

Webex Conferencing
Moderator: Megan Ewald
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Listening Session 2/2: Identifying Aquaculture Opportunity Areas in Southern California

Megan Ewald

As part of NOAA's mission to foster ocean sustainability while facilitating domestic aquaculture growth, NOAA's working to identify aquaculture opportunity areas. These areas were evaluated for their potential environmental, economic, and social suitability to support multiple commercial aquaculture operations. This is a process rooted in science and public engagement that will help the U.S. plan for aquaculture development. Last month, NOAA released two draft programmatic environmental impact statements for Southern California and the Gulf of Mexico that bring us one step closer to identifying aquaculture opportunity areas. The 90 day public comment period is open through 20 February 2025, and thank you all for attending today to provide a public comment on these draft documents.

As a reminder, this is an opportunity to provide oral comments. It's not a question and answer session. To provide a comment, please raise your hand by pressing the hand icon at the bottom of the screen and I'll unmute you. For those calling in, please press star three, to raise your hand and star six to unmute. Participants will have 3 min to provide verbal comments. If you'd like to provide multiple, you're welcome to raise your hand and get back in the queue. So to start us off today, we'll do a round of introductions. I'm Megan Ewald, communications lead for NOAA Fisheries Office of Aquaculture, and I'll allow our presenter Celia to introduce herself. Celia, we can't hear you.

Celia Barroso

Apologies, I'm having a number of technical issues today. I apologize and hope that this is the end of it.

Megan Ewald

I can't hear you yet. While Celia works on her microphone, I'll invite David to introduce himself, our cohost.

David Reynolds

Hello, my name is David Reynolds. I am an aquaculture support specialist with NOAA Fisheries west coast.

Megan Ewald

Maybe it's me that I can't hear you, and maybe I'm the issue. So I'll allow you guys to go ahead while I sort out my own personal speaker issues.

Celia Barroso

Okay, if others are on the line, if you're unable to hear us, feel free to raise a hand.

Megan Ewald

And Celia I believe this is a personal issue. I can hear you loud and clear, so please go ahead and finish introducing yourself if you haven't already.

Celia Barroso

Sure, apologies. I'm the Aquaculture Coordinator for California for NOAA Fisheries in the West Coast Region. And I think now hopefully everybody can hear and I have the screen appropriately put up. We'll keep going.

Alright, to reiterate a bit of what Megan had mentioned, this is the meeting to for the public to provide comments to NOAA Fisheries on the draft programmatic environmental impact statement for the identification of aquaculture opportunity areas in federal waters off of Southern California. The environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA provides an opportunity for our stakeholders and the public to get involved in a federal agency's decision making process. In May of 2022, we published the notice of intent to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement to identify aquaculture opportunity areas or AOAs. We solicited comments from the public on that Notice of Intent.

The input we received helped shape this draft programmatic environmental impact statement or EIS, and this is the opportunity for you to provide input on the programmatic EIS. The goal of today's meeting is to hear from you, as mentioned by Megan it is not a question and answer session. This meeting is being recorded and will be part of the administrative record for the programmatic EIS. If you do not wish to be recorded, please exit the webinar. On this slide is a link to download the draft programmatic EIS as well as a QR code.

This is the second of two webinars and I apologize I did not update the initial heading here. So this is the second of two public webinars. The first was on 23 January, and this one is now today on the 28th, and these are webinars to provide verbal comments to NOAA Fisheries on this draft programmatic environmental impact statement. Toward the end of this presentation, I will provide information on other ways to provide written comment as well. We will be covering the expectations for the meeting, and then I will provide an overview of the draft programmatic EIS. After, we will open the meeting for public comment. We will put instructions on how to provide that comment, such as unmuting yourself and a couple, a couple of times in this presentation before the public comments session in order to familiarize yourself with the process.

