

FORM 1 GENERAL		U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY GENERAL INFORMATION Consolidated Permits Program (Read the "General Instructions" before starting.)		I. EPA I.D. NUMBER	
LABEL ITEMS		PLEASE PLACE LABEL IN THIS SPACE		GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS	
I. EPA I.D. NUMBER				If a preprinted label has been provided, affix it in the designated space. Review the information carefully; if any of it is incorrect, cross through it and enter the correct data in the appropriate fill-in area below. Also, if any of the preprinted data is absent (the area to the left of the label space lists the information that should appear), please provide it in the proper fill-in area(s) below. If the label is complete and correct, you need not complete Items I, III, V, and VI (except VI-B which must be completed regardless). Complete all items if no label has been provided. Refer to the instructions for detailed item descriptions and for the legal authorizations under which this data is collected.	
III. FACILITY NAME					
V. FACILITY MAILING ADDRESS					
VI. FACILITY LOCATION					
II. POLLUTANT CHARACTERISTICS					
INSTRUCTIONS: Complete A through J to determine whether you need to submit any permit application forms to the EPA. If you answer "yes" to any questions, you must submit this form and the supplemental form listed in the parenthesis following the question. Mark "X" in the box in the third column if the supplemental form is attached. If you answer "no" to each question, you need not submit any of these forms. You may answer "no" if your activity is excluded from permit requirements; see Section C of the instructions. See also, Section D of the instructions for definitions of bold-faced terms .					
SPECIFIC QUESTIONS		Mark "X"		SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	
		YES	NO	FORM ATTACHED	
A. Is this facility a publicly owned treatment works which results in a discharge to waters of the U.S.? (FORM 2A)					
		16	17	18	
C. Is this a facility which currently results in discharges to waters of the U.S. other than those described in A or B above? (FORM 2C)					
		22	23	24	
E. Does or will this facility treat, store, or dispose of hazardous wastes? (FORM 3)					
		28	29	30	
G. Do you or will you inject at this facility any produced water or other fluids which are brought to the surface in connection with conventional oil or natural gas production, inject fluids used for enhanced recovery of oil or natural gas, or inject fluids for storage of liquid hydrocarbons? (FORM 4)					
		34	35	36	
I. Is this facility a proposed stationary source which is one of the 28 industrial categories listed in the instructions and which will potentially emit 100 tons per year of any air pollutant regulated under the Clean Air Act and may affect or be located in an attainment area? (FORM 5)					
		40	41	42	
B. Does or will this facility (either existing or proposed) include a concentrated animal feeding operation or aquatic animal production facility which results in a discharge to waters of the U.S.? (FORM 2B)					
		19	20	21	
D. Is this a proposed facility (other than those described in A or B above) which will result in a discharge to waters of the U.S.? (FORM 2D)					
		25	26	27	
F. Do you or will you inject at this facility industrial or municipal effluent below the lowermost stratum containing, within one quarter mile of the well bore, underground sources of drinking water? (FORM 4)					
		31	32	33	
H. Do you or will you inject at this facility fluids for special processes such as mining of sulfur by the Frasch process, solution mining of minerals, in situ combustion of fossil fuel, or recovery of geothermal energy? (FORM 4)					
		37	38	39	
J. Is this facility a proposed stationary source which is NOT one of the 28 industrial categories listed in the instructions and which will potentially emit 250 tons per year of any air pollutant regulated under the Clean Air Act and may affect or be located in an attainment area? (FORM 5)					
		43	44	45	
III. NAME OF FACILITY					
C. SKIP					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
IV. FACILITY CONTACT					
A. NAME & TITLE (last, first, & title)					
B. PHONE (area code & no.)					
C. 2					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
V. FACILITY MAILING ADDRESS					
A. STREET OR P.O. BOX					
C. 3					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
B. CITY OR TOWN					
C. STATE					
D. ZIP CODE					
C. 4					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
VI. FACILITY LOCATION					
A. STREET, ROUTE NO. OR OTHER SPECIFIC IDENTIFIER					
C. 5					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
B. COUNTY NAME					
C. 6					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
C. CITY OR TOWN					
D. STATE					
E. ZIP CODE					
F. COUNTY CODE (if known)					
C. 6					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					

VII. SIC CODES (4-digit, in order of priority)										
A. FIRST					B. SECOND					
C					(specify)	C				(specify)
7						7				
15	16	-	19			15	16	-	19	
C. THIRD					D. FOURTH					
C					(specify)	C				(specify)
7						7				
15	16	-	19			15	16	-	19	

A. NAME																																																												B. Is the name listed in Item VIII-A also the owner? ☐ YES ☐ NO							
C. STATUS OF OPERATOR (<i>Enter the appropriate letter into the answer box; if "Other," specify.</i>)																																																												D. PHONE (<i>area code & no.</i>)							
F = FEDERAL S = STATE P = PRIVATE																														M = PUBLIC (<i>other than federal or state</i>) O = OTHER (<i>specify</i>)																														C							
																																																												A							
																																																												15		6 - 18		19 - 21		22 - 26	

E. STREET OR P.O. BOX		
26	55	

F. CITY OR TOWN																																								G. STATE		H. ZIP CODE		IX. INDIAN LAND		
C																																												Is the facility located on Indian lands?		
B																																												☐ YES ☐ NO		
15	16																																							40	41	42	47	-	51	52

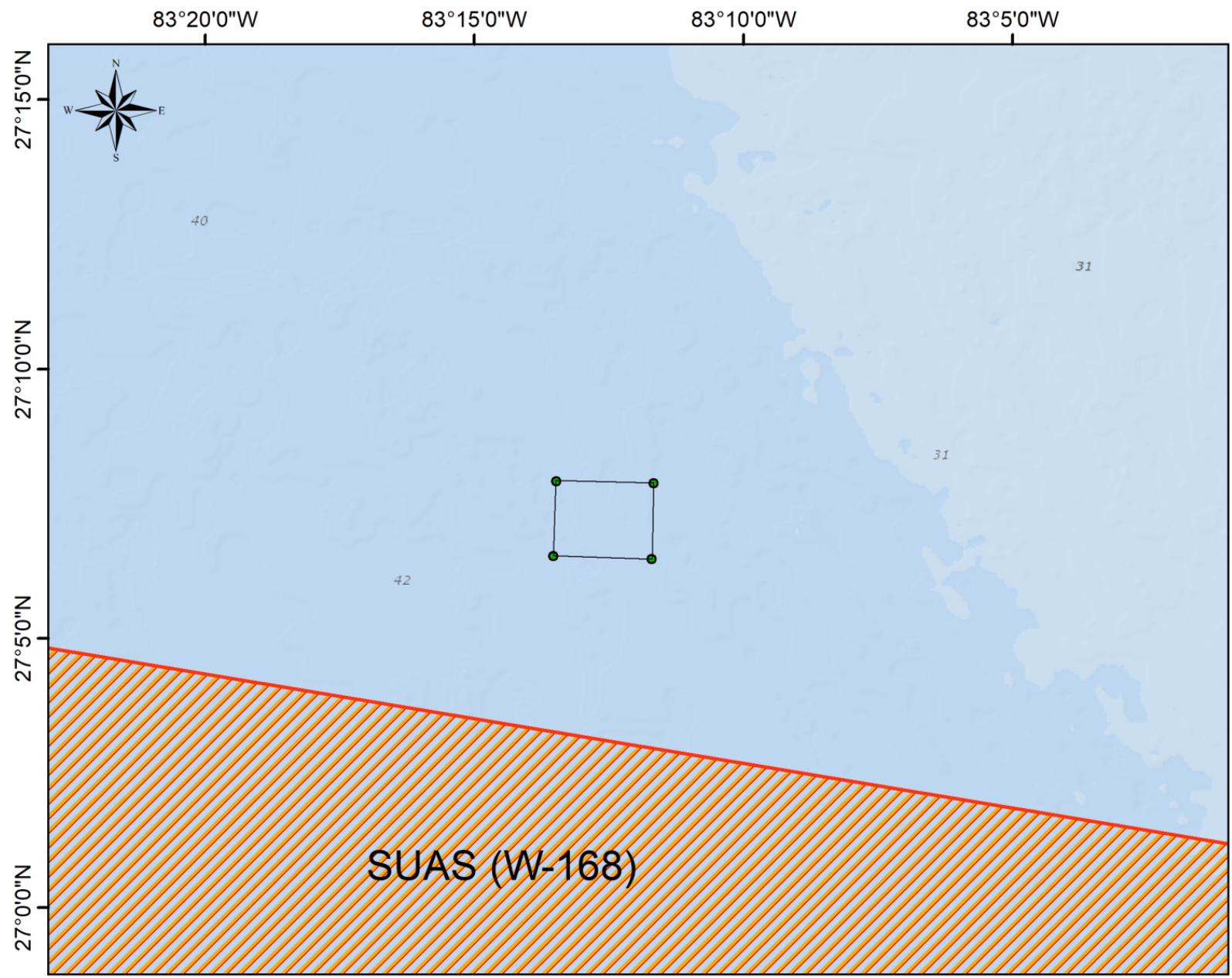
A. NPDES (Discharges to Surface Water)														D. PSD (Air Emissions from Proposed Sources)																											
C	T	I												C	T	I																									
9	N													9	P																										
15	16	17	18											30	15	16	17	18											30												
B. UIC (Underground Injection of Fluids)														E. OTHER (specify)																											
C	T	I												C	T	I																									
9	U													9																											
15	16	17	18											30	15	16	17	18											30												
C. RCRA (Hazardous Wastes)														E. OTHER (specify)																											
C	T	I												C	T	I																									
9	R													9																											
15	16	17	18											30	15	16	17	18											30												

Attach to this application a topographic map of the area extending to at least one mile beyond property boundaries. The map must show the outline of the facility, the location of each of its existing and proposed intake and discharge structures, each of its hazardous waste treatment, storage, or disposal facilities, and each well where it injects fluids underground. Include all springs, rivers, and other surface water bodies in the map area. See instructions for precise requirements.

I certify under penalty of law that I have personally examined and am familiar with the information submitted in this application and all attachments and that, based on my inquiry of those persons immediately responsible for obtaining the information contained in the application, I believe that the information is true, accurate, and complete. I am aware that there are significant penalties for submitting false information, including the possibility of fine and imprisonment.

A. NAME & OFFICIAL TITLE <i>(type or print)</i>	B. SIGNATURE 	C. DATE SIGNED
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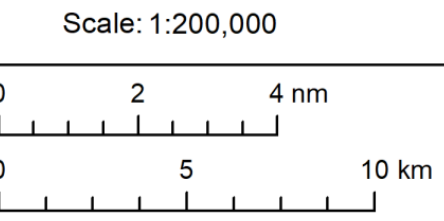
[illegible]



The center point of the site is 4 nm away from the Special Use Air Space (SUAS); the southwest corner point (closest) is 3.2 nm from the SUAS.

