

NOAA Fisheries Aquaculture Opportunity Area Updates



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Session Overview

- 8:30-10:00 Presentations
 - Intro: Paul Doremus
 - AOA Basics: Kristy Beard
 - Aquaculture Opportunity Atlas Results for Gulf of Mexico: Ken Riley
 - Aquaculture Opportunity Atlas Results for Southern CA: Ken Riley
 - Science to Support AOAs: Seth Theuerkauf
 - AOA PEIS Status Updates: Andrew Richard
- 10:00-10:30 Break
- 10:30 Facilitated Panel Q&A



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Panel Participants

- Kristine Cherry – NMFS Office of Aquaculture, Regulatory and Policy Branch Chief
- Kristy Beard – OAQ Policy Analyst, National AOA lead
- Phaedra Doukakis – OAQ Policy Analyst, NEPA lead
- Seth Theuerkauf – OAQ Science Team
- Ken Riley – National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS)
- Andrew Richard – NMFS Southeast Regional Office, Regional Aquaculture Coordinator
- Marifrancis (Min) Moschopoulos - OAQ



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NOAA Aquaculture Program

NOAA Fisheries

fisheries.noaa.gov

- » policy/regulatory
- » aquaculture outreach
- » science for sound aquaculture development

Sea Grant

seagrant.noaa.gov

- » external grants
- » extension and education for coastal and Great Lakes aquaculture

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science

coastalscience.noaa.gov

- » spatial planning and siting
- » ecosystem services
- » environmental monitoring and modeling



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Executive Order on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth

Section 7: Aquaculture Opportunity Areas

- The Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with other appropriate Federal officials, appropriate Regional Fishery Management Councils, and in coordination with appropriate State and tribal governments, shall:
 - Within 1 year of date of E.O., identify at least two geographic areas containing locations suitable for commercial aquaculture.
 - Within 2 years of identifying each geographic area, complete a PEIS for each to assess the impact of siting aquaculture facilities there.
 - Each of following 4 years, identify two more geographic areas and complete PEIS within 2 years.

** A decision on AOA location(s) is not made until the PEIS is complete and Record of Decision (ROD) is signed*



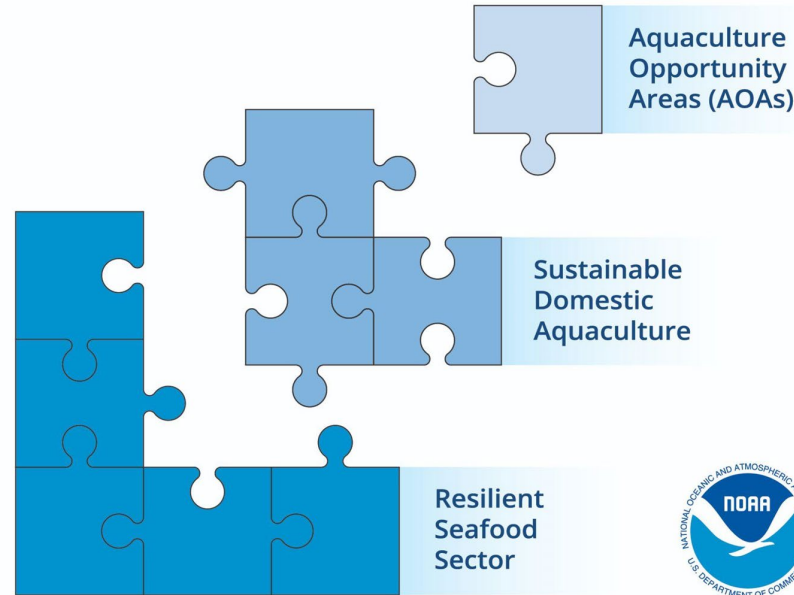
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Aquaculture Opportunity Areas and Expanding U.S. Seafood

Expanding U.S. Seafood

As a complement to our wild-capture seafood, expanding domestic aquaculture is critical for economic and environmental resilience.

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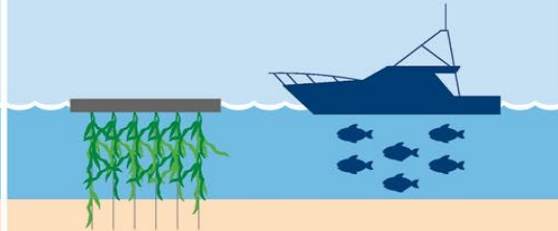
What is an Aquaculture Opportunity Area?

Aquaculture Opportunity Areas show high potential for commercial aquaculture. A science and community-based approach to identifying these areas helps minimize interference with other enterprises, account for current fishing patterns, and protect the ecosystem.

AOAs will expand economic opportunities in coastal and rural areas, and increase our nation's seafood security.

AOAs use the best available science to find appropriate spaces for sustainable aquaculture.

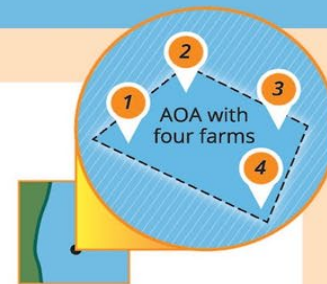
AOAs minimize interactions with other users, such as shipping, fishing, and the military.



Assessment and Use of AOAs

Stakeholder input is essential in the design and location of AOAs and NOAA expects these areas will be shaped through a public process that allows constituents to share their community and stewardship goals, as well as critical insights.

