

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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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



Quick AOA Refresher

- Aquaculture Opportunity Atlases were developed by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science to inform the AOA planning process, pub. 11/2021
 - AOA Atlas for the Southern California Bight
 - AOA Atlas for the Gulf of Mexico
- 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



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
- Info 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?

POC: Southern California AOA PEIS

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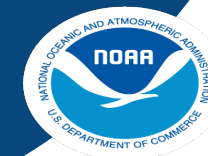
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POC: Gulf of Mexico AOA PEIS

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