



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council



Aquaculture Fishery Management Plan

Purpose and Need

Purpose:

To maximize benefits to the Nation by establishing a regional permitting process to manage the development of environmentally sound aquaculture industry in the Gulf EEZ.

Need:

- Increasing interest in conducting aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Growing U.S. Demand for seafood.
- \$9 billion dollar seafood trade deficit.

What the process will do

A regional permitting process is intended to:

- create economic opportunities in aquaculture that are environmentally sound, sustainable, and provide maximum benefits to the Nation
- maximize the benefits of U.S. coastal resources for local, regional, and national economies
- assist NOAA Fisheries Service and the Council in better achieving required objectives, including optimizing yield and reducing fishing mortality

Other benefits

Open-ocean aquaculture may:

- allow yield to be optimized at levels above those achieved solely by wild stocks
- help reduce fishing mortality on Council managed stocks

Proposed Management Actions

This Fishery Management Plan (FMP) contains ten management actions, each with a range of alternatives for establishing a regional permitting process.

Preferred alternatives have been selected by the Gulf Council and are outlined on the following slides

For a complete list of alternatives and detailed discussion, please refer to Section 4.0 of the document

Primary Goal

To increase MSY and OY of federal fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico, consistent with the goals and objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, by supplementing the harvest of wild caught species with cultured product.

Action 1 – Permit Requirements, Eligibility, and Transferability

Require a NOAA Fisheries Service Gulf of Mexico aquaculture permit to do any of the following:

- Deploy or operate an allowable aquaculture system in the Gulf of Mexico EEZ
- Harvest of wild broodstock of an allowable aquaculture species native to the Gulf of Mexico for aquaculture purposes
- Land allowable aquaculture species at a U.S. Port

Action 1-*continued*

- Transport an allowable species in, from, or to the Gulf of Mexico EEZ for aquaculture purposes
- Sell, only at the first point of sale, an allowable aquaculture species cultured in an allowable aquaculture system in the Gulf of Mexico EEZ

Eligibility for a permit is limited to U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens.

A Gulf of Mexico aquaculture permit is **transferable**

Action 2 – Application and Operational Requirements

- Proposes conditions that must be met in order for aquaculture operations to be permitted, such as acquiring an assurance bond, placing locating devices on cages or pens (e.g., radio signal), describing plans for maintaining genetic diversity, rearing and spawning broodstock, marking or tagging broodstock, environmental monitoring, and aquatic animal health certification

Action 3 – Duration of Permit

- Proposes that Aquaculture permits be effective for 10 years and may be renewed in 5 year increments

Rational- short permit durations would make it difficult for investment and financing of aquaculture operations

Action 4 – Allowed Species

- Would allow the aquaculture of all native species in the Gulf of Mexico managed by the Council, except shrimp and corals
- The Council would also request NOAA Fisheries Service to develop concurrent rulemaking to allow aquaculture of highly migratory species

Action 5 – Allowable Systems

- Would provide NOAA Fisheries Service authority to evaluate each proposed aquaculture system on a case-by-case basis to ensure systems are reliable and provide structural integrity to withstand physical stresses
- This provides aquaculture operations the greatest amount of flexibility when selecting systems

Action 6 – Site Requirements and Conditions

- Would not establish specific areas for marine aquaculture, but would establish general siting criteria for application on a case-by-case basis to ensure use of reliable offshore growing systems
- Also allows NOAA Fisheries Service to determine siting locations that minimize environmental impacts by completing requirements such as benthic video surveys and many others

Action 7– Restricted Access Zones

- Would create a restricted access zone for each aquaculture facility. No fishing (recreational or commercial) and no vessels may operate in or transit through the restricted access zone without a copy of the facilities' aquaculture permit
- Size of the zone corresponds with coordinates approved by Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE) siting permit

Action 8 – Recordkeeping & Reporting

- Includes many requirements including but not limited to:
- Providing NOAA Fisheries Service with relevant federal & state permits
- Reporting to NOAA Fisheries Service the harvesting & landings of cultured fish
- Reporting incidents of disease, escapement, migratory birds, and marine mammal entanglement
- Requiring additional annual records and reports

Action 9 – Biological Reference Points

- Proxy for MSY = OY
- Proxy for OY is the total yield harvested by all permitted aquaculture operations annually, but not to exceed 64 million pounds
- No individual, corporation, or other entity can produce more than 20 % of OY

Action 10 – Framework Procedures

- Specify framework procedures for modifying biological reference points (MSY, OY), and management measures for offshore marine aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico EEZ
- Gulf Council will appoint Aquaculture Advisory Panel to meet annually for evaluation. Panel includes: Council staff, NOAA Fisheries Service biologists and social scientists, Scientific and Statistical Committee, Socioeconomic Panel, state, university, and private scientists

For More Information

List of Appendices:

A – Stocks Managed in Council FMPs

B – NMFS Exempted Fishing Permit* 50CFR 600.745

C – EPA Effluent Limitations Guidelines and New Source Performance Standards

D – ESA/Marine Mammals Issues

E – Interim Final 10-year Plan - NOAA Aquaculture Program

F – National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007

Summary & H.R. 2010 IH April 24, 2007 Introduced Bill

G – Illustrations of Cages and Pens

H – Gulf Council's Marine Aquaculture Policy

I – Explanation of Economic Terms

Questions?

