



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

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NOAA Seeks Comments on Additional Information to be Considered When Regulating Offshore Marine Aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on a draft supplemental environmental document related to the Fishery Management Plan for Regulating Offshore Marine Aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico (Aquaculture Plan). This document considers possible environmental impacts of the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil spill on offshore aquaculture in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico. This document was published in the *Federal Register* on February 18, 2014 (79 FR 9199). The public comment period for this document ends on **March 31, 2014**.

Background

In 2009 the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council submitted the Aquaculture Plan which included a final programmatic environmental impact statement, and associated rulemaking, to NOAA Fisheries for Agency review. At that time, NOAA Fisheries announced that the agency would develop a new national policy for marine aquaculture which would include guidance for federal waters.

On April 20, 2010, an explosion occurred on the DWH Macondo 252 oil rig, resulting in the release of millions barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. After 85 days, the well was successfully capped.

In 2011, NOAA released its Marine Aquaculture Policy and announced its intentions to move forward with rulemaking for the Aquaculture Plan.

In order to consider new circumstances arising from the DWH blowout, including additional analysis of the management alternatives for the Aquaculture Plan, a draft supplemental environmental document was created.

Request for Comments

You may submit comments on the draft supplemental environmental document, identified by "NOAA-NMFS-2008-0233" by any of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submissions:** Submit electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2008-0233, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
- **Mail:** Submit written comments to Jess Beck-Stimpert, Southeast Regional Office, NOAA Fisheries, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA Fisheries. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NOAA Fisheries 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, or Adobe PDF file formats only. Comments must be received by March 31, 2014, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries.

Electronic copies of the Aquaculture Plan and final programmatic environmental impact statement, which includes an initial regulatory flexibility analysis, and a regulatory impact review may be obtained from the Southeast Regional Office Web site at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information regarding the existing regulations. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the regulations as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.