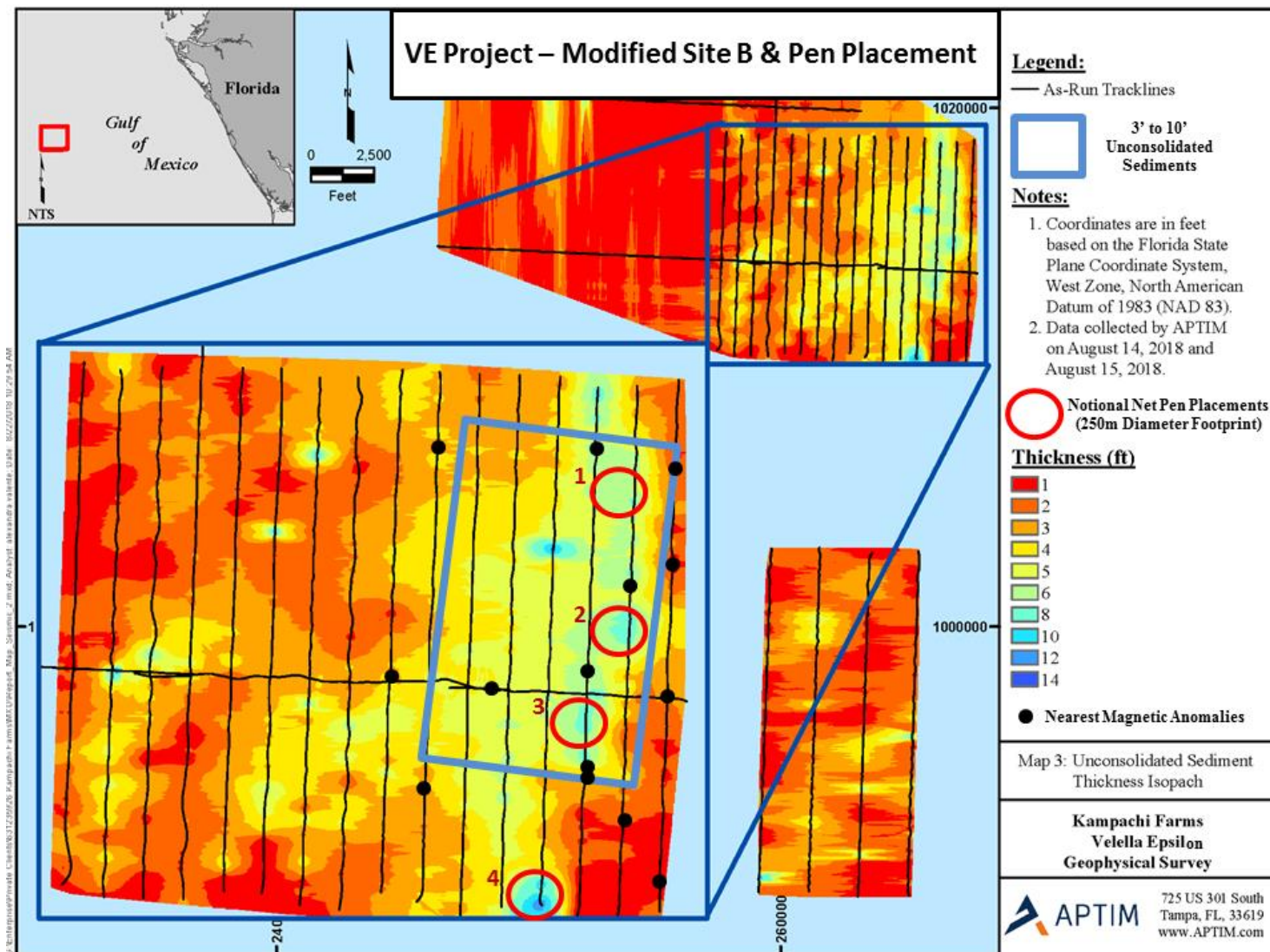
Legend

-  Site
-  Site corner points
-  Special Use Air Space (SUAS)



Map intended for planning purposes only: Not intended for navigational purposes

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Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, DeLorme, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors



Position	° Decimal ' Latitude	° Decimal ' Longitude	Decimal ° Latitude	Decimal ° Longitude	Perimeter (km)	Area (km ²)
Modified Site B from BES Report						
Upper Left	27° 7.86863' N	83° 13.45827' W	27.131143° N	83.224303° W	11.1571	7.7237
Upper Right	27° 7.83079' N	83° 11.63237' W	27.130512° N	83.193872° W		
Lower Right	27° 6.43381' N	83° 11.69349' W	27.107230° N	83.194890° W		
Lower Left	27° 6.50261' N	83° 13.52658' W	27.108377° N	83.225442° W		
Center	27° 7.11266' N	83° 12.58604' W	27.118543° N	83.209767° W		
Targeted Subset Area of Modified Site B from BES Report (3' to 10' Unconsolidated Sediments)						
Upper Left	27° 7.70607' N	83° 12.27012' W	27.128445° N	83.204502° W	5.2273	1.6435
Upper Right	27° 7.61022' N	83° 11.65678' W	27.126837° N	83.194278° W		
Lower Right	27° 6.77773' N	83° 11.75379' W	27.112962° N	83.195897° W		
Lower Left	27° 6.87631' N	83° 12.42032' W	27.114605° N	83.207005° W		
Center	27° 7.34185' N	83° 12.02291' W	27.122365° N	83.200382° W		
Notional Net Pen Placements within Modified Site B from BES Report						
1	27° 7.54724' N	83° 11.85393' W	27.125787° N	83.197565° W	0.7854	0.0491
2	27° 7.17481' N	83° 11.82576' W	27.119580° N	83.197095° W		
3	27° 6.93930' N	83° 11.94780' W	27.115655° N	83.199130° W		
4	27° 6.52579' N	83° 12.09175' W	27.108763° N	83.201530° W		

Disclaimer

This is an updated PDF document that allows you to type your information directly into the form, print it, and save the completed form.

Note: This form can be viewed and saved only using Adobe Acrobat Reader version 7.0 or higher, or if you have the full Adobe Professional version.

Instructions:

1. Type in your information
2. Save file (if desired)
3. Print the completed form
4. Sign and date the printed copy
5. Mail it to the directed contact.

C. ☐ TOPOGRAPHIC MAP			
D. TYPE OF CONTAINMENT, STORAGE AND CAPACITY			
1. Type of Containment	Total Capacity (in gallons)		
☐ Lagoon			
☐ Holding Pond			
☐ Evaporation Pond			
☐ Other: Specify _____			
2. Report the total number of acres contributing drainage: _____ acres			
3. Type of Storage	Total Number of Days	Total Capacity (gallons/tons)	
☐ Anaerobic Lagoon			
☐ Storage Lagoon			
☐ Evaporation Pond			
☐ Aboveground Storage Tanks			
☐ Belowground Storage Tanks			
☐ Roofed Storage Shed			
☐ Concrete Pad			
☐ Impervious Soil Pad			
☐ Other: Specify _____			
E. NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN			
Note: Effective February 27, 2009, a permit application is not complete until a nutrient management plan is submitted to the Permitting Authority. 1. Please indicate whether a nutrient management plan has been included with this permit application. ☐ Yes ☐ No 2. If no, please explain: It is anticipated, that should a Nutrient Management Plan be required as part of this NPDES permit, that EPA will work collaboratively with Kampachi Farms to develop one, based on the limited size of this pilot scale project. See attached Excel file providing weekly, monthly, and maximum fish production and feed requirements. 3. Is a nutrient management plan being implemented for the facility? ☐ Yes ☐ No 4. The date of the last review or revision of the nutrient management plan. Date: <u> N/A </u> 5. If not land applying, describe alternative use(s) of manure, litter, and/or wastewater:			
F. LAND APPLICATION BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES			
Please check any of the following best management practices that are being implemented at the facility to control runoff and protect water quality: ☐ Buffers ☐ Setbacks ☐ Conservation tillage ☐ Constructed wetlands ☐ Infiltration field ☐ Grass filter ☐ Terrace			

III. CONCENTRATED AQUATIC ANIMAL PRODUCTION FACILITY CHARACTERISTICS					
A. For each outfall give the maximum daily flow, maximum 30-day flow, and the long-term average flow.			B. Indicate the total number of ponds, raceways, and similar structures in your facility.		
1. Outfall No.	2. Flow (gallons per day)		1. Ponds	2. Raceways	3. Other
	a. Maximum Daily	b. Maximum 30 Day	c. Long Term Average	C. Provide the name of the receiving water and the source of water used by your facility.	
				1. Receiving Water	2. Water Source
D. List the species of fish or aquatic animals held and fed at your facility. For each species, give the total weight produced by your facility per year in pounds of harvestable weight, and also give the maximum weight present at any one time.					
1. Cold Water Species			2. Warm Water Species		
a. Species	b. Harvestable Weight (pounds)		a. Species	b. Harvestable Weight (pounds)	
	(1) Total Yearly	(2) Maximum		(1) Total Yearly	(2) Maximum
E. Report the total pounds of food during the calendar month of maximum feeding.			1. Month	2. Pounds of Food	
IV. CERTIFICATION					
<i>I certify under penalty of law that I have personally examined and am familiar with the information submitted in this application and all attachments and that, based on my inquiry of those individuals immediately responsible for obtaining the information, I believe that the information is true accurate and complete. I am aware that there are significant penalties for submitting false information, including the possibility of fine and imprisonment.</i>					
A. Name and Official Title (print or type)			B. Telephone (_____) _____		
C. Signature				D. Date Signed	

INSTRUCTIONS

GENERAL This form must be completed by all applicants who check “yes” to Item II-B in Form 1. Not all animal feeding operations or fish farms are required to obtain NPDES permits. Exclusions are based on size and whether or not the facility discharges proposed to discharge. <i>See</i> the description of these exclusions in the CAFO regulations at 40 CFR 122.23. For aquatic animal production facilities, the size cutoffs are based on whether the species are warm water or cold water, on the production weight per year in harvestable pounds, and on the amount of feeding in pounds of food (<i>for cold water species</i>). Also, facilities which discharge less than 30 days per year, or only during periods of excess runoff (<i>for warm water fish</i>) are not required to have a permit. Refer to the Form 1 instructions to determine where to file this form. Item I-A See the note above to be sure that your facility is a “concentrated animal feeding operation” (CAFO). Item I-B Use this space to give owner/operator contact information. Item I-C Check “proposed” if your facility is not now in operation or is expanding to meet the definition of a CAFO in accordance with the CAFO regulations at 40 CFR 122.23. Item I-D Use this space to give a complete legal description of your facility’s location including name, address, and latitude/longitude. Also, if a contract grower, the name and address of the integrator. Item II Supply all information in item II if you checked (1) in item I-A. Item II-A Give the maximum number of each type of animal in open confinement or housed under roof (either partially or totally) which are held at your facility for a total of 45 days or more in any 12 month period. Provide the total number of animals confined at the facility. Item II-B Provide the total amount of manure, litter, and wastewater generated annually by the facility. Identify if manure, litter, and wastewater generated by the facility is to be land applied and the number of acres, under the control of the CAFO operator, suitable for land application. If the answer to question 3 is yes, provide the estimated annual quantity of manure, litter, and wastewater that the applicant plans to transfer off-site. Item II-C Check this box if you have submitted a topographic map of the entire operation, including the production area and land under the operational control of the CAFO operator where manure, litter, and/or wastewater are applied with Form 1.	Item II-D 1. Provide information on the type of containment and the capacity of the containment structure (s). 2. The number of acres that are drained and collected in the containment structure (s). 3. Identify the type of storage for the manure, litter, and/or wastewater. Give the capacity of this storage in days. Item II-E Provide information concerning the status of submitting a nutrient management plan for the facility to complete the application. In those cases where the nutrient management plan has not been submitted, provide an explanation. If not land applying, describe the alternative uses of the manure, litter, and wastewater (<i>e.g.</i>, composting, pelletizing, energy generation, etc.). Item II-F Check any of the identified conservation practices that are being implemented at the facility to control runoff and protect water quality. Item III Supply all information in Item III if you checked (2) in Item I-A. Item III-A Outfalls should be numbered to correspond with the map submitted in Item XI of Form 1. Values given for flow should be representative of your normal operation. The maximum daily flow is the maximum measured flow occurring over a calendar day. The maximum 30-day flow is the average of measured daily flow over the calendar month of highest flow. The long-term average flow is the average of measure daily flows over a calendar year. Item III-B Give the total number of discrete ponds or raceways in your facility. Under “other,” give a descriptive name of any structure which is not a pond or a raceway but which results in discharge to waters of the United States. Item III-C Use names for receiving water and source of water which correspond to the map submitted in Item XI of Form 1. Item III-D The names of fish species should be proper, common, or scientific names as given in special Publication No. 6 of the American Fisheries Society. “A List of Common and Scientific Names of Fishes from the United States and Canada.” The values given for total weight produced by your facility per year and the maximum weight present at any one time should be representative of your normal operation. Item III-E The value given for maximum monthly pounds of food should be representative of your normal operation. Item IV The Clean Water Act provides for severe penalties for submitting false information on this application form. Section 309(C)(2) of the Clean Water Act provides that “Any person who knowingly makes any false statement, representation, or certification in any application...shall upon conviction, be punished by a fine of no more than \$10,000 or by imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.”
Federal regulations require the certification to be signed as follows: A. For corporation, by a principal executive officer of at least the level of vice president. B. For a partnership or sole proprietorship, by a general partner or the proprietor, respectively; or C. For a municipality, State, federal, or other public facility, by either a principal executive officer or ranking elected official.	Paper Reduction Act Notice The public reporting and recordkeeping burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 9.5 hours per response. The public reporting and recordkeeping burden for development of the nutrient management plan to be submitted with the form is estimated to average 58 hours per response. Send comments on the Agency's need for this information, the accuracy of the provided burden estimates, and any suggested methods for minimizing respondent burden, including through the use of automated collection techniques to the Director, Collection Strategies Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2822T), 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20460. Include the OMB control number in any correspondence. Do not send the completed form to this address.



