a program such as this is important for the restoration and development of the oyster industry for years to come.

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 or 813.438.FLAA (3522).

Alligators: Allen Register, 863.675.0623, allen@gatorama.com

Aquatic Plants: Brandon McLane, 954.472.5120, brandon@floridaaquatic.com

Food Fish: Joe Cardenas, 561.866.7092, joe@aquacofarms.com

Shellfish: Sarah Solano Stokes, 813.417.9441, sarahsolano36@gmail.com

Suppliers: Tom Drury, 844.946.4272, druryt14@gmail.com

Tropical Fish: David Rawlins, 813.737.3418, rawlins@ij.net

Shellfish Connoisseurs Are Drawn to Cedar Key Clams and Oysters

farmflavor.com/florida/florida-crops-livestock/shellfish-connoisseurs-are-drawn-to-cedar-key-clams-and-oysters/

With just over 1,000 residents, Cedar Key is a small, beloved coastal town with a big reputation. This charming spot is known as one of the best places in the U.S. for clams and oysters. More than 90 million clams are produced annually in Cedar Key. This accounts for more than 90% of Florida's total clam cultivation and makes Cedar Key the largest producer of farm-raised clams in the state.

Jon Gill, co-owner of [Southern Cross Sea Farms](#), says they alone ship approximately 20 to 30 million clams annually. Cedar Key is also a top producer of oysters in the state. "Cedar Key's location jutting out into the Gulf of Mexico exposes it to a consistent tidal range, with two high tides and two low tides daily that move nutrients constantly through the waters in which the clams are grown," says Heath Davis of [Cedar Key Seafarms](#). "For these reasons, the time required to grow market-sized clams is considerably shorter in Cedar Key than other areas."

Dan Solano, owner of [Cedar Key Aquaculture Farms](#), has been in the clam business for three decades and credits the excellent combination of saltwater and freshwater for the success of the clam farmers and the clams they produce. "There's a strong seafood heritage here," he says. "This area doesn't have any shoreline development like so much of Florida has, and that allows a good algae production most of the year, which helps them have a great taste and a nice looking 'piece of meat' in the shell."

The clam business took off in Cedar Key around 1990, while oysters have been around much longer but not at the same production level. Rose Cantwell, chairwoman of the [Cedar Key Aquaculture Association Inc.](#) and owner of Dog Island Blues Clam Co., notes hard clams dominate shellfish aquaculture in Florida, and most of the production occurs in the Cedar Key area. Other shellfish produced in the state include oysters and sunray venus clams.

Improving Water Quality

Sue Colson, vice mayor of Cedar Key, says because Cedar Key is surrounded by federal and state properties, it helps ensure that the water quality remains natural and safe for shellfish consumption. As clams feed, they create water currents in and out of their shells, and this helps water quality and contributes to Florida's marine conservation. "During this process, they improve the clarity of the water by reducing the turbidity and amount of sediment as they remove excess nutrients from the water," Davis says. "They are natural filters, and as they convert phytoplankton into clam tissue and shell, they contribute to a wide array of ocean life by allowing more light to penetrate the water column."

Seed to Table

Cedar Key clam farmers participate in the entire seed-to-table process, which means they grow the tiny baby clams, or seeds, that go from upland or over-water raceway nurseries to grow-out bags on clam leases in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Cedar Key clam farmers utilize best management practices that ensure food safety and quality during the entire process of bringing the consumer clams to their table," Davis says. The whole process from seed to table isn't easy and happens much slower than people think. "All seeds start in a Florida hatchery then move to a nursery system," explains Shawn Stephenson, co-owner of Southern Cross Sea Farms. "Nurseries pump large amounts of natural water past the clams and oysters so that they can filter, feed and grow. Next, they move out to our underwater fields (leases) and grow out to full size. Clams take two years to grow to marketable size, while oysters take one year."

Consuming Cedar Key Clams and Oysters

Many believe the fast-growing, nutrient-rich clams produced in Cedar Key taste better. There are innumerable recipes for cooking clams. Davis' favorite is among the simplest – steaming clams in butter, garlic and white wine for seven to nine minutes in a covered pot, or until all the clams open, then eating them on saltine crackers with a little hot sauce or horseradish.

Most Cedar Key restaurants serve clams and oysters, but some of the local favorites include [Tony's Seafood Restaurant](#), [83 West](#), [Island Room](#), [Duncan's on the Gulf](#) and [Island Hotel & Restaurant](#).

"Everyone loves the clams, and we are humbly trying to grow and help the marketplace," Solano says. "The clams and oysters are grown in the United States, and that gives people around Cedar Key pride."

To find out more about all Cedar Key has to offer, visit the town's chamber of commerce website at cedarkey.org.

2021 Taste of Florida Agriculture Report

On November 30th, 2021, the Florida Farm Bureau hosted its annual Taste of Florida Agriculture event in Tallahassee. Shortly before this event our lobbyist, Mr. Jim Spratt arranged several meetings with key stakeholders. Several FAA members and board members met with Sen. Jim Boyd, Rep. Josie Tomkow, Rep. Dana Trabusly, and Rep. Toby Overdorf. All four of these meetings were spectacular and better than we all could have hoped for. The key points that we brought to their attention included ARC funding and the challenges facing Largemouth Bass production and its relationship with FWC. Rep. Josie Tomkow is the House Agriculture Appropriation Chair, so our conversations with her regarding ARC funding and other opportunities for aquaculture with positive and engaging. Sen. Jim Boyd and Rep. Dana Trabusly were very instrumental in the handling and passing of the Largemouth Bass legislation so we were able to present them with a token of our appreciation (pictured below). Overall, each meeting was very positive and refreshing. Sen. Boyd, Rep. Tomkow, Rep. Trabusly, and Rep. Overdorf are all very supportive of aquaculture and truly desire to see our industry grow and succeed within the state of Florida.



After our meetings, we participated in the Taste of Florida Agriculture event. Evans Farms provided delicious smoked sturgeon dip and Leslie Sturmer provided her always amazing clam dip fresh from Cedar Key. Each year folks from around the state look forward to each of these dishes that are made from Florida's aquacultured commodities. This event is a great manner for Florida's aquaculture to be seen and experienced by other commodity groups, political figures, and industry stakeholders that we may not otherwise be able to converse with. As we begin plans for next year's event, we hope that more members and commodity groups are able to participate. Please be on the lookout for information about this event in the fall.

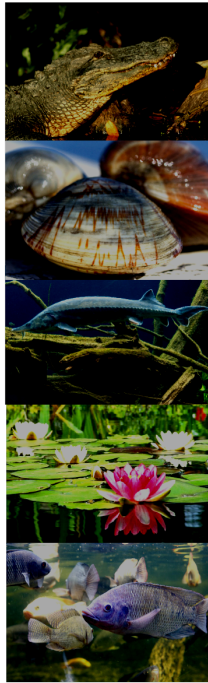


Florida Aquaculture Association

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 fought 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

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.

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



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