Let's go on to the meeting expectations. This meeting is intended to introduce and receive comments on the draft programmatic EIS for the identification of aquaculture opportunity areas in federal waters off of Southern California or as I will frequently call it throughout this session, the draft programmatic EIS. Another acronym you may see in here is AOA, and this means aquaculture opportunity area. This meeting is not a question and answer session, and NOAA Fisheries will be in listening mode only. This is also not a common opportunity for a specific permit application or aquaculture initiative. The U.S. Army Corps engineers recently published a public notice announcing that Ocean Rainforest is applying for a permit for a seaweed facility off of Santa Barbara. This is not the opportunity to comment on that. Additionally, NOAA Fisheries has published a draft programmatic EIS for the identification of AOAs off of the Gulf of Mexico, and this is not an opportunity to comment on that draft. The Southeast Regional Office is hosting separate meetings for a comment on that draft.

This is to introduce you to the comment process and we will display this again later in the presentation. As mentioned earlier, this meeting is being recorded, and this includes all verbal comments received today. You can join the queue to provide a comment by raising your hand, one place where that hand raise feature is found is at the bottom of the screen. If you are calling in by phone, you can press star and then three. When called upon, press star six, to unmute yourself. When prompted, please clearly state your 1st and last name, location and organization or affiliation before providing your comment. Please keep your comments to no longer than 3 min to allow time for other participants to provide comments. If you would like to provide additional comments beyond 3 min, you may rejoin the queue. NOAA Fisheries staff will let you know when the 3 min have been reached.

On to the overview of the programmatic EIS. I will provide a background, including an overview of the National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA, and a timeline of events that have gotten us to where we are today. I will then describe the purpose and need, proposed action, and alternatives analyzed. I will give a brief overview of the resources analyzed and mention some of the impacts described in the programmatic draft programmatic EIS. Lastly, I will mention the next steps and how to submit comments before opening the meeting for public comment.

In May of 2020 an Executive Order called promoting seafood Competitiveness and economic growth was signed. This Executive Order aims to address the increasing demand for seafood in the United States, facilitate long term planning for marine aquaculture development, and address interests and concerns regarding siting of offshore marine aquaculture. Section 7 of the Executive Order on aquaculture opportunity areas directed NOAA to identify geographic areas suitable for commercial aquaculture and to complete a programmatic environmental impact statement for each area under the National Environmental Policy Act. NOAA selected federal waters in Southern California as one of the

first two regions for potential AOAs. AOAs, or aquaculture opportunity areas, are defined as geographic areas that have been evaluated to determine their potential suitability for commercial aquaculture.

Before diving into the contents of the draft programmatic EIS, let's talk about NEPA. NEPA is a procedural statute intended to ensure federal agencies consider the environmental impacts of their actions in the decision making process. NEPA considers both beneficial and adverse potential impacts to the environment, including natural, cultural and historic resources, the socioeconomic environment, public health and safety, climate change, environmental justice and cumulative impacts.

This document is a programmatic EIS. This is a programmatic approach to NEPA, which is a broad analysis to evaluate plans, policies, programs or groups of related activities. The programmatic analysis may be used to inform NEPA processes for individual projects proposed later in time. A programmatic EIS considers a range of alternatives, including a no action alternative, and is shaped by public input.

Since the signing of the executive order, NOAA Fisheries in 2020 published a request for information that solicited public input to help identify data needs, data sources, and project requirements for offshore aquaculture in the first two geographic regions in which NOAA Fisheries has chosen to identify AOA, as well as on a national level. At the same time, the National Center for Coastal Ocean Science, or NCCOS, worked with the NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region to collect data first spatial modeling analysis for the region. NCCOS published, as a peer review technical memorandum, an aquaculture opportunity area atlas for the southern California Bight referred to as the atlas. Using the Atlas and information collected during the request for information, NOAA Fisheries published the notice of intent to prepare a programmatic EIS, which initiated the NEPA process. We published a public scoping report describing the public comments received on that notice of intent, which is available online. Those were then considered when developing the draft programmatic EIS, you have available to you now.

This project has three cooperating agencies, which are federal agencies with jurisdiction by law or special expertise. They are consulted during the development of the draft programmatic EIS. The three cooperating agencies are Region 9 of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Los Angeles District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and District 11 of the U.S. Coast Guard.

