

Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) Status Update

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March 4, 2022

Aquaculture America 2022 - San Diego, California
Aquaculture Opportunity Areas - Updates Session



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Overview

- Quick refresher on AOAs
- Developing a PEIS
- Vision for AOA PEIS process
- Stakeholder and public involvement
- Regional PEIS update



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Disclaimer

The purpose of this presentation is to provide an update on the AOA PEIS process and is for information purposes only. This presentation is not a part of the formal NEPA scoping process for the Southern California or Gulf of Mexico AOA PEIS and comments are not being solicited from the public for that process at this time.



Quick AOA Refresher

- Executive Order 13921, “Promoting Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth”
- Section 7 of EO 13921 directs NOAA to:
 - Identify geographic areas suitable for commercial aquaculture
 - Complete a PEIS for each area to assess the impact of siting aquaculture facilities there
- Federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico and southern California were selected as the first two regions in which AOAs would be identified

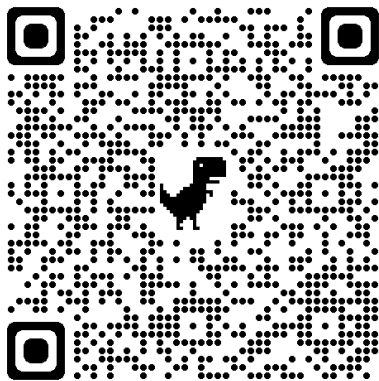


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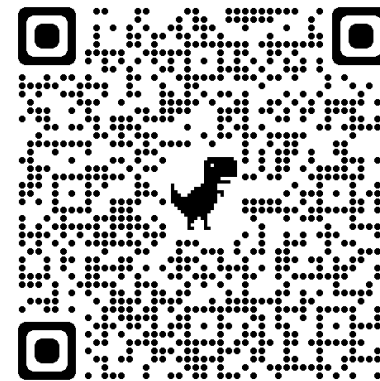
Quick AOA Refresher

- Aquaculture Opportunity Atlases were developed by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science to inform the AOA planning process
- The information within these Atlases will be used as one source of information to assist the agency in identifying AOAs
- Next step is initiating the NEPA process and preparing the PEIS

AOA Atlas for for the
Southern California Bight



AOA Atlas for the U.S.
Gulf of Mexico



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What is a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement?

- A broad or high level environmental review document that assesses the impacts of proposed policies, plans, programs or projects
- Typically considers impacts to ecological, socioeconomic, cultural and historical environment, as well as impacts to public health and safety, climate change, environmental justice communities, and cumulative impacts.
- PEISs consider a reasonable range of alternatives, including a no action alternative
- PEISs rely on feedback from stakeholders and the public throughout their development



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Vision for AOA PEIS

- Goal: Facilitate efficiency through upfront environmental review
- Regionally led, HQ coordinated
- Opportunity to use best available science
- Shaped by public and stakeholder input



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Overview of AOA PEIS Process

- Publish Notice of Intent and initiate formal public scoping period
- Consider public comments
- Develop Draft PEIS
- Notice of Availability of Draft PEIS in Federal Register and formal public comment period
- Consider and respond to public comments (in Final PEIS)
- Publish Final PEIS
- Publish Record of Decision (30-day waiting period)

GOAL: 2 years from publishing of NOI to signing of ROD



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Stakeholder and Public Involvement

- Formal public scoping
 - Kicks off with publishing of NOI
 - Opportunity to provide comment will last 30-60 days
 - Scoping meetings as detailed in NOI
- Formal public comment period (draft PEIS)
 - Will have draft PEIS available for review
 - Opportunity to provide comment will be for a minimum of 45 days
- Stakeholder input will be critically important in informing the AOA PEISs for Southern California and the Gulf of Mexico



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Regional PEIS Updates

- Southern California and Gulf of Mexico
 - Finalizing federal agency coordination
 - Preparing scoping plans
 - Consistency between regions
 - Anticipating publishing of NOIs late spring/summer 2022



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Notice of Intent

- Purpose and need for the proposed action
- Description of the proposed action and preliminary alternatives
- Scoping information
- List of topics we'd like feedback on!



Key Takeaways

- Scoping for the AOA PEIS process will soon begin
- Stakeholder involvement is key to this process!
- Public engagement opportunities:
 - Formal public scoping period
 - Formal public comment period
- Your expertise and feedback will help to shape AOAs!



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Questions?

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