Supplemental Data

In Support of the

**Velella Epsilon Project –
Pioneering Offshore Aquaculture in the Southeastern Gulf of Mexico**

Ocean Era, Inc.
Action Proponent

Dennis Jay Peters
Aquaculture Permitting Coordinator

09/21/2020

Date

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- Appendix D. Guidance and Procedures for Genetic Requirements for Gulf Aquaculture Permits
- Appendix E. Draft-Final Protected Species Plan
- Appendix F. USEPA NPDES Permit Application
- Appendix G. USACE Section 10 Permit Application

The Velella Epsilon Project – Supplemental Data

1.0 Application Submission Date and Research End Date

- 1.1 Application Submission Date: October 26, 2018
- 1.2 Research Start Date (estimated): Spring 2021
- 1.3 Research End Date (estimated): Spring 2022
- 1.4 NPDES Permit Duration: 5 years (from initial cage deployment)

2.0 Applicant Contact and Project Coordination Information

2.1 Applicant Contact Information:

Neil Anthony Sims
Ocean Era, INC.
PO Box 4239
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
(808) 989-2438
neil@ocean-era.com

2.2 Project Coordination Information:

Dennis Jay Peters
Gulfstream Aquaculture
603 Walton Way
Miramar Beach, Florida 32550
(850) 240-3414
dennis@gulfstreamaquaculture.com

3.0 The Point of Contact Regarding Project Questions:

Dennis Jay Peters

4.0 Project Summary and Justification:

Project Summary -

The VE Project focuses on a small, demonstration, pilot-scale (single net pen) aquaculture system where up to 20,000 almaco jack (kampachi; *Seriola rivoliana*) fingerlings would be reared in Federal waters approximately 40 miles west southwest of Sarasota, Florida. Fish will be stocked as a single cohort of 20,000 fish and reared for approximately 12 months. We expect to yield approximately 17,000 fish (based on an estimated 85% survival rate) with a final fish size of approximately 4.4 lbs/fish. Based on these numbers, we anticipate an estimated final maximum harvest weight of 74,800 pounds [lbs] whole weight for all fish combined. These fish will be landed in Florida, marketed, and sold to state- and Federally-licensed dealers, in accordance with state and Federal law.

The VE Project will support, promote, and invigorate marine aquaculture in the GOM by directly addressing the constraints, barriers, or hurdles, and often misperceptions of, U.S. domestic aquaculture development that currently limit increased production. The VE Project will provide information on data collection related to growth of a federally managed species in the offshore environment, information on open ocean aquaculture systems that can be used to inform other pilot- and commercial-scale operations, seafood product development, and market research.

While the project includes an 12 month rearing timeframe, we are requesting a total of 2 years for the permitting duration which will provide time necessary for initial cage

deployment and water quality/benthic sampling, time between stocking and harvesting, and the removal of gear at project conclusion.

4.1 Purpose and Goals of the Research Aquaculture Activity:

4.1.1 Purpose #1

The **First Purpose** is to validate the feasibility of deploying a temporary, small-scale, demonstration net pen, and rearing a single cohort of the Federally managed species, almaco jack, in GOM waters approximately 40 miles off west southwest of Sarasota, Florida. A CopperNet manufactured submersible fish pen will be deployed on a Makai-engineered, multi-anchor swivel (MAS) mooring system. It will have up to four (4) anchors for the mooring, with a swivel and a bridle system.

There are two goals of the first purpose, the **First Goal** is to (a) validate the use of a submersible surface net pen on a MAS mooring as an effective design for the GOM in order to reduce current and wind stress on the system; and to use the demonstration as a platform to maximize access for public outreach benefits. Structural information describing the system and net pen array, along with the tethered tender vessel will be detailed in the analyses of the NEPA documentation, and provided in Appendix E.

Functionally similar to the MAS, a single-point mooring (SPM) was first approved and successfully deployed in Hawaii (RIN 0648-XC791) during the Velella Delta project, which lasted 41 months in duration. This particular SPM consisted of a 12,000-foot (ft) mooring line in approximately 6,000 ft of water (i.e. 2:1 scope), utilizing a deadweight anchor. The VE Project mooring will demonstrate the utility of a MAS in shallower water, approximately 130 ft deep with a longer scope (conceivably 5:1), for a mooring line length of 500 ft to 650 ft, and utilizing an embedment anchor (i.e., a flipper delta-type anchor). The SPMs have been successfully utilized with the SubFlex system in Israel. Small-scale swivel mooring single net pens are also used in some parts of Japan, such as Kagoshima. Ocean Era, Inc. anticipates utilizing swivel moorings for future offshore macroalgae culture trials in Hawaii, as well.

The VE Project Team proposes that a successful demonstration of the CopperNet netpen using a MAS system will validate the structural integrity of this system as a future representative design for commercial aquaculture development in the GOM, supporting a variety of species.

Figure 1 provides a notional schematic diagram of the VE Project net pen and mooring configuration. The MAS will additionally minimize the environmental footprint of the limited water quality impacts due to the unidirectional current flow and the clockwise rotation of the net pen. The engineering designs are provided in **Appendix A**.

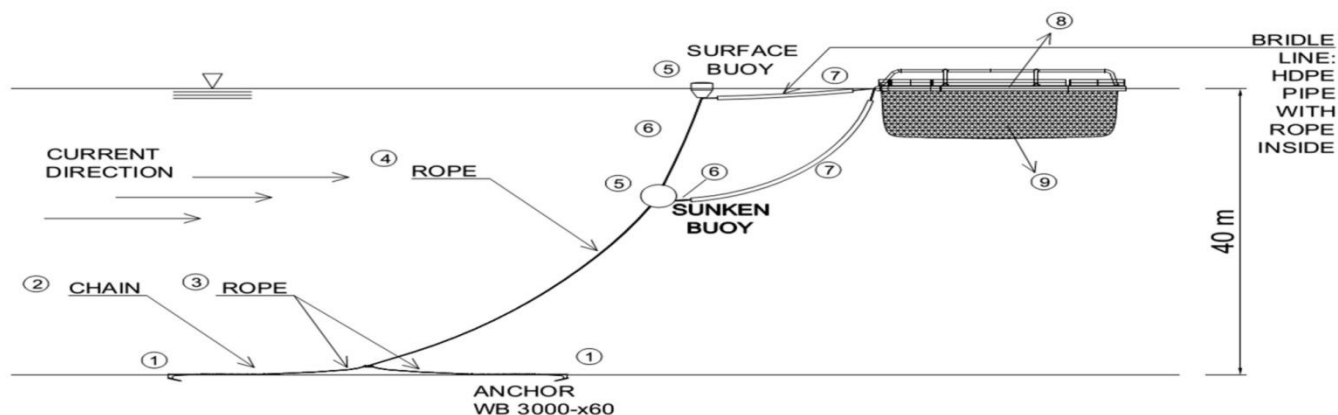


Figure 1. Notional Schematic for the VE Project Net Pen and Mooring Configuration

The **Second Goal** of the first purpose is to **(b)** achieve a minimum survival rate to harvest of approximately 85% from each of the single cohort (approximately 12 months), yielding approximately 17,000 fish harvested (74,800 pounds) from an initial 20,000 fish stocked.

The VE Project Team further proposes that successful growout survivability and size of fish at harvest will validate the system design and general site location as a future representative design to be appropriately scaled up to support commercial aquaculture development in the GOM.

4.1.2 Purpose #2

The **Second Purpose** is to conduct a thorough environmental monitoring program whose **Goal** is to validate previous conclusions (as shown with larger aquaculture net pen operations in Hawaii state waters) that impacts on water quality around the net pen are likely to be immeasurable, due to the low stocking biomass, the careful monitoring of feeding, and the constant, dilutive movement of water through the net pen.

Tender Vessel – The tender vessel is an 80-foot ocean going Staysail Schooner, the SV *Machias*, a U.S. Coast Guard inspected and documented (Document No. 289053) sailing vessel with a commercial fishing endorsement, outfitted and approved for open ocean, blue water cruising that includes space for 24 passengers. The vessel is equipped with modern communications and navigation technology, e.g., two-way radio, GPS, radar, high frequency transceivers, etc. It can use both sail power and diesel power and in the event of problems, can communicate with the Coast Guard for assistance.

At least two scientific field technicians from Ocean Era, Inc., will be stationed on the tender vessel at all times for the duration of the project. Staff will be rotated, so that each individual is at sea for four weeks, then off for two weeks. Staff will be responsible for water quality and benthic sampling, feeding the fish, monitoring fish health, collecting data on the growing fish, and monitoring interactions with fish and protected marine species and observing fishing activities around the net pen array. Additional technicians from universities will assist with conducting environmental monitoring and monitoring of protected species interactions (see Section 6.4.2 for further details).

Water Quality and Benthic Sampling - Using a probe similar to a HYDROLAB® HL7 Multiparameter Water Quality Sonde, these technicians will measure a suite of physical, hydrographic parameters at depth; such as, temperature, salinity, pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen (D.O.), D.O. saturation, and specific conductivity. Additionally, water samples will be taken from which measures of supplemental physical and nutrient parameters will be performed; such as dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus, and total suspended solids. These samples are anticipated to be taken at a number of sites up-current of the VE Project net pen, and at a range of distances down-current, at a range of depths (e.g., surface, 15 m, and 30 m). In addition to water column sampling, it is anticipated that benthic seafloor sampling will be conducted as well. The VE Project Team will work directly with EPA to define a specific monitoring plan (water quality and benthos) for the VE Project.

It is understood that the VE Project will comply with the environmental monitoring, requirements, and conditions specified in the EPA National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System [NPDES] and all other federal permits. Additionally, a Nutrient Management Plan may be required as a condition of the EPA, NPDES permit.

4.1.3 Purpose #3

The **Third Purpose** is to directly address the public misperception of, and resistance to, the expansion of open ocean aquaculture in the GOM. To initiate this effort, Mr. Peters will identify and select a sample of potential stakeholders (e.g., commercial and

recreational fishermen) at the beginning of the project and conduct an assessment of their attitudes towards aquaculture, specifically marine fish, net pen, ocean-based aquaculture in the GOM. This assessment work will include in-person, telephone, and email interviews with established stakeholder interests and provide the baseline data for later evaluation of the effectiveness of the project.

The **Goals** of the third purpose are to **(a)** provide a working net pen example to Federal regulators, politicians, constituents, journalists, and other influencers of policy or public perceptions, as well as the local community as an educational platform on open ocean aquaculture; **(b)** increase public awareness of, and receptivity towards, offshore aquaculture, and the need to culture more seafood in U.S. waters, by providing public tours of the offshore operation, **(c)** serve as a demonstration platform for data collection of water quality, potential benthic impacts, and marine mammal and fish stock interactions resulting from offshore aquaculture in the GOM; and **(d)** provide local recreational, charter, and commercial fishing communities with evidence of the benefits of aquaculture, through the fish attraction device (FAD) effects of the project, and by documentation of fish aggregation and fishing boat activity around the VE project. The VE Project will capture descriptions and outcomes from the engagement with stakeholders and other community interests, and will condense these findings into summary accounts from the relevant public meetings, meetings with regional relevant officials, and other information gathered during public outreach activities.

4.1.4 Siting Analysis Process

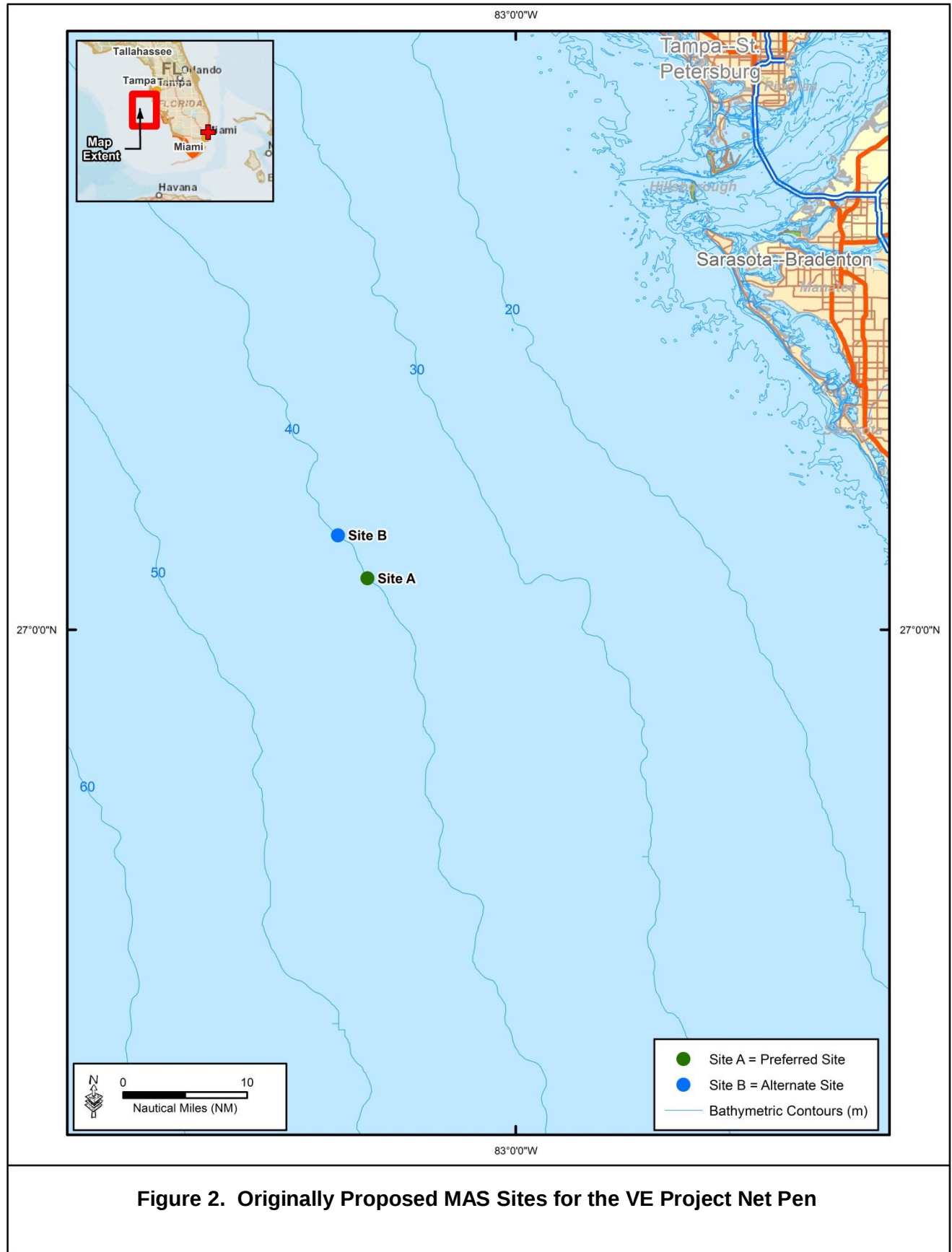
A thorough siting analysis was performed over the course of several months to identify an appropriate Preferred Site and Alternate Site. The following section describes this process in several parts: A) Preliminary Siting, B) Secondary Siting, C) Draft-Final Siting and D) Final Siting.

