



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

The voice of Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources since 1940.

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Resolution 2, 2026

SUBJECT: Concerns Regarding the Potential Impacts of Offshore Aquaculture Projects on Louisiana's Fisheries and Coastal Wildlife Resources

WHEREAS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), released a Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (FPEIS) on September 19, 2025, evaluating the potential establishment of Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) in U.S. federal waters of the Gulf of America and assessing the environmental and socioeconomic implications of siting offshore aquaculture projects within those AOAs; and

WHEREAS, NMFS prepared the FPEIS pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and in response to Executive Order 13921, Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth; and

WHEREAS, the FPEIS identifies six (6) AOAs within federal waters, including two areas located offshore of Louisiana that may directly affect Louisiana's recreational and commercial fisheries, coastal wildlife, and sensitive marine habitats; and

WHEREAS, Alternative 5 AOA (C-3) is defined as an approximately 2,000-acre site situated roughly 72 nautical miles south of the region between Pecan Island and Marsh Island, Louisiana, and although initially considered a preferred alternative, its classification was reduced due to documented conflicts with the commercial shrimping industry; and

WHEREAS, Alternative 6 AOA (C-13) is defined as a 500-acre site located approximately 5.2 nautical miles south of the South Pass of the Mississippi River, an area that supports significant ecological productivity and high levels of fishing activity; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's offshore and nearshore waters sustain a multi-billion-dollar recreational and commercial fishing sector that depends on healthy marine ecosystems and reliable access to fishing grounds; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Wildlife Federation has longstanding concerns regarding the introduction of industrial-scale offshore aquaculture in or near Louisiana waters due to identified risks to fisheries resources, marine wildlife, and coastal water quality; and

WHEREAS, numerous potential impacts documented in the FPEIS and in scientific literature, including nutrient discharge, habitat disturbance, disease transmission, gear failure, and interactions with protected species, pose meaningful risks to Louisiana's marine environment; and

WHEREAS, the FPEIS recognizes concerns regarding disease management and potential pharmaceutical use in aquaculture, but notes that antibiotic use in the United States is highly

regulated and that project-specific reviews must address chemical use, discharge, and mitigation measures including vaccines, biosecurity protocols, and best management practices; and

WHEREAS, the north-central Gulf of America is characterized by relatively shallow bathymetry and experiences some of the highest hurricane frequencies in the United States, conditions that increase the likelihood of structural failure, stock escapes, gear loss, and environmental contamination at offshore aquaculture sites; and

WHEREAS, an industry representative from Ocean Era Inc. publicly stated during an October 2020 aquaculture workshop in Sarasota, Florida, that “there is no safe place in the Gulf” for offshore aquaculture nets with regard to hurricane exposure, underscoring concerns regarding operational feasibility and containment; and

WHEREAS, offshore fish production systems generate concentrated waste and nutrient discharge, which may exacerbate eutrophication and hypoxic conditions, issues to which Louisiana’s Gulf Coast is already chronically vulnerable; and

WHEREAS, large offshore aquaculture structures may function as fish-aggregating devices, potentially increasing angler effort and harvest pressure on species such as greater amberjack and red snapper, which are already subject to strict management due to overfishing concerns; and

WHEREAS, the FPEIS identifies Rice’s whale, giant manta rays, and Kemp’s ridley sea turtles as species potentially vulnerable to adverse effects from aquaculture operations in certain alternatives, with risk varying by spatial overlap and project design.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation urges the incorporation of rigorous spatial justification, ecological analyses, and wildlife impact assessments prior to the siting of any offshore or nearshore aquaculture operations within proximity to the Louisiana coastline.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation recommends prioritizing research, innovation, and investment in land-based or closed-system aquaculture technologies, where nutrient discharges, contaminants, and other operational risks can be more effectively contained and managed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation supports the establishment and use of robust scientific reference points and monitoring programs, addressing water quality, wildlife interactions, habitat impacts, fisheries conflicts, before considering any permits for offshore or nearshore aquaculture projects in Louisiana-adjacent federal waters.

Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation in Convention Assembled on February 28, 2026, in Lafayette, Louisiana.