

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AQUACULTURE OPPORTUNITY AREAS

On September 19, 2025, NMFS published a final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) identifying 10 Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) in Southern California. AOAs result from a planning process that resulted in defined geographic locations that may be most suitable for siting multiple future offshore aquaculture operations. They take into account the potential environmental, economic, and social impacts of siting aquaculture in these areas, drawing from extensive scientific review, spatial analysis, and public input. This is a long-term planning effort, not a permitting action. Prospective farmers must still adhere to full permitting requirements. For more information, including how to download the final PEIS, please see the [NOAA Fisheries Southern California AOA website](#).

NMFS would welcome guidance from the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) on how best to inform and receive input from the Council on proposed future aquaculture projects in federal waters, whether inside or outside of an AOA. We understand the importance of engaging the PFMC and fishing communities on any future aquaculture projects.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is the federal permitting agency for offshore aquaculture structures and solicits comments from the public on project proposals. Once an application is complete, USACE will publish a public notice, which is the primary method for advising all interested parties of a proposed activity for which a permit is sought, and soliciting comments and information necessary to evaluate the probable impacts on the public interest. See an example public notice for the [Ocean Rainforest Commercial-Scale Kelp Aquaculture project](#). While the publication and comment period for these notices may not align with PFMC meetings, NMFS is committed to helping keep the PFMC informed on aquaculture developments. For more information on permitting in California, please see the [Guide to Leasing, Permitting, and Authorizing Commercial Aquaculture Operations off the California Coast](#).