Two potential site locations were identified after an extensive 5 month siting analysis with NOAA, National Ocean Service National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NOS NCCOS) staff and in consultation with the Southern Shrimp Alliance. The following sections go into further detail regarding the siting analysis process.

Figure 2 provides the location of the two site locations which are currently under consideration. **Site #A is the Preferred Site of the VE Project team, with Site #B being an Alternate (or back-up) Site.** Discussions to follow later in this section, will document the iterative evaluation process and multiple stakeholder engagements that have led to this two-site selection. A **Baseline Environmental Survey (BES)** was initiated for Site A and Site B using guidance developed by NOAA Fisheries and EPA (**Appendix B**) prior to deployment of the net pens. As a result, a Modified Site B location was identified.

A) Preliminary Siting Analysis – The Demonstration farm site and location of the SPM considered the following criteria:

- Convenient proximity to a commercial port (Sarasota or Charlotte Harbor region)
- Short navigation time for stocking, harvesting, and public tourism activities
- Water depths (130 ft) that allow net pen submersion, but maximize mooring scope
- Avoidance of corals, coral reefs, and hardbottom habitats
- Avoidance of artificial reefs and submerged cultural resources (ship wrecks)
- Sources of open sand bottoms (unconsolidated sediments) for positioning the SPM
- Avoidance of marine protected areas (MPAs), marine reserves, and Habitats of Particular Concern (HAPCs)
- Proximity to seafood outlets for product marketing and sales trials



- Avoidance of navigational fairways, vessel traffic routes, anchoring areas, lightering zones, deepwater ports, platform safety zones, military (Air Force) zones, fisheries and tourism areas, dredging sites, mineral extraction areas, designated dredge material dumping sites, rights of way for energy transmission lines and communications cables, and scientific reference sites
- Avoidance of other industry user groups (i.e., shrimping and longline fishing)
- Avoidance of other offshore aquaculture facilities (none within 1.6 nautical miles)
- Avoidance of Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites (none within 1.0 nautical mile)

The VE Project Team participated in a live demonstration of the **Gulf AquaMapper** provided by NOS NCCOS staff during which a preliminary siting analysis was conducted. Supplemental data (e.g., wave heights, currents, temperatures, multibeam side scan sonar, and bathymetry modeling) at the proposed site location were later provided. These data were provided in the **Screening Discussion for the Velella Project Gulf of Mexico – Exempted Fishing Project (Appendix C)**.

The preliminary siting analysis for the VE Project farm site and location of the MAS additionally referenced data and information from the following Federal websites:

- Essential Fish Habitat Mapping Application for the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries:
<http://portal.gulfcouncil.org/EFHMap.html>
- GIS Data for Gulf of Mexico EFH and HAPC
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/maps_gis_data/habitat_conservation/efh_gom/index.html
- NOAA Gulf of Mexico Data Atlas
<https://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/website/DataAtlas/atlas.htm?plate=Temperature%20-%20CMECS>
- NOAA Ocean Explorer
<http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/02mexico/background/currents/currents.html>
- NOAA National Data Buoy Center - Eastern Gulf of Mexico Recent Marine Data
<http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/maps/Florida.shtml>
- NOAA National Data Buoy Center - HF Radar National Server
<http://hfradar.ndbc.noaa.gov/index.php?s=42013>
- NOAA Office for Coastal Management - Digital Coast
<https://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/>
- NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) – Coastal Aquaculture Planning Portal (CAPP) – Gulf AquaMapper
<http://noaa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=889b16ac2f4e4637b73e4579831b806d>

NOAA navigational charts of the area were referenced and did not indicate any conflict with major shipping channels or DoD Restricted Access areas.

B) Secondary Siting Analysis – NOS NCCOS staff have offered to provide ongoing modeling and data support during the permitting process. The NOS NCCOS lab strategized further on specific siting criteria and concluded that the preliminary evaluations should identify 15 – 20 site locations, approximately 40 to 45 miles offshore of the general Sarasota and Charlotte Harbor region, to provide flexibility during the siting analyses and deconflict other potential user group industries. Preliminary engineering analyses suggested that a minimum depth to ensure the survivability of the SPM net pen array during a potential 200-year storm is 130 feet. As such, the NOS NCCOS team identified a total of 18 alternative sites (**Figure 3**) along the 130-ft isobath offshore of Sarasota and Charlotte Harbor.

C) Draft-Final Siting Analysis – The VE Project team further reduced the number of viable alternative sites to a total of six (6) site locations that: **(a)** minimized the transit time from a major port (Sarasota or Charlotte Harbor); **(b)** avoided any military special use airspace; **(c)** minimized overlap with known commercial fishing areas; **(d)** ensured no overlap with ocean disposal sites, submarine cables, shipping lanes (and minimized intersection of major vessel traffic), anchorage areas, or artificial reefs; and **(e)** avoided sensitive coral hardbottom, coral EFH, and shrimp EFH habitat areas (**Figure 4**).

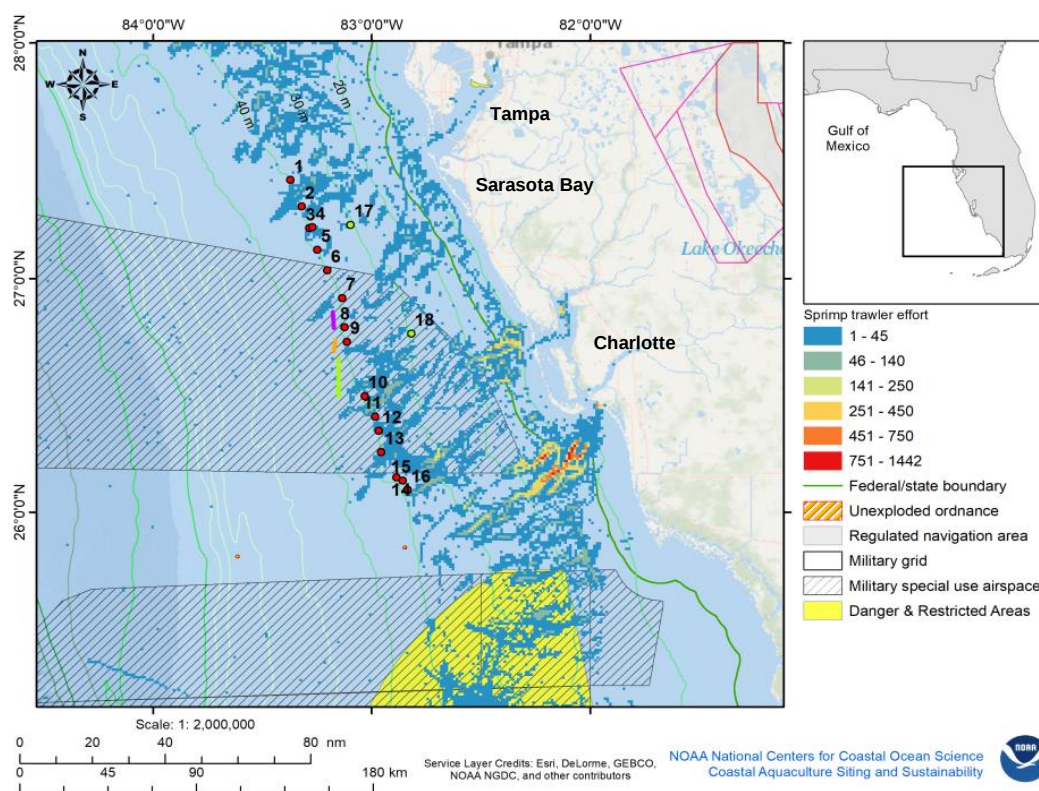


Figure 3. Alternative Site Locations (18) Resulting from the Secondary Siting Analysis

Extensive coordination and collaboration with the Executive Director of the Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA) over a 3-month period has resulted in identifying the three (3) sites (Sites #4, #5, and #6) that were preferred by the SSA and were not located in traditionally trawled areas by the shrimping industry or located in the military special use airspace. Of these sites, Site #6 has been identified as the VE Projects' Alternative Site A and Site #5 has been identified as the VE Projects' Preferred Site (Site B), as illustrated in Figure 2.

D) Final Siting Analysis – The VE Project Team performed the Final Siting Analysis by conducting in-water site surveys. The NOAA Fisheries and EPA guidance document, **Baseline Environmental Survey Guidance and Procedures for Marine Aquaculture Activities in U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico**, October 24th, 2016 (Appendix B), was referenced while conducting this work. At a minimum, the BES included comprehensive *Seafloor Survey* and *Hydrographic Measurements* as defined in the guidance document. Information gained from the BES was used to select the exact site location for the MAS, and demonstrated confirmation of hardbottom and coral habitat and cultural resource avoidance.

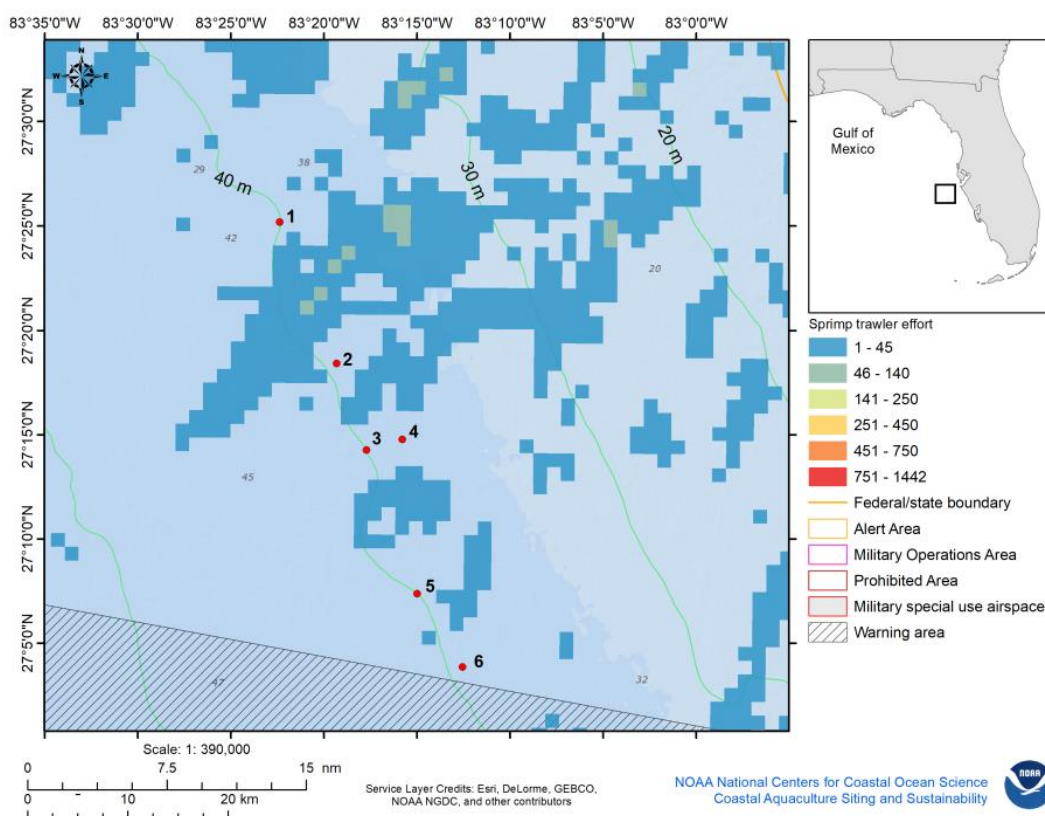


Figure 4. Alternative Site Locations (6) Resulting from the Draft-Final Siting Analysis

Other Required Federal Permits - The VE Project is concurrently applying for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 10 permit (12/28/2017, Department of Army Permit Number: SAJ-2017-03488-KRD; "Velella Epsilon Project/Aquaculture"). A BES was conducted, and the subsequent data analysis and report was submitted in support of the USACE, Section 10 and the EPA, NPDES permits (along with copies to NOAA FISHERIES representatives) on October 26, 2018.

