



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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NOAA Fisheries Service is Seeking Comments on a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS) for Regulating Offshore Aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) requests comments from the public on the DPEIS developed to analyze the impacts of proposed offshore marine aquaculture regulations in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The Environmental Protection Agency announced the availability of the DPEIS on September 12, 2008 (73 FR 53001).

The primary purpose of the DPEIS developed by NOAA Fisheries Service, in cooperation with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council), is to evaluate the effects of a range of alternatives for regulating offshore marine aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico. The Council initiated this action to provide a programmatic approach to evaluating the impacts of aquaculture proposals in the Gulf of Mexico and a comprehensive framework for regulating such activities. Actions in the DPEIS include: 1) Aquaculture permit requirements, eligibility, and transferability; 2) aquaculture permit application requirements, operational requirements, and restrictions; 3) duration an aquaculture permit is effective; 4) species allowed for offshore marine aquaculture; 5) allowable systems for growing cultured organisms; 6) marine aquaculture siting requirements and conditions; 7) restricted access zones surrounding marine aquaculture facilities; 8) recordkeeping and reporting requirements; 9) status determination criteria and biological reference points; and 10) framework procedures for reviewing the aquaculture program and modifying regulations.

Frequently asked questions about the Council's Aquaculture Fishery Management Plan, including the DPEIS, can be found at: www.gulfcouncil.org.

Request for Comments

Written comments on this DPEIS must be received no later than 5 p.m., Eastern time, on **October 27, 2008**, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. See the **Addresses** section for information on where and how to submit comments.

Addresses

Copies of the DPEIS are available on the Council's Web site at: <http://www.gulfcouncil.org> and at the NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office Web site at: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>. Copies of the DPEIS are also available at the e-Rulemaking Portal (<http://www.regulations.gov>, enter "NOAA-NMFS-2008-0233-0002" in the keyword search) or in printed form by contacting Andy Strelcheck (address below).

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You may submit written comments, identified by 0648-AS65, by any of the following methods:

- Electronic submissions: Go to the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov> and enter "NOAA-NMFS-2008-0233-0001" in the keyword search, then select "Send a Comment or Submission." All comments received are part of the public record and will be posted to www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments (enter N/A in the required fields, if you wish to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

- Mail: Andy Strelcheck at mailing address above.

Comments submitted via fax or e-mail will not be accepted.

How Can We Improve These Fishery Bulletins?

If you have any suggestions on how we may improve the contents of future fishery bulletins, please contact:

Kim Amendola, Communication Specialist
Phone: 727-551-5707; Fax: 727-824-5320
e-mail: SERO.Communications.Comments@noaa.gov

If you would like to receive these fishery bulletins via e-mail as soon as they are published, please e-mail us at the address below. You will still receive a print copy of these bulletins through the mail. E-mail SERO.Communications.Comments@noaa.gov and include: (1) "Request for Electronic Fishery Bulletins" in the subject line and (2) your preferred e-mail address in the body of the e-mail.