

**Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee
Aquaculture Task Force
Terms of Reference
January 2015**

Purpose

Establish a Task Force under the authority of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) to provide additional expert advice to MAFAC, and subsequently NOAA Leadership, on emerging aquaculture issues and assist NOAA Fisheries in fulfilling its mission activities.

Objective

This Task Force is being established to expand the aquaculture expertise of MAFAC and to help MAFAC provide advice and input to NOAA Leadership on the NOAA Aquaculture Program and its future activities. The Task Force will assist NOAA in fulfilling its central role in developing and implementing policies that enable marine aquaculture. Furthermore, it will work to ensure that aquaculture complies with existing federal laws and regulations that NOAA enforces under its marine stewardship mission.

The initial actions for consideration of the Task Force include:

- Provide input to and feedback on the coordinated permit framework for aquaculture in federal waters, which is being developed by the Regulatory Task Force of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Aquaculture. One possible activity would be to develop a mock-up description of a representative, commercial aquaculture project of the type NOAA may be asked to permit under the fishery management plan (FMP) for aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico. The mock project will provide sufficient detail to allow for it to be used to test the coordinated permitting framework or “run” the mock application through the permit process (early 2015).
- Review NOAA's progress on implementing the agency's 10-Year Plan for Marine Aquaculture (2007) and provide input on priorities and objectives to include in strategic planning for the aquaculture program (mid 2015).

Background/Scope:

MAFAC has a longstanding history of engagement on aquaculture issues, and its input will be of great assistance as several new enterprises get underway. The aquaculture community's interest in permitting in federal waters has been buoyed by the release of the proposed rule for Gulf of Mexico waters in August 2014. In tandem with this, the Interagency Working Group on Aquaculture (IWG-A) has organized a Regulatory Task Force to address aquaculture permitting issues. A current priority for the IWG-A Regulatory Task Force is to develop a permitting framework to address NOAA, Army Corps, EPA, and other federal agency requirements that will apply to commercial aquaculture activities in federal waters. The IWG-A Regulatory Task

Force to date has primarily worked internally, but will need to reach out to constituents to ensure the permitting framework is workable.

In response to a request from MAFAC in 2005, NOAA's Aquaculture Program drafted its 10-Year Plan to frame the agency's vision and plans for development of marine aquaculture in the United States. After MAFAC input and public input, the plan was adopted by NOAA in 2007 as an agency-wide policy document intended to guide a broad, national initiative for marine aquaculture. It is now timely to assess the progress made on the Plan's implementation to help guide future priorities for the Office of Aquaculture.

Terms and Composition

This Task Force will consist of no more than 11 individuals. The individuals will have expertise and experience in aquaculture science, research, development, NGO, and industry. MAFAC's Commerce Subcommittee and MAFAC will review all applicants, and recommend candidates for the Task Force. The full Task Force composition will be approved by NOAA Fisheries.

It is intended that Task Force members represent the diverse constituent groups and partners that interact with NOAA Fisheries from across U.S. regions and Territories. Task Force members will be appointed for one (1) year terms with the opportunity for reappointment for one additional term.

Organization and Reporting

The Task Force may meet in person at the discretion of NOAA Fisheries and MAFAC with the concurrence of the members. Other meetings may be conducted by telephone or using other meeting technology.

The Task Force will report to MAFAC's Commerce Subcommittee, which will report on its activities, findings, recommendations, reports, and other deliverables at regular meetings of MAFAC and to NOAA Fisheries Leadership. Individual members of the Task Force may provide feedback on specific topics that do not require consensus input, at the request of NOAA Fisheries outside of the MAFAC approval process.

Funding

NOAA Fisheries will be responsible for travel and other expenses. The Task Force will be managed under the Office of Policy, with input from the Office of Aquaculture.

Duration

The Task Force will be established for an initial period of one (1) year with a possibility of extending that term if deemed necessary by NOAA Fisheries and MAFAC.