As part of the Federal permitting processes, the following consultations/responsibilities will be satisfied:

- Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA),
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Stevens Act) for Essential Fish Habitat (EFH),
- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA; Section 106), and
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and documentation

It is also understood that a final permit authorization and issuance of the Department of the Army (DA) Section 10 permit will not be able to be made without a copy of the State of Florida's Section 404 Water Quality Certification (WQC) and Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) consistency determination and/or waivers.

The VE Project Team continues to work with NOAA FISHERIES, USEPA and USACE to develop and execute the milestone goals of the multiagency schedule.

An Interagency Coordination Meeting via conference call on April 3, 2018 was conducted to review the VE project details with Federal permitting and authorizing agencies. Participants on this call included staff from the following federal agencies: NOAA

Fisheries, USEPA, USACE, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), U.S. Air Force (USAF), and the U.S. Navy (USN). The VE Project Team felt that this multiagency coordination was the best approach for the draft-final siting analysis prior to expending resources on conducting a *Seafloor Survey* in support of the required BES.

5.0 Project Needs and Milestones:

One of the various constraints to and misperceptions of, U.S. domestic offshore aquaculture development is the limitation of species with closed life-cycle technology that are suitable for production offshore. The VE Project has specifically identified and proposes to culture a species with a proven culture record and with a documented closed life-cycle technology that is suitable for offshore production in the GOM: almaco jack. Ultimately, project success is inherently determined and controlled by strict schedule management and compliance. **Table 1** provides a summary the key milestone activities, goals, and schedule of the VE Project, including the approximate start date, finish date, and the duration of each activity.

<u>Milestone Activity</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Finish Date</u>	<u>Months</u>
Obtain All Environmental Permits and Approvals			
VE Demonstration Project Permits	Oct-17	Sep-20	36
Initiate Pursuit of Commercial Permits	Sep-20		
Deploy Demonstration Netpen/ Tender Vessel Array			
Port Manatee Staging Area	Dec-20	Jan-21	2
Obtain Mooring and Deployment Equipment	Dec-20	Jan-21	2
Net Pen Delivery	Dec-20	Jan-21	2
Construct & Deploy Net Pen Array	Dec-20	Jan-21	2
Rear a Single Cohort of Almaco Jack			
Larval Runs & Fingerling Production	Dec-20	Feb-21	4
Ship Fingerlings & Stock Net Pen	Mar-21	Mar-21	1
Feeding, Cleaning, & Monitoring	Mar-21	Feb-22	12
Water Quality & Benthic Monitoring	Mar-21	Feb-22	12
Environmental & Data Reports	Feb-21	Apr-22	15
Engagement in Stakeholder & Public Outreach	Oct-17	Feb-22	53
Source Buyer(s)/Dealer(s)	Dec-21	Feb-22	3
Harvest Fish	Jan-22	Feb-22	2
Project Closeout			
Project and Environmental Summary Report	Dec-21	Feb-22	3
Port Manatee Staging Area	Feb-22	Mar-22	2
Obtain Mooring and Netpen Equipment	Feb-22	Mar-22	2
Deconstruction & Shipment of Net Pen Array	Feb-22	Mar-22	2
Manual for Aquaculture Permitting Pathway (MAPP)	Jan-22	Feb-22	2

Table 1. Summary the Key Milestone Activities, Goals, and Schedule of the VE Project

6.0 Catch (Culture) Information:

6.1 Species expected to be Harvested and/or Discarded:

The almaco jack is the selected species that will be cultured and ultimately harvested from within a closed Demonstration net pen system. The original source of the fish to be stocked in the net pen will likely be from either the RSMAS hatchery in Miami, Florida, or the Mote Aquaculture Research Park in Sarasota, Florida. The VE Project Team would transfer fingerlings from the hatchery's land-based rearing tanks into oxygenated holding

containers. Using a crane, they would then place the holding containers onto flatbed trucks and secure them. The trucks would follow the shortest distance from RSMAS, Miami or Mote Aquaculture Research Park, Sarasota, to the Sarasota Bay, where the holding tanks would be transferred using a small crane to the deck of the tender vessel. NOAA Fisheries, USCG, FWC and other appropriate Federal and state agencies would be notified of the anticipated transport activity.

It is estimated that three trips (approximately 6,500-7,000 fish per trip x 3 trips = 20,000 fish per grow out cycle) to stock the net pen would be required. The transport vessel would proceed to the VE Project site location where the fingerlings would be pumped via a hose directly into the net pen using a specially designed fish pump. As this is a well-rehearsed commercial activity, it is unlikely any fingerlings would escape during these operations.

6.2 Number or Weight by Species, of Harvest and/or Discard:

The VE Project will harvest (market and sell to state- and Federally-licensed dealers) a single cohort of almaco jack, comprising approximately 17,000 fish, (12 months) for a final total marketable yield of approximately 74,800 lb. Due to natural mortality, it is estimated that 2,999 fish, of varying sizes over the course of a total of a 12-month growout period, will be properly discarded (onshore) after a necropsy has been performed on a sample of these fish to determine the cause of death. The weight of discarded fish is estimated to be less than 4,992 lb.

Fish would be concentrated using a seine net inside of the net pen prior to harvesting. The VE Project Team would harvest fish using a vacuum pump which will transfer fish directly from the net pen to containers onboard the vessel, thus reducing the chance for escapes. Fish may also be harvested using dip nets and transferred to a support vessel and transported to shore for processing. All appropriate state and Federal agencies would be notified of the anticipated transport activity.

6.3 Expected Disposition of Species, of such Harvest:

The VE Project will transport the harvested fish to a shore-based operation, where extensive marketing trials will be conducted and the fish will be ultimately sold to state- and Federally-licensed seafood dealers and distributed to markets with a focus on the southeast and Florida. The VE Project Team will comply with the Best Management Practices (BMPs) identified in the “**Aquaculture Best Management Practices Manual**”, Incorporated into Rule 5L-3.004, F.A.C. Further, the VE Project Team will secure the required **Aquaculture Certificate of Registration Number**, which will be identified with each of the receipts, bills of sale, bills of lading, or other such manifest, in addition with information describing the product’s origination.

Routine and Contingency Operations - The VE Project net pen will have as a minimum, one properly functioning locating device (e.g., global positioning system [GPS] device) to assist in locating the system in the event it is damaged or lost. The VE Project Team contacted the Aids to Navigation (ATON) Officer for USCG, Sector St. Petersburg, FL. It was determined that no permanent aids to navigation are required or necessary (as it is not necessary to chart the net pen array as an ‘obstruction to navigation’) as long as a tender vessel remains onsite. When pens are submerged during storm or other trial events, the area perimeter would be marked with buoys or high flyers (poles) per USCG and NOAA Fisheries regulations.

The USCG is willing to broadcast safety notices to mariners to make citizens aware of the VE Project’s location, as necessary. Contacts to local USCG patrols in the area re: the project location will be made as well.

The CopperNet net pen design is very flexible and self-adjusts to suit the constantly changing wave and current conditions. As a result, the system can float on the surface of the ocean most of the time at an operational position. When a storm approaches the area, the operating team simply opens a valve to flood the system (the Flotation Capsule) with water, causing the entire net pen array to submerge. A buoy remains on the surface, marking the net pen's position and supporting the air hose. When the net pen approaches the bottom, the system will maintain the cage several meters above the sea floor. Submerged and protected from the storm above, the system is still able to rotate around the MAS and adjust to the currents. After the storm, the operating team pumps air back into the system (the Flotation Capsule) via a hose, making the net pen array buoyant, causing the system to rise back to the surface and resume operational conditions.

During nominal storm events such as tropical depressions, the tender vessel would likely remain on location and the offshore-strength CopperNet net pen would be submerged approximately 40 ft below the surface until the storm (high wind and wave height) conditions diminish.

During stronger storm events, the net pen would be submerged approximately 40 ft below the surface, and the tender vessel will return to an identified safe harbor. Once the storm has passed, the tender vessel would return to the mooring position, re-connect with the mooring line, bring the net pen to the surface, and resume activities. An **emergency contingency plan** for containment and retrieval of the net pen resulting from severe weather conditions may be required by the USACE.

GPS transponders aboard the net pen would provide regular automated reporting of the net pen's position. This information would be available only to the VE Project Team members and not to other mariners. Video feeds from security and in-water cameras would be available for monitoring from the tender vessel 24 hours a day. VE Project staff would access the monitor the systems at least twice a day. If staff detect that the net pen is outside of the expected operating area, they would use GPS information to launch an emergency response in a timely manner.

At the conclusion of the Demonstration trial, the net pen and all mooring equipment would be removed from the site and hauled to shore for proper cleaning and storage. The VE Project Team would comply with any requirements for a more detailed **project closure plan** that may be required by the USACE.

6.4 Anticipated Impacts:

6.4.1 Fisheries

The closed net pen culture and harvest of almaco jack would not result in any anticipated impacts on, nor jeopardize the sustainability of, any wild stocks of almaco jack, or of any other wild fish. The VE Project plans to use almaco broodstock that are native to the GOM (and are not genetically engineered or transgenic) for the source of eggs during the hatchery production of fingerlings. The VE Project would use first-generation offspring (**F1 juveniles**) for stocking the net pen from an existing facility (e.g., RSMAS, UM or the Mote Aquaculture Research Park) that harvests fish to maintain adult broodstock.

The almaco jack broodstock at Mote Marine Lab were caught in the Gulf of Mexico off of Madeira Beach, Florida, just north of the Mote Aquaculture Research Park and only F1 progeny will be stocked into the offshore net pen array.

This sourcing of broodstock is consistent with Appendix A of the NOAA document entitled, **Guidance and Procedures for Genetic Requirements for Gulf Aquaculture Permits**; February 12th, 2016, which states that almaco jack, may be sourced from the entire GOM (**Appendix D**). There are 26 broodstock fish at a sex ratio

of approximately 1:1, and ***FWC has determined these mating ratios, as well as the cohort sizes described for the VE Project are appropriate with respect to FWC genetic-policy requirements.*** Thus, the VE Project would not require any additional harvest of wild almaco jack.

The VE Project would use methods designed to prevent accidental escapes of cultured F1 almaco jack juveniles during net pen stocking and harvest activities by using closed containers to transport fingerlings to the net pen. Because stocking would be done using pumps while the net pen is at the surface and the surround net is deployed, few fingerlings if any would likely escape during stocking operations. Considering the equipment and operations that will be put in place to reduce the risk of escape, the potential for escapes during stocking and harvesting is thought to be minimal. Should any fingerlings escape, they would be expected to remain around the net pen (which, as has been the experience in Hawaii operations, would act as a fish aggregating device [FAD]). Large fish that are expected to have become attracted to the net pen such as tunas, billfish, and possibly sharks, would likely consume any escaped fingerlings that are not retrieved.

Contingency Plan for Escapes - The VE Project team of onsite technicians will attempt to recover any escapes. The risk for escapes will be *de minimus* because the net pen system consists of a stainless cage with CuNiClad coating (copper nickel alloy), which reduces the risk for catastrophic cage collapse due to predator breaches. One of the advantages of the VE Project's CopperNet system is that it will have a jump net on the surface which allows divers to enter and exit the cage from above the surface of the water, thereby further reducing potential for incidental or chronic escapes of fish.

The fish that would be stocked and maintained in the net pen would be genetically indistinguishable from the local wild population because they are first-generation (F1) offspring from wild-caught fish from the GOM and are the result of mixed broodstock parental crosses. As such, an unforeseen release of small quantities of cultured fish into the wild are not expected to substantially impact the genetic structure of wild fish stocks through genetic introgression and would therefore not reduce the health or fitness of the wild stock.

Further, the VE Project Team is aware of and will reference guidance from the ***“Decision Process for the Genetic Risk Assessment of Releases Involving Marine Organisms”***, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, September 2009.

