

**Benefiting commercial aquaculture,
conserving natural resources**

Division of Aquaculture

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Sovereignty Submerged Land Leases for Aquaculture

Currently aquacultural activities on sovereignty submerged lands consist of growing shellfish and live rock. Producing shellfish (typically clams and oysters) is the largest marine aquaculture business in Florida.

LEASE SITE SUITABILITY

Applicants may apply for parcels in existing Aquaculture Use Zones (AUZs) or propose new locations. New locations nominated will be evaluated to avoid areas with seagrass, hard bottom and shellfish reefs or beds. Shellfish leases must be sited in Approved or Conditionally Approved Shellfish Harvesting Areas. Additional restrictions on gear or production methods may apply in endangered species critical habitat. Before deciding on a location, the applicant must determine if a certain site is suitable for their production plans.



Liverock on a lease

APPLICATION AND FEES

To apply for a sovereignty submerged land lease, complete the lease application and submit the \$200 processing fee. In the lease application, the potential leaseholder shall nominate a site (either in an existing AUZ or a new location with Global Positioning System coordinates), describe proposed activities, acreage necessary to meet their proposed production levels, describe the general site characteristics, and locate the site on a map. The AUZ parcel availability map identifies existing parcels currently available for leasing.

The applicant must also apply for an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration. The annual fee for an Aquaculture Certification of Registration is \$100 and certificates expire on June 30th of each year. The Aquaculture Certificate of Registration authorizes planting, harvesting, and the sale of aquaculture products. An Annual Certificate of Harvester Education Training is also required for an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration, which lists shellfish as a product.

Lease rental fees vary depending on lease type. Bottom lease fees are \$16.73 per acre and fraction of an acre, along with a \$10.00 surcharge per acre and fraction of an acre. Bottom leases allow use of up to 6 inches off the bottom. Water column leases fees are \$33.46 per acre and fraction

of an acre and a \$10.00 surcharge per acre and fraction of an acre. Water column leases allow use of the full water column. Please indicate in your application the type of lease you want to pursue. Lease fees are due on January 1st of each year.

LEASE MARKERS



3 foot X 3 foot sign

Pursuant to US Coast Guard specifications, a lettered 3 foot x 3 foot sign is required to mark specific points in AUZs and individual lease parcels, generally the corners and points along the perimeter. Corners not requiring a 3 foot x 3 foot marker should be marked with a pvc post with the geographic position of the post relative to its position on the lease and the

parcel number or lease number in two-inch black block characters. Refer to your lease agreement for required markers specific to your lease. See the Navigational Marking of Off-Bottom Oyster Culture Leases fact sheet for more information.

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FDACS-P- 2068
Created 3/16



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BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

As a leaseholder, you are agreeing to comply with the Aquaculture Best Management Practices (BMPs). Per BMPs, mechanical harvesting is prohibited on aquaculture leases unless specified in the lease agreement. All non-natural materials, such as protective cover netting, bags, etc, shall be disposed of properly. Leaseholders identification information shall be attached to all floating or off-bottom culture structures.

All stock placed on leases must be native to Florida and documentation of broodstock origin must be retained for a minimum of two years. Shellfish or shellfish gametes from out of state sources for aquaculture purposes must have diagnostic results from an accredited



Off bottom culture gear

laboratory and a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection signed by a licensed veterinarian stating the stock shows no clinical signs of Quahog Parasite Unknown (QPX) in clams and *Haplosporidium nelsoni* (MSX), *Perkinsus marinus* (Dermo), and *Bonamia exitiosa* in oysters. The certificates are valid for 30 days following signature by the veterinarian.

Transferring any oysters from the Atlantic Coast into Gulf Coast waters is prohibited due to the known threat of MSX. Oyster stock from nurseries, hatcheries, and leases on the Atlantic Coast may not be transferred to Florida Gulf Coast waters.

Out of state sources for triploid seed derived from a tetraploid crossed with a diploid oyster require the use of broodstock from the Gulf of Mexico. Triploid seed or gamete suppliers must provide written documentation of methods utilized to create the triploid (tetraploid X diploid or chemical induction of triploidy), addressing whether any shellfish

stocked for grow out are expected to attain reproductive maturity, describing how ploidy of the seed shellfish was tested, providing ploidy testing results from a representative sample of seed purchased, and addressing whether the triploid seed is guaranteed to be sterile.

Triploid seed derived from two diploid oysters, to be stocked in Gulf Coast, waters require that the broodstock comes from Florida Gulf Coast Waters. Triploid seed derived from two diploid oysters, to be stocked in Florida Atlantic Coast waters, requires that broodstock to come from Florida Atlantic Coast.

AUDITS

Each January, aquaculture leaseholders are required to complete an Affidavit of Audit that details planting and harvesting activities on each lease and leaseholders must submit copies of all seedstock receipts, health certificates and proof of broodstock origin for out of state sourced shellfish for the previous year. The audit also allows staff to verify whether the leaseholder has satisfied the minimum cultivation requirements. Effective cultivation for clams requires planting a minimum of 100,000 clams per acre, per year and oysters require planting a minimum of 70,000 oysters per acre, per year.



Fresh clams

TRANSFERS

Leases may not be transferred or subleased for 5 years from the effective lease date. Contact the division for more information about the lease agreement.