AOA size, exact location, and farm types will be determined through spatial analysis and public input to expand sustainable domestic seafood production while minimizing potential user conflicts. Farms will still need to go through the permitting process and environmental reviews.



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Key Points

- Planning process, not regulatory, no new NOAA authorities
- Process to identify AOAs is independent of specific proposals for aquaculture operations within an AOA
- Federal and state permit requirements remain the same
- Additional NEPA, ESA, EFH, MMPA analyses may be required as part of permitting and authorization processes
- Selection on AOA location(s) will not be made until end of NEPA process
- Aquaculture projects don't have to be in an AOA



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What have we done since May 7, 2020?

June 2020



Now: March 2022

Coming soon!

Task:

Selected Gulf of Mexico and Southern CA as first two regions

Q&A, National and Regional rollouts; presentations & outreach

NCCOS data collection and modeling for siting analysis

RFI in October 2020; 5 listening sessions (3 national, 2 regional)

NCCOS draft Aquaculture Opportunity Atlas; peer review

Gulf of Mexico and Southern CA Atlases published (NEW!)

Consider selection of additional region(s), timing, resources

Combine public input, results of Atlas, and other information to identify preliminary NEPA alternatives

NOI to prepare PEIS, with preliminary AOA alternatives to consider

Begin stakeholder outreach and coordination in third region; RFI



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RFI: Comment Summary

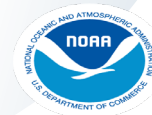
- Comments closed December 22, 2020
- 73 unique comment submissions through regulations.gov; 24 from five public listening sessions
- A mix of Federal and State agencies, Councils, Makah Tribe, NGOs, individuals submitted comments
- Two write-in campaigns
 - Friends of the Earth - 27,368 signatures
 - Center for Food Safety - 6,519 signatures



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RFI: Comment Details

- Mix of support and opposition
- Opposition primarily focused on finfish aquaculture
- Specific areas within Southern CA and Gulf of Mexico to focus on or avoid
- Issues raised (e.g. water quality, marine mammals, impacts to fishing markets, escapes, disease) to be considered in the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS)



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Round 1 Next Step: AOA Programmatic Environmental Impact Assessment (PEIS)

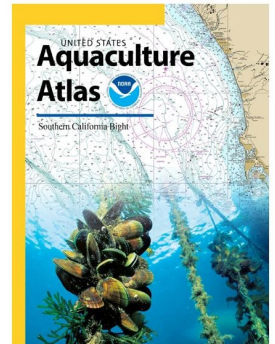
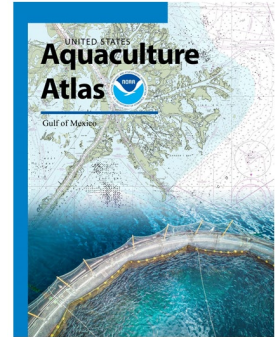
- Southeast and West Coast regions will complete PEISs for first AOAs
 - Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare each PEIS
- Areas that will be considered in the PEIS will be based on sources including:
 - NCCOS Atlas
 - Protected Resources, Sustainable Fisheries, and Habitat Conservation coordination
 - Public, stakeholder, agency input
- Input opportunities: scoping and public comment period



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AOA Atlases – Key Points

- Published November 2021
- Planning goal was to identify areas that have the highest potential to support three to five marine aquaculture operations with the least amount of conflict with other ocean uses. Not the same as planning for one farm!
- Do not reflect a decision on location of AOA(s) – that will be made after completion of NEPA process.
- Do provide peer-reviewed spatial mapping and data analyses – one of many sources of information that contribute to and inform the AOA identification process.



Round 2: Comments on Future AOA locations

- Support for AOA for shellfish and seaweed mariculture in Alaska (state and federal waters)
- Support for AOA in Western Pacific
- Support for AOA in USVI and Puerto Rico (through public meeting)
- Support for AOA in waters off of Florida
- Primarily opposition for AOA in Northeast at this time
 - Potential conflicts with wind planning, lobster industry, right whales
 - One comment in support of AOA in Northeast
- Opposition for AOA in Oregon at this time
- Opposition for AOA in coastal Washington (Makah Tribe)



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Round 2: Selecting AOA Region(s)

- Reviewed RFI comments
- Worked with Regional Offices to define opportunities and challenges of AOAs in their region
- NMFS Leadership consideration of opportunities and challenges, including resource limitations



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Round 2: Next Steps

- Determine resource availability, next steps, timeline
- Announce next region
- Begin stakeholder outreach and coordination
- Begin NCCOS data collection
- Work to prepare RFI for Round 2
- Plan for public comment period



AOA Timeline: Fall 2021/Summer 2022

1

Publish Atlases as peer reviewed NOAA tech memos for each region.

2

Publish Notice of Intent (NOI) for each programmatic EIS in the Gulf of Mexico and Southern California, beginning in-depth evaluation of potential areas.

3

Continue to coordinate with other federal agencies, Fishery Management Councils, Marine Fisheries Commissions, states, and tribes.

4

Announce selection of next region(s) of focus for AOA identification using best available scientific data and stakeholder input.

fisheries.noaa.gov/aquaculture

01/2022



Find the most up-to-date information on our website, including past presentations and links to public comments

Facilitated Panel Q&A

- This is not an opportunity to provide public comment
- Please focus your questions on AOAs and the Atlases
- Index cards and pens available
 - Please include your name and your questions
- Follow-up questions can be asked without writing down



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