Aquatic Animal Health - Pathogen and parasite transmission from the VE Project is unlikely due to the following protocols which will be implemented:

- Fingerlings would be from the RSMAS or Mote Aquaculture Research Park certified disease-free hatchery facility. Before every stocking event, almaco jack fingerlings would be examined by an Aquatic Animal Health Expert (AAHE) to ensure they are visibly healthy and free from pathogens of concern specific to the cultured species
- Fish are proposed to be stocked at levels that are not expected to result in stress from overcrowding, which has the potential to result in a greater likelihood for diseases.
- Technicians would routinely monitor the health of the fish in the net pen; dead or sick individual fish would be removed.
- Fish mortalities that occur during the VE Project would be removed during daily maintenance operations. Technicians would perform a necropsy on a sample of dead fish and dispose of any mortalities onshore using proper disposal methods.

As guided by any subsequent requirements issued in the EPA NPDES or USACE Section 10 permits, the VE Project will develop an **Aquatic Animal Health Plan** in cooperation with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Veterinary Service (APHIS VS) and FWC that is tailored to the specific needs of the VE Project. Additionally, the VE Team will abide by the following:

- The VE Project Team will provide a contractual arrangement with an AAHE to provide services to the aquaculture facility/facilities and will provide a valid copy of the AAHE's license or certification EPA and the USACE. The aquatic animal health plan will involve a U.S. licensed veterinarian who can help facilitate the aquatic animal health plan, diagnosis and treat fish as needed, and certify the health of fish for movement and trade.
- Only FDA approved drugs will be used and in accordance with FDA requirements under the direction and supervision of a U.S. licensed veterinarian.
- A health certification form will be provided to EPA each time fingerlings are stocked into offshore cages.

6.4.2 Marine Mammals and Protected Species

The VE Project's net pen culture and harvest operations of almaco jack would not result in any anticipated impacts on marine mammals, sea turtles, or other protected species of the GOM. There are 28 different species of marine mammals that may occur in the GOM. All 28 species are protected under the MMPA; six are additionally listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (sperm [*Physeter microcephalus*], sei [*Balaenoptera borealis*], fin [*Balaenoptera physalus*], blue [*Balaenoptera musculus*], humpback [*Megaptera novaeangliae*] and North Atlantic right [*Eubalaena glacialis*] whales).

Other ESA-protected species occurring in the GOM include two threatened sea turtle species (loggerhead [*Caretta caretta*] and green [*Chelonia mydas*]); three endangered sea turtle species (Kemp's Ridley [*Lepidochelys kempi*], leatherback [*Dermochelys coriacea*], and hawksbill [*Eretmochelys imbricata*]); two endangered fish species (Gulf sturgeon [*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*] and smalltooth sawfish [*Pristis pectinata*]); and one threatened fish species (Nassau grouper [*Epinephelus striatus*]).

Contingency Plan for Entanglements - The MAS system comprises large diameter mooring lines (ropes) that will be approximately 2". The drag load and constant taught lines scenario serves to reduce to *de minimus* the typical levels of risks and concerns for marine mammal entanglement. The inherent rigidity of the anchor line would make it is extremely unlikely that the line could wrap around a fluke or tail of a marine mammal or entangle a sea turtle. Additionally, since the net pen system consists of a stainless cage, the rigid chain-link mesh pen reduces the risk for catastrophic cage collapse and further reduces to a *de minimis* level the chance for marine species entanglement. The HDPE flotation system is also very rigid, and is not anticipated to cause any entanglement or injury to protected marine species.

Further, during severe storm events when the net pen array is submerged, marine species have been documented to seek deeper waters and avoid shallower systems or infrastructure, such as the net pen array. Dolphins and whales have the ability to detect changes in salinity of waters near the surface, often caused by heavy rainfall associated with storms, such as hurricanes. Marine mammals have been reported to depart from areas experiencing the heavy rain events associated with the leading edges of hurricanes. As such, marine mammals have sufficient time to exercise precautionary measures and seek refuge away from storms, and thus the VE Project site.

Additionally, nine coral species (elkhorn [*Acropora palmata*], staghorn [*A. cervicornis*], Lamarck's sheet [*Agaricia lamarcki*], lobed star [*Orbicella annularis*] pillar coral [*Dendrogyra cylindrus*], elliptical star coral [*Dichocoenia stokesii*], mountainous star coral [*Orbicella faveolata*], boulder star coral [*Orbicella franksi*], rough cactus coral [*Mycetophyllia ferox*]) are ESA-protected as threatened.

The potential for attraction or interaction of marine mammals and sea turtles at the VE Project site is likely. Despite the potential risks; however, the potential for entanglements are unlikely if mooring lines are kept taut at all times. The MAS is designed to remain taut. The net pen (and any attached vessels) will track around in a 'watch circle' with the current, maintaining taut mooring lines. Additionally, the pen will use a rigid copper alloy mesh, which presents no marine mammal entanglement hazard. The VE Project activity is not anticipated to result in collisions between protected marine mammal, sea turtle, or fish species and the net pen or tender vessel. The vessel captain will operate at sea in a manner that would reduce the risk of collisions with marine mammals and sea turtles. No impacts are anticipated on the Gulf sturgeon, as they are not anticipated to occur at the offshore distance of the VE Project site location (40 to 45 miles offshore). No impacts are anticipated on the Nassau grouper, as they are limited to locations including the Yucatan, Tortugas, and Key West. Due to the relatively shallow water depths of the proposed VE Project site location (approximately 130 ft deep), the MAS (moorings) securing the tender vessel and supporting the floating net pen would be positioned via diver assistance and/or drop camera systems, as a habitat conservation measure for avoidance and minimization of environmental impacts, thus ensuring that the placements are in areas of unconsolidated sediments (sand bottom) and avoiding hardbottom, coral, or other sensitive habitats, as sited from the BES results.

In cooperation with NOAA Fisheries Protected Resources staff, the VE Project Team has prepared and will implement a **Marine Mammal, Sea Turtle, and Seabird Monitoring and Data Collection Plan (Protected Species Plan)**. Marine protected species are marine mammals, sea turtles, and ESA-listed seabirds. The VE Project staff would monitor marine mammals and other protected species whenever staff are at the VE Project site. A designated representative of the EPA and USACE permits would report immediately to NOAA Fisheries (a) any observed or reported direct physical contact by any marine mammal, sea turtle, or ESA-listed seabird with any part of the net pen array; or (b) any observed or reported injured or entangled marine mammal, sea turtle, or ESA-listed seabird within 330 ft of any part the net pen array. The VE Project staff would suspend all surface activities, including stocking, harvesting operations, and routine maintenance operations when an ESA-listed seabird comes within 330 ft of the activity until the bird leaves the area. The Protected Species Plan is provided in **Appendix E**.

6.4.3 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)

The VE Project's net pen culture and harvest activities of almaco jack may adversely affect EFH, but would have only a minimal effect on EFH. The VE Project's activities are anticipated to have no effect on EFH Habitats of Particular Concern (HAPC), as none are located in the vicinity of the project area. The Reef and Banks Coral EFH HAPC are located in the northwestern portion of the GOM, off the Texas and Louisiana coasts; and the Pulley Ridge Coral EFH HAPC is located approximately 80 nautical miles southeast of the VE Project site. The Modified Site B identified in the BES report by the VE Project Team does not coincide with any sensitive coral hardbottom, Coral EFH, or Coral HAPC habitats, as demonstrated by the NCCOS spatial analysis team and the BES report.

The VE Project activities are anticipated to result in negligible, short-term impacts on EFH, including the *Shrimp*, *Red Drum*, *Reef Fish*, *Coastal Migratory Pelagics*, *Spiny Lobster*, *Coral and Coral Reefs Stone*, and *Stone Crab* Fishery Management Units

(FMUs). The VE Project is not anticipated to result in substantial impacts on EFH waters (water quality) or substrate (hardbottom components) of the GOM or coastal habitats due to the stationary (MAS) site location and diver-assisted anchor placement of the VE Project; the limited size and duration of the project; operational features that would result in minimal impacts to water quality, and that prevent adverse impacts to shallow habitats. The VE Project has GPS-tracking features to help ensure that if gear becomes detached, a notification signal would be sent and the gear could be retrieved. There would be limited vessel activity associated with the project.

7.0 Final Location of Modified Site B:

The two draft-final site locations under consideration prior to the BES report were the Preferred Site #A, at approximately 27.069191° N and -83.199163° W, in approximately a 130-ft water depth; and the Alternate Site #B, at approximately 27.127108° N, -83.238919° W, in approximately a 130-ft water depth.

Although an exemption of any restricted access area around the sites is being requested, it is anticipated that the approval of the BES will typically require the establishment of a 1,640-ft (500 m) buffer area around each side of the project area. For siting analyses, the VE Project has selected to define a 1.3 mile x 1.3 mile project area about each of the sites' coordinates, for the 1.7-square-mile area for each site; however, the VE Project Team is amenable to repositioning the proposed site and project footprint. Modified Site B is located at approximately 27.122364167° N and -83.200381833° W

Preferred Site #A:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
Top Left	27.087752° N	-83.218684° W
Top Right	27.086662° N	-83.178426° W
Bottom Left	27.051718° N	-83.219894° W
Bottom Right	27.050629° N	-83.179649° W

Alternate Site #B:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
Top Left	27.145665° N	-83.258456° W
Top Right	27.144584° N	-83.218175° W
Bottom Left	27.109629° N	-83.259656° W
Bottom Right	27.108550° N	-83.219389° W

Modified Site #B:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
Top Left	27.131143° N	-83.224303° W
Top Right	27.130512° N	-83.193872° W
Bottom Left	27.107230° N	-83.194890° W
Bottom Right	27.108377° N	-83.225442° W

8.0 Vessel Information:

8.1 Vessel Name:

Schooner Machias

8.2 Vessel USCG Documentation Number, State License or Registration:

U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Document No. 289053

8.3 Vessel Home Port:

Honolulu, HI

8.4 Vessel Owner Information:

Ocean Charter Service, Inc.
1042 D. Ilima Drive,
Honolulu, HI 96817
(808) 595-0219
CaptBillAustin@hawaii.rr.com

8.5 Vessel Captain Information and Primary Project Participants Names:

8.5.1 Captain

Bill Austin

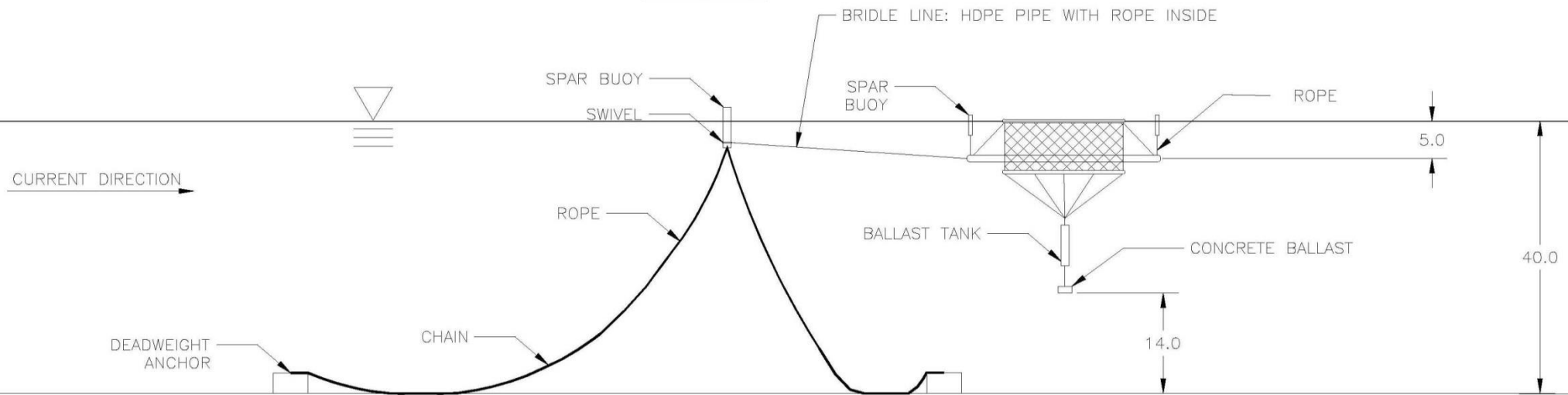
8.5.2 Crew

U of M graduate students, Kampachi staff, first mate, and cook (names to be provided)

Depending on the availability of Machias at the time of deployment, an alternative tender vessel of similar capability may be arranged from either Sarasota Bay or Charlotte Harbor, Florida. The exact specifications of the vessel and captain information will be provided as soon as they are confirmed for the deployment.

APPENDIX A
Engineering Designs

PROFILE VIEW



1) Deadweight Anchors (concrete):

- Three (3) anchors equally spaced @:
 - 120m from mooring centerline
 - 120 degrees from each other
- Each @ 3 ton Stevpris Mk-5 drag embedment anchor

2) Mooring Chain (Grade 2 steel):

- 80m length on each anchor
- 50mm (2") thick links
- No load = 70m length of each on seafloor
- Design load = some entirely off seafloor/ others completely on seafloor

3) Mooring Lines (rope):

- 40m length on each chain
- AMSTEEL®-BLUE
- 36mm (1 1/2") thick lines

4) Spar Buoy w/ Swivel (steel):

5) Bridle Lines (rope inside HDPE pipe):

- Three (3) ~30m bridle lines (rope) from swivel to spreader bar
- AMSTEEL®-BLUE
- 33.3mm (1 5/16") lines inside HDPE pipe

6) Spreader Bar (HDPE):

- Header Bar (load bearing) connected to Bridle Lines
 - 30m in length
 - 0.36m OD DR 11 HDPE pipe
- Side and Rear Bars (smaller load bearing)
 - 30m in length
 - 0.36m OD DR 17 HDPE pipe
- Four (4) corner spar buoys

7) Net Pen Connection Lines (rope):

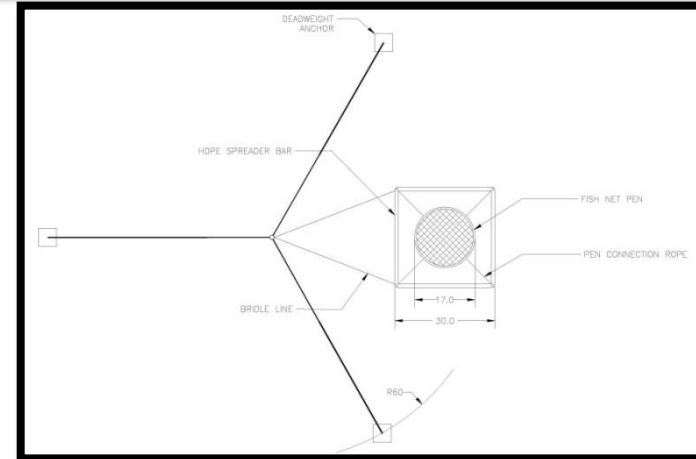
- Four (4) ~13m connection lines (rope)
- Connected from Spreader Bar to Net Pen Float Rings
- AMSTEEL®-BLUE
- 33.3mm (1 5/16") lines

8) Net Pen Frame Structure (HDPE):

- Top Frame Structure
 - 18m in diameter
 - One (1) HDPE side-by-side Float Rings
 - On the sea surface
 - ~ 0.36m OD DR 11 HDPE pipe
 - One (1) HDPE net ring (railing)
 - Connected ~ 1.0m above Float Rings
 - Connected to Net Pen Mesh
 - ~ 0.15m OD DR 17 HDPE pipe
- Bottom Frame Structure
 - 18m in diameter
 - One (1) HDPE sinker ring
 - 7.0m below Float Rings
 - Connected to Net Ring
 - ~ 0.36m OD DR 11 HDPE pipe
 - One (1) HDPE net ring
 - 7.0m below float rings
 - Connected to copper alloy mesh
 - ~ 0.15m OD DR 17 HDPE pipe

9) Net Pen Mesh (copper alloy):

- 17m diameter x 7m depth
- Top connected to top net ring (railing)
- Bottom connected to bottom net ring
 - 4mm wire diameter
 - 40mm x 40mm mesh square
- Effective volume of 1,600m³



10) Shackle Point Connection (steel):

- One (1) ~0.13m² shackle plate
- Four (4) connection lines
 - 12 mm in diameter x 10m in length
 - Connected from shackle plate to HDPE sinker ring
- ~1m Grade 2 steel chain (32mm) connected to Floatation Capsule

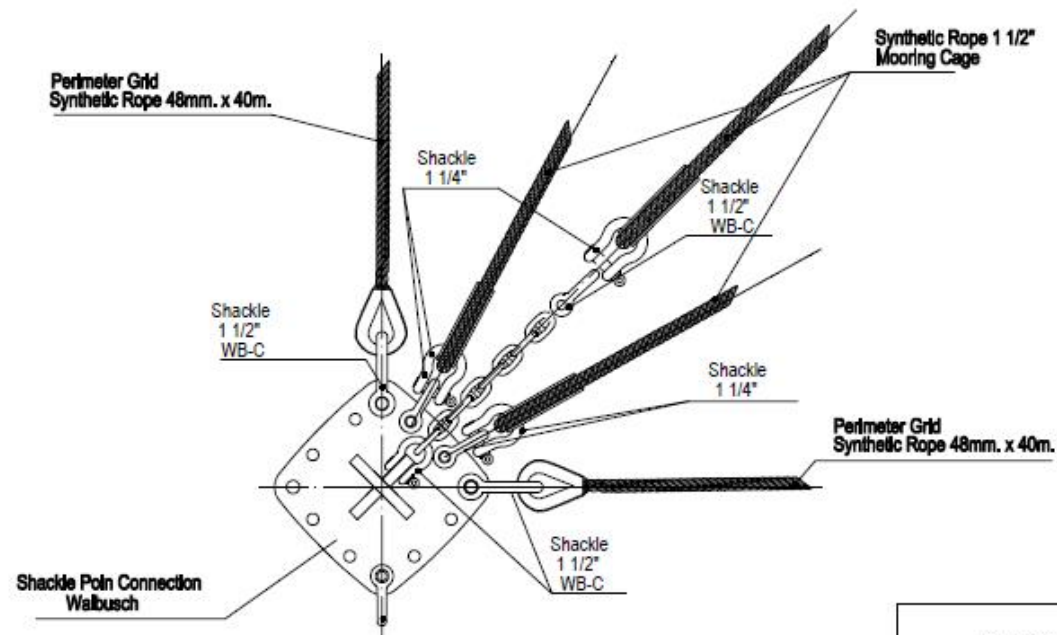
11) Floatation Capsule (steel):

- ~ 1.5m in diameter x ~3.45m in length
- Effective floatation volume = 6m³
- ~3m Grade 2 steel chain (32mm) connected to Counter Weight

12) Counter Weight (concrete):

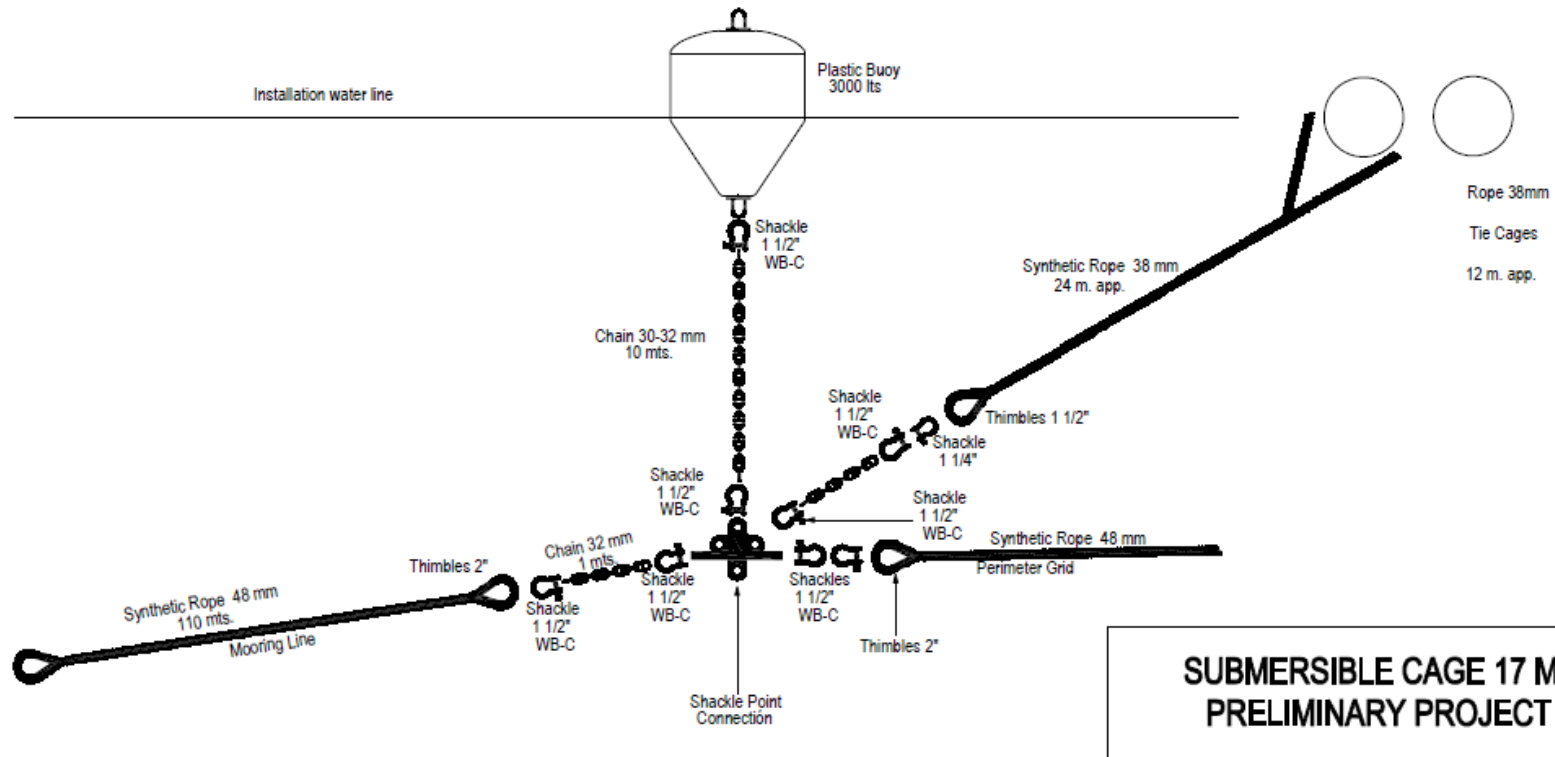
- ~ 1.1m in diameter x ~2.2m in length
- Effective weight of 5 MT

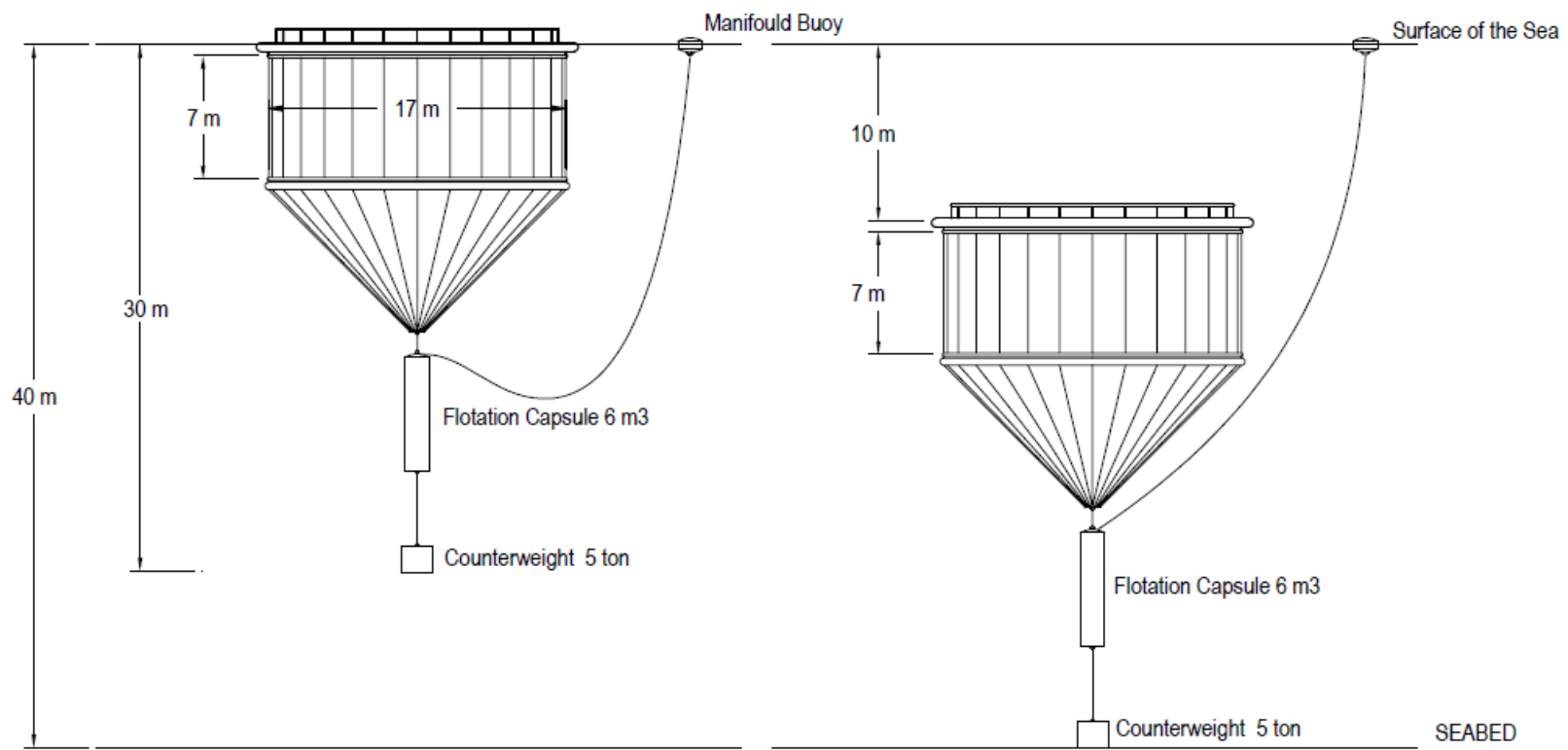
Detail 1
(Shackle Point Connection According to Grid and Mooring Cage)



SUBMERSIBLE CAGE 17 M
PRELIMINARY PROJECT

BUOY INSTALLATION DETAIL





APPENDIX B

Baseline Environmental Survey Guidance and Procedures for Marine Aquaculture Activities in U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico

Baseline Environmental Survey Guidance and Procedures for Marine Aquaculture Activities in U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico October 24th, 2016

Purpose and Authorities

- a) **Purpose.** This document provides information on the baseline environmental survey (BES) requirement for the NOAA Fisheries Gulf Aquaculture Permit (GAP) as well as requirements pertaining to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The information in this document is specific to marine aquaculture operations sited in federal waters of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico (Gulf).

