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**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

National Marine Fisheries Service  
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

## 2025 AFSC Seminar Series

### **Emily Reynolds and Hannah Wilson,** NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region

Tuesday, March 18<sup>th</sup> @ 10 am Pacific

#### **Aquaculture Opportunity Areas in Alaska: Science and Community-Driven Planning for Sustainable Aquaculture Development**



Identifying Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) in Alaska is a science and community-driven planning process to assist in the development of a sustainable seaweed and shellfish farming industry in State waters. By identifying suitable areas for multiple aquaculture operations through spatial analysis and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process, AOAs aim to balance ecological, economic, and social considerations. For the spatial analysis, NOAA's National Center for Coastal Ocean Science employed whole-ecosystem spatial modeling methods to incorporate the best available data and

public input. A key consideration in AOA siting is the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's "50-50 rule", which requires that kelp farms source spores from a minimum of 50 unrelated individual organisms within 50 km of the farm each year. This rule ensures genetic diversity by allowing many local plants to contribute to the farm's genetic makeup, ensuring that farm-released spores are genetically similar to wild stocks. To support this, a seaweed source inventory is being developed through a participatory mapping process, aiding in the AOA siting analysis.



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