The proposed action of the draft programmatic EIS is to identify one or more AOAs that may be suitable for multiple offshore aquaculture projects in federal waters in the Southern California Bight. So this is outside of state waters and within the U.S. EEZ and to evaluate the impacts of siting aquaculture in those locations. The draft programmatic EIS analyzed types of commercial

aquaculture, including finfish, shellfish, macroalgae or multi species aquaculture. Identifying AOAs is a long term planning effort, it is not a regulatory or permitting action, and does not propose to authorize or permit any specific aquaculture related activities or individual aquaculture projects.

The purpose of the programmatic environmental impact statement is to analyze the impacts of the alternatives by applying a science based approach to identify aquaculture opportunity areas in federal waters. The goal of identifying AOAs is to promote American seafood competitiveness, food security, economic growth, and to support the development of domestic commercial aquaculture consistent with sustaining and conserving marine resources and applicable laws, regulations and policies. The need as identified in this planning document is to meet the directive of executive order 13921 mentioned earlier to address the increasing demand for seafood, facilitate long term planning for marine aquaculture development, and to address the interests and concerns regarding offshore marine aquaculture siting.

This draft programmatic EIS analyzes three alternatives in addition to the No action alternative. Alternative one is the no action alternative, in which no AOAs are identified off of Southern California. Each of the alternatives two through four have two sub alternatives. A, which analyzes the potential siting of macroalgae and shellfish aquaculture only, and B, which analyzes the potential siting of all types of commercial aquaculture, including macroalgae, shellfish, finfish, and integrated multitrophic aquaculture or INTA. INTA grows more than one organism in a facility. For example, shellfish with finfish. Shellfish, molluscan, such as oysters, clams, mussels, scallops, and abalone. Alternative two identifies up to eight AOAs from federal waters in the Santa Barbara Channel. In the next slides, I will show images of these areas. Alternative three identifies up to two AOAs from federal waters in the Santa Monica Bay. And alternative four identifies up to ten total AOAs from either the Santa Barbara channel or the Santa Monica Bay.

This is a map of the AOA options in the Santa Barbara channel. They are located between 5 and 11 nautical miles offshore Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. The options range from 1500 to 2000 acres each with a total combined acreage of 15,000 acres.

This is a map of the AOA options in the Santa Monica Bay. They are located between 4 and 5 miles offshore Los Angeles County and range in size from 500 to 1000 acres with a total combined acreage of 1500 acres.

This is a map of alternative four, which is a combination of AOA options in both areas for a total combined acreage of 16,500 acres.

In the next few slides, I'll provide a brief overview of the resources analyzed in this planning document. The draft programmatic environmental impact

statement describes the potential impacts that may occur as a result of siting aquaculture facilities in the future. As a reminder, no specific aquaculture project is being analyzed. Rather many examples are included in the programmatic EIS. This document is a consortium of information and includes a broad range of activities analyzed. For example, the range of acreage with aquaculture facilities sited within AOA options, which could be anywhere from 1 to 16,500 acres. The affected environment and environmental consequences may be found in chapter three. It is in this chapter where we describe the potential impacts of siting aquaculture in AOAs. I will provide an overview of the impacts, which is not an exhaustive list. As you review the document, you may notice the effects on various resources depend not only on quantity as just mentioned, but the type of aquaculture as well.

The first described is the administrative environment, which is based on the development of this planning document. As noted in the draft programmatic EIS, the use of AOAs creates a predictable area for aquaculture development, which may have a beneficial impact on communities in creating predictability and focusing on aquaculture in an area that has been evaluated and assessed to be the most suitable in southern California. This planning document does not change the existing regulatory authorities or processes related to permitting offshore aquaculture.

The physical environment resources analyzed our oceanography and climate, marine managed areas and special resource areas, seafloor characteristics, water quality, air quality and aesthetics, and the acoustic environment. Depending on the amount of facilities and type of aquaculture or potential adverse effects may be due to changes in localized hydrodynamic processes, fuel use, anchoring systems, marine debris, turbidity, or nutrient deficits. Potential benefits may include farm species taking up nutrients and new areas of wildlife aggregations. Effects as a result of alternative four may be compounded due to increased acreage with aquaculture facilities or alternatively effects may be more dispersed if facilities are dispersed over a larger area.

The biological environment resources analyzed are federally protected species in habitat, wild fish stocks, ecologically important marine communities and potentially farmed species. Potential adverse effects may be due to escapes, disease, noise or light pollution due to fixed gear, entanglements in gear, increased vessel traffic, changes in habitat characteristics are used, new wildlife aggregations, use of native versus naturalized species and farming practices. Potential benefits may include wildlife aggregations, productivity and connectivity with the pelagic environment, and improvements in water quality. As mentioned earlier, alternative four effects may be either compounded or dispersed depending on the resource and the total acreage, type of aquaculture and distribution of aquaculture facilities.

The socioeconomic environment topics analyzed our commercial and recreational fishing, markets and regional food systems, ports and working water fronts, tourism and other recreation, transportation and navigation, offshore energy and public services, public health and safety and environmental justice considerations. Potential adverse effects may be due to disruption of commercial fishing, navigation disruptions, and disproportionate impacts to vulnerable communities. Potential benefits may be due to new infrastructure, also supporting other activities, employment opportunities, and new wildlife aggregations supporting recreational activities. As mentioned, again, alternative four effects may be either compounded or dispersed depending on the resource and the total acreage, type of aquaculture and distribution of aquaculture facilities.

Of the cultural and historic environment, potential impacts of future siting of aquaculture to the following are described in the planning document. Tribal resources and cultural practices, non-tribal cultural and traditional practices and archaeological resources. Potential effects could be due to damaged artifacts, impacts to culturally valuable areas and the biological resources communities rely on or how the socioeconomic benefits are distributed. This section notes that the Santa Monica Bay AOA options are farther from the Chumash National Marine Sanctuary that was recently designated. In addition, the entire Southern California bite region could be culturally significant to indigenous groups due to the historic presence and land use along this section of the California coast and throughout the Channel Islands. As mentioned earlier, an alternative four effects may be either compounded or dispersed on the resource and the total acreage, the type of aquaculture and distribution of aquaculture facilities.

In chapter four, the draft programmatic EIS describes the cumulative impacts in climate change. This section is an overview of baseline climate change impacts on the previously mentioned resources and an overview of baseline impacts that could occur due to other ocean uses and forecasted trends in the Southern California Bight. The level of potential cumulative impacts would depend on individual projects. Distance and time between siting and operating actions, the potential lifespan of projects, and many other factors of ocean use in the region all would contribute to incremental adverse and beneficial effects.

So where do we go next? The public comment period ends on 20 February at 11:59 p.m. Eastern time. NOAA Fisheries will consider all comments received when preparing the final programmatic environmental impact statement. No sooner than 30 days after the final EIS is published we will issue a Record of Decision, which is the concluding step of the environmental impact statement process. The Record of Decision explains the agency's decision, describes the alternatives the agency considered, and discusses the agency's plans for mitigation and monitoring if necessary. We have a NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region website dedicated to the identification of AOAs where updates will be posted and we provide the link and QR code here.

So thank you for attending. If you have any questions, you are welcome to email socalaoa.wcr@noaa.gov

Before opening the floor to your comments I wanted to cover the other ways to submit comments. As noted, this is the second and last of two public webinars. You may also submit written comments at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) by searching for the identifier, NOAA-NMFS-2022-0051, or email socalaoa.wcr@noaa.gov or mail me, the comment coordinator, at the physical address in Long Beach at the address on the screen. Again, all comments are due no later than 20 February 2025 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern time.

To provide comments today, as a reminder, this is not a question and answer session, but an opportunity for you to provide comment on the draft programmatic EIS. To provide comments now, you can join the queue by raising your hand. One place the hand raised feature can be found is at the bottom of the screen. If you are calling in by phone, press star and then three. When called upon, press star and then six to unmute yourself. When prompted, please clearly state your first and last name, location, organization or affiliation before providing your comment. Please keep your comments to no longer than 3 minutes to allow time for other participants to provide comments. If you would like to provide additional comments beyond 3 minutes, you may rejoin the queue. NOAA Fisheries staff will let you know when those 3 minutes have been reached. As a reminder, this meeting has been recorded, including any comments you provide and will be part of the administrative record. Thank you very much. The floor is open.

Megan Ewald

Okay, thank you so much, Celia. The floor is now open for anyone who would like to provide a public comment. Please go ahead and raise your hand if you'd like to do so.

Okay, I'm seeing one raised hand from Nam Nguyen. If you'd like to, I'm requesting you to unmute.

Nam Nguyen

Yeah yes, in the in the document, where can I find the information that decided or determined that San Diego region was not a suitable, not a suitable place for aquaculture?

Did I come in? Checking. Can, can folks hear me?

Megan Ewald

Yes, I'm sorry. We can hear you. Thank you for chiming in today. Unfortunately, this is not a question and answer session. But if you would like to get in touch

with our Regional aquaculture Coordinator via the contact information that was provided during this presentation, we're happy to answer questions that way.

Nam Nguyen

Understood.

Megan Ewald

Thank you very much. All right. Would anyone else like to provide a public comment today? Please go ahead and raise your hand. Jeff I'm seeing your hand raised and I'm requesting you to unmute.

Okay, Jeff I'm requesting you to unmute, you should see a notifications.

Jeff Maassen

Now are you hearing me?

Megan Ewald

Yes, I can hear you loud and clear.

Jeff Maassen

I tuned in a little bit late. I was under the impression the meeting was postponed, and I got an email from one of our advisors. I am a Santa Barbara based sea urchin dive harvester for the past 40 years, and I also work for the DoD in contracting in a variety of operations here in the range in Point Mugu. During my tenure, of being a sea urchin dive harvester, I've noticed with the El Ninos and the warm water blob, we've had diminished kelp, in the near shore ecosystems, particularly at the Northern Channel Islands. We are seeing some, it's bouncing back a little bit, but, it's over the last 40 years since I started, it's progressively diminishing the amount of kelp availability, which directly relates to the vitality of nearshore fisheries and biodiversity.

So aside from that, what I did, four or five years ago is I diversified I was able to access two oil platforms, Houchin and Hogan, off of Carpinteria, Ventura, area, and I was harvesting mussels, and selling and hopefully I wanted to have them tested for human consumption. but I got no help from NOAA in Long Beach and I wanted to, I had in \$50,000 of my own money to put into it to explore the palatability and feasibility of, of these muscles in terms of, how healthy they are and whether there are any contaminants that are emanating from the floor. sea floor up to the, the legs. So, in the process of developing that, I was selling them to commercial fishermen trappers, lobster and crab trappers, and they were using them as bait, keeping them whole and they were going in and scratching the lobsters and crabs and so that would attract more. So I, I developed a, a harvest plan based on supplying those, not that I expected it to be profitable, but, I, did my landings, paid my taxes on them and tried to develop it.

So, in, in my tenure of being able to dive, the platform legs and harvest, it became obvious that, we could plant scallops, abalone on the cross members, harvest the perpetually growing mussels and that there are some possibilities for aquaculture on, and around those oil platforms especially since, you know, it's a habitat that comes up, you know, to the intertidal. So, I wanted to make a suggestion and a request if perhaps the platforms as they're being decommissioned, that we keep those platforms into the intertidal, which is surface, keep them to the surface, maybe they need to be buoyed and lit, as hazards to navigation for maritime purposes. But, as an urchin diver I have an urchin vessel, a slip in the harbor, and there's 1520 other boats here in the harbor that would be interested in participating in growing, doing aquaculture experiments on the oil platform legs especially as more and more come, are becoming, shut in and decommissioned.

So I just wanted to plant that seed hopefully that we can make some forward traction on exploring and expanding the possibility of using those existing infrastructures to grow food for the community. And those are my comments. Thank you.

Megan Ewald

Great, thank you for your comment Jeff. I'm going to go ahead and lower your hand and place you back on mute. The floor is open, and I'd like to remind everyone joining today that if you have a question pertaining to the contents of the DPEIS, you can reach out to socalAOA.wcr@noaa.gov and Celia will continue to share this slide with that information. There we go. Thank you Celia. Please don't hesitate to reach out via email to that with any questions. The floor is open for others that would like to provide a public comment. Please go ahead and raise your hand by pressing star three if you're on the phone or by pressing the hands icon in the lower right hand portion of your screen if you're joining via web.

Okay Barbara I'm seeing your hand raised. I'm requesting you to unmute.

We should be able to hear you Barbara.

Barbara Holzman

Okay, thank you. My name's Barbara Holzman. I'm a Professor Emeritus from San Francisco State that I am a resident with Santa Barbara area, and I just wanted to comment on a couple of issues that I hope will be considered in your evaluation of the impacts. One is that this has, this Santa Barbara Channel has just been recently designated as a world whale heritage site and I am very interested in the potential impacts to our marine mammals in the Channel. We are currently seeing an increase in humpback whales in the area and some staying year round for our food. The channel is very productive as it is with our sanctuaries in place and the sanctuary people doing a great job of doing that. I

really fear that adding some man-made aquaculture to the area may be very negatively impacting the marine mammal population.

The other impact is Santa Barbara Channel and I know your oceanographers will probably know this already, the winds in that are rather strong at times and the potential for pollution from these areas of aquaculture to the larger food web are very possible.

And the third impact that I want someone to pop to investigate is there's a lot of DDT contamination, a lot of professors down in Southern California have been looking at that and the impact of such aquaculture with anchoring and disturbing the potential DDT pollution and bringing it back up into the food web, which has been a hazard for a lot of marine animals in the past and finally seems to have settled down into the deeper areas of the Channels in Santa Monica as well. So I'm just leaving those three comments as hopefully will be considered in the impacts and I would urge a no action on this item. Thank you.

Megan Ewald

Great, thank you Barbara, for your comment. I'm going to place you on mute and lower your hand. Thank you to everybody who's logged on today and to everybody who's provided a comment. The floor is open. Please raise your hand by pressing the icon in the lower right hand portion of your screen or by pressing star three.

I'm not seeing any hands raised. We will be here for the duration of the two hour webinar. People are welcome to chime in at any time and provide a comment. The floor is open.

I'm not currently seeing any raised hands, but as a reminder, there are many ways that you can provide a public comment. We'll pass it over to Celia to run through them.

Celia Barroso

Thank you Megan. Other options for providing comment are to do some written comments if today is not the day to provide your comment. We are accepting written comment in a few avenues. You can search for NOAA-NMFS-2022-0051 at www.regulations.gov and click comment or you can email socalaoa.wcr@noaa.gov or you can mail the comment coordinator at the physical address in Long beach. Again, these comments are due by 20 February. Or you can provide a verbal comment today with the instructions on the screen by raising your hand or if on the phone pressing star three.

Megan Ewald

I'm still not seeing any raised hands, which is perfectly alright. There are many ways that you can comment through 20 February. We will start to wind down these verbal reminders that the floor is open. We will be here for the duration of

the two hours and people are welcome to comment and raise their hand at any time.

Thank you again to everyone who joined today. The floor is still open. We will be here through 07:00 Pacific time.

Celia Barroso

Thank you for joining. Just wanted to remind you, if you would like to provide a comment today, you can join the queue by raising your hand or if on the phone, you can press star and three. And then when prompted star and six to unmute your line. Other ways to provide comment if it is not today verbally. You may provide a written comment at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) by searching for NOAA-NMFS-2022-0051 or you can email socalaoa.wcr@noaa.gov or you can mail the comment coordinator at a physical address in Long Beach. All comments are due no later than 20 February. We will be providing these updates periodically and we are here until the end of this webinar at 07:00 P.M. Pacific time, but we will be winding down the frequency at which we give these updates. Thank you.

Megan Ewald

Hi Jeff, I see your raised hand and I'm requesting you to unmute.

Jeff I just requested you to unmute again.

Jeff Maassen

Okay. Awesome. Celia, I was wondering if you took Diane Windham's position.

Megan Ewald

This is a listening session, not a question and answer session, but Celia is our Regional Aquaculture Coordinator for California.

Jeff Maassen

Gotcha. Okay cool. I, yeah, west coast. Yeah, that's probably it then. Okay, so I just wanted to, since this meeting isn't ringing off the hook, if I could just make a couple more comments. Would that be ok?

Megan Ewald

You are more than welcome.

Jeff Maassen

Awesome. Yeah, cause I noticed the 3 minute thing and I'm unfortunately I'm not very well prepared. I just got back into the country and I'm I have a cold, so I'm not a hundred percent. But, I did want to touch base that I did work with Diane Windham some five years ago when I was harvesting mussels off of Hauchin and Hogan and as I said, I was selling those to commercial fishermen, lobster and crab trappers to use as bait. My goal was, is to get to develop a testing

protocol to determine suitability for human consumption. So at, at that point that I was doing the harvest, I was getting, paying landing taxes. I was doing it legitimately through the California Department Fish and Wildlife. I was posting I was weighing the mussels and posting and reporting the weight, to fish and wildlife paying the tax and fulfilling my obligations as a commercial harvester. The, the oil platforms are highly productive as they're in offshore waters and, the bio accumulation. has to be scraped off anyway and it typically falls to the sea floor where it's wasted. As a commercial fishing, commercial fishermen and many other commercial fishermen within my community were suffering, high, higher frequencies of El ninos and situations that are making it difficult to continue commercial fishing, so diversification is, is a, is in order.

And with that being said, I would like to strongly suggest that we explore including those oil platforms within the AAOs and, for, the technology of manual harvest and planting and as well as other attached potential of aquaculture ideas that may come up or prove to be feasible and lucrative. As an active commercial fisherman, it's not a big deal to, to tie off to an oil platform and dive down and harvest those mussels. There's a potential for abalone there's a potential for scallops, and other echinoderms, maybe even sea urchins on some of the, the cross members to be able to feed those out or feed lot them for harvest. So I'd like to formally request that you consider working with me and other commercial fishermen to develop, the use of oil platforms for aquaculture possibly even supporting us in that for pilot projects, in the form of a grant to be able to go out there, do the harvest, and submit those for testing to determine suitability for human consumption. I am working with local Chumash on a couple other projects.

Megan Ewald

Hey Jeff. I'm sorry it is a formality within the NEPA process that we need to limit all of our comments to 3 minutes. So I'm sorry if it seems a little bit silly since you're the only one currently commenting but if you wouldn't mind, I'm going to end this comment and lower your hand. If you'd like to raise it again, you're more than welcome to submit another comment.

Jeff Maassen

Okay, thank you. Yeah, I'll think let me think about it.

Megan Ewald

Okay, we are here for two hours and there is no limit to how many comments you can submit but comments are limited to 3 minutes.

Jeff Maassen

Understood. Thank you so much.

Megan Ewald

Thank you.

Celia Barroso

This is just a reminder of other ways to provide comment in addition to verbal comments today. You could search for NOAA-NMFS-2022-0051@regulations.gov. Or you could email socalaoa.wcr@noaa.gov or you can mail the comment coordinator at a physical address in Long Beach here on the screen that is 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200. All comments are due no later than 20 February 2025. Or if today if you are still on the line and would like to submit a comment, you can do so by raising your hand. If you're on the phone, you can press star and then three, and then when prompted you can use star then 6 to unmute your line. Again, we are going to be providing these updates periodically for the next hour until the end of the webinar. Thank you.

This is our periodic reminder that if you wish to provide comments, you can do so by raising your hand or if you're on the phone, you can press star and then three, and then star then six to unmute yourself. Other options for providing comment are written comment, I mean providing written comments are NOAA-NMFS-2022-0051 at www.regulations.gov. You can also email socalaoa.wcr@noaa.gov or mail the comment coordinator at a physical address in Long beach. All comments are due no later than 20 February. We will provide another update in approximately 15 min and we will stay on the line until 7PM.

This is a periodic reminder for those of you still on the line, if you wish to provide a verbal comment, you can do so by raising your hand. Or if you're on the phone, you can press star then three, and then star six to unmute yourself. Other ways to provide comment, include doing so in written form at regulations.gov, you can search for NOAA-NMFS-2022-0051 or you could email socalaoa.wcr@noaa.gov or you could also mail the comment coordinator a physical address written on the screen here. Comments are due on 20 February at 11:59 P.M. Eastern time. I will provide another update in about 15 min. Thank you.

Megan Ewald

We have currently no members of the public on the line. I just want to note for the record that we will conclude this public webinar in 5 min.

And that concludes today's webinar. Thank you for attending.