Applicants are ***strongly encouraged*** to contact NOAA Fisheries and EPA prior to beginning survey work on a proposed aquaculture site as additional conditions may apply.

- b) **Authorities.** NOAA Fisheries has the authority to issue GAPs under the Fishery Management Plan for Regulating Offshore Marine Aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico (FMP) and regulations implementing the amendment codified at 50 CFR § 622, Subpart F. In accordance with the FMP and NOAA Fisheries implementing regulations, a BES of the proposed aquaculture site must be submitted as part of the GAP application package.¹

The EPA issues NPDES permits under authority of the Clean Water Act (CWA). An NPDES permit is required for any aquaculture operation that produces 100,000 or more pounds of fish per year. The EPA requires that applicants submit baseline data on water quality and benthic systems as part of the NPDES permit application process.²

Guidance and Procedures

The BES consists of a ***Seafloor Survey*** and ***Hydrographic Measurements*** and shall be initiated after successful completion of the Pre-Application Meeting with the various federal permitting agencies. Potential applicants are required to conduct a BES of the proposed

¹ Once a GAP has been issued, the NOAA Fisheries requirement for permittees to monitor and report the environmental survey parameters at the site will be met by complying with EPA monitoring requirements.

² The EPA also administers Section 403(c) of the CWA which provides that NPDES permits for discharges to the "territorial sea, the waters of the contiguous zone, or the oceans" must be in compliance with the ocean discharge guidelines. These guidelines are used to determine whether or not a discharge will cause "unreasonable degradation" of those waters. Unreasonable degradation is defined as any significant adverse impact to water quality or the marine communities living in the water column and on the seafloor. CWA Section 403(c) requires that the EPA consider location and proximity of the discharges to sensitive marine habitat and communities in a determination of unreasonable degradation and the EPA can deny a permit if it finds that the location will result in significant adverse impacts.

area, analyze the data and submit a report to both the NOAA Fisheries (Jess.Beck@noaa.gov) and designated EPA contact (EPA Region 4 – Ferry.Rol@epa.gov; EPA Region 6 - Afghani.Jim@epa.gov). The processed data used in the analysis should be provided to NOAA and the EPA as part of the BES package.

NOAA Fisheries and the EPA will use the information submitted to determine whether or not particular features exist that could disqualify the proposed area for siting purposes. If the proposed site is disqualified, an alternate site must be chosen and another Pre-Application Meeting scheduled.

1) Seafloor Survey

The purpose of the site seafloor survey is to ensure that the site is clear of benthic and subsurface (*i.e.*, pipelines, buried debris, vessels etc.) features that would preclude the siting of an aquaculture operation. The boundaries of an aquaculture site should be a minimum of 500 meters from such features to provide a protective buffer from construction related activities and operational discharges. **Note** that NOAA Fisheries and EPA may modify the boundary distance on a case-by-case basis.

NOAA Fisheries and EPA may waive some or all of the seafloor survey requirements if data from prior seafloor surveys is available for the proposed site. NOAA Fisheries and EPA will make this determination on a case-by-case basis and will consider data quality and completeness. Applicants should note that even if certain requirements are waived, all data must still be analyzed and reported per Section 3.

Survey Methodology

Seafloor Surface

Acoustic (*i.e.*, side-scan sonar) data in the 100 kHz frequency and 500 kHz frequency if available (use frequency and range settings providing best image quality) should be used to interpret for the presence of features on the seafloor surface within the boundaries of the proposed aquaculture site.³ Survey line spacing should be set so that sonar tracks overlap sufficiently to obtain 100% coverage of the seafloor surface within the proposed site.

³ NOAA Fisheries recommends designating an observer to scan for marine mammals in the area while conducting acoustic sonar surveys. If marine mammals are observed while conducting surveys, please halt the acoustic sonar survey until the animals have left the survey area.

Survey vessels should use an integrated GPS navigation system that can continuously determine the surface position of the vessel. In water depths greater than 91 meters (300 feet) survey vessels should use acoustic positioning of towed sensors to facilitate sufficiently accurate mapping of any recorded contacts.

A hull mounted, high-frequency, narrow beam hydrographic echo sounder must be employed to obtain bathymetric data. Bathymetry data should be logged digitally and continuously and should be corrected for vessel movement and tides.

Any significant discrete features discovered on the seafloor surface during the acoustic survey should be further resolved by adjusting range settings and frequency as appropriate. NOAA Fisheries and the EPA recognize that acoustical methods may not allow for complete and accurate identification of all seafloor features and will assume that any significant discrete features based on acoustical reflection should be avoided whether or not they are accurately identified. However, the applicant may choose to employ visual (photographic/video) methods of identification of discrete features if they believe it is warranted. In this case, applicants must provide high resolution still photos and/or video to fully and completely identify the discrete features in question.

Sub-Surface

Debris, pipelines and archeological resources may lay below the seafloor surface not detectable by sidescan sonar survey methods. Sub-surface data will be obtained with a magnetometer and a sub-bottom profiler.

Magnetometer: For all surveys conducted in water depths less than 100 meters (328 feet), a proton precession or cesium total field magnetometer should be used to detect ferrous and other magnetically susceptible metals. Tow the magnetometer sensor as near as possible (but no more than 6 meters (20 feet) above the seafloor) and in a way that minimizes interference from the vessel hull and the other survey instruments.

Attach a depth sensor to the magnetometer sensor and annotate each survey line with tow sensor height off seafloor and with start of the line (SOL) and end of the line (EOL) times. Ensure that magnetometer sensitivity is one gamma (γ) or one nanoTesla (nT) or less, and that the data sampling interval does not exceed one (1) second. Ensure also that the background noise level does not exceed a total of 3 gammas peak to peak.

Record data on a digital medium in such a way that it can be linked to the positioning data. Make sure that the recording scales are set no higher than 1,000-gamma and 100-gamma full scale, respectively. Annotate shot points and recorder speed.

Sub-Bottom Profiler: Use a very high-frequency subbottom acoustic profiler operating within the 1.5- to 4.5-kHz bandwidth to provide continuous and very high resolution information of near surface geological features within the uppermost 15 meters (50 feet) of sediment. Run the subbottom profiler system to provide penetration that exceeds the depth of disturbance (i.e., the maximum expected anchor penetration).

Make sure that the subbottom profiler system is capable of achieving a resolution of vertical bed separation of at least one (1) foot in the uppermost 15 meters (50 feet) below the mudline.

Record the data digitally to allow signal processing to improve data quality further and allow export to a workstation for integrated interpretation and mapping of the data.

2) Hydrological Measurements

Hydrological information is necessary in order to model the directionality of water quality impacts and organic deposition on the seabed. The modeling results will be used to develop a directed operational monitoring plan for the facility.

A water current meter should be deployed at the approximate center of the proposed aquaculture site. The current speed and direction should be measured at a minimum of three depths: near surface, bottom of suspended cage, and one meter off the seabed. Data collection should occur for one deployment for a minimum of 20 days or 40 tidal cycles, measured hourly. If sufficient historical current data exist for the proposed site, NOAA and the EPA may waive this requirement. NOAA Fisheries and EPA will make this determination on a case-by-case basis and will consider data quality and completeness. Wave data for the site should be obtained from the Wave Information Study (WIS) station (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) nearest the site. Wave properties to your location should be refracted using linear wave theory. Applicants should note that even if certain requirements are waived, all data must still be analyzed and reported per Section 3.

3) Data Analysis and Report

Field survey reports should be prepared using the guidelines below. Applicants should provide one hard copy and two DVD copies of the report to both NOAA Fisheries and the EPA as part of the permit application package for each agency. Note that DVD report information should be in PDF format. Applicants should also provide two digital copies of all survey maps (as DWG files) to both NOAA Fisheries and the EPA. Survey maps should be oriented to the North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) coordinate system. The processed data used in the analysis should be provided to NOAA and the EPA as part of the BES package.

The report should contain an evaluation and synthesis of the data gathered during the field survey. This information should be prepared, signed, and dated by a professional archaeologist who is qualified according to the standards found at 36 CFR part 61 Appendix A (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-1998-title36-vol1/pdf/CFR-1998-title36-vol1-part61-appA.pdf>). Specialists in other fields may participate in data analysis and report preparation, as needed.

The following information should be included in the report.

- A. A description of the area surveyed, including the permitted area and its minimum and maximum water depths.
- B. A list of the individuals with names, titles and affiliations that were involved in survey planning, fieldwork, and report preparation, and a description of their duties.
- C. A discussion of the field survey methodology, including:
 - 1. A brief description of the navigation system, including a statement of its estimated accuracy for the area surveyed.
 - 2. A brief description of survey instrumentation, including scale, sensitivity settings, sampling rates, and tow heights off seafloor, as appropriate for each instrument.
 - 3. A description of the survey vessel, including its size, sensor configuration, instrument set-backs, and navigation antennae locations.
 - 4. Vessel speed and course changes.
 - 5. Sea state and weather conditions.
 - 6. A copy of the **original** daily survey operations log. Include sensor height off seafloor for the magnetometer and acoustic survey (sidescan sonar) for the beginning and end of each survey line.
 - 7. A description of survey procedures, including a statement of survey and record quality, a comparison of survey line crossings, and discussion of any problems that may affect the ability of the report preparers to determine the potential for the presence of hazards, debris, human activities (*i.e.*, oil/gas structure, artificial reefs), and biological and archaeological resources in the survey area.
 - 8. An explanation of the problem(s) if unable to meet the survey line spacing or instrumentation guidelines listed above.

D. A navigation post plot map of the survey area at a scale of 1:12,000 showing survey lines, shot points at 152-meter (500-foot) intervals, line direction in the grid projection in which the lease is described (e.g., UTM, Lambert, or geographic coordinates) with tics placed every five inches thereon, and with geodetic graticules every 60 seconds. (Submit one hardcopy and two digital copies (one in PDF format and ESRI Shapefile format) of this map to both NOAA Fisheries and the EPA.) Orient this map, or separate maps at the same scale that also show survey lines, shot points, and line direction, to true north and delineate the following, as appropriate:

1. For sub-bottom profiler data, include the horizontal and vertical extent of all relict geomorphic features having potential for associated prehistoric sites.

When relict fluvial systems are recorded, make sure that the map:

- a. differentiates between generations of channeling when more than one generation is present;
- b. shows any internal channel features such as point bar deposits and terraces;
- c. delineates any channel margin features such as natural levee ridges;
- d. indicates all depths of channel banks and channel axes (thalwegs); and
- e. delineates all areas recommended by your archaeologist for avoidance for potential archaeological resources.

Note: An isopach map of channel fill sediments is often the most efficient means of conveying the above information, but this method alone will not allow differentiation between more than one generation of channeling.

2. All magnetic anomalies and acoustic survey (sidescan sonar) contacts of unknown source (for magnetic anomalies use map symbol: ▲; for acoustic survey contacts use map symbol: ☒).

Identify these magnetic anomalies and acoustic survey contacts using only the aforementioned symbols and a unique number keyed to the listings in the unidentified magnetic anomaly and acoustic survey tables in the text (see paragraph F below).

In congested areas with numerous unidentified magnetic anomalies, you may use a map(s) at a scale of 1:6,000 to depict the anomalies. If you do, tie this congested area map(s) into the 1:12,000 survey area map. ***Plot all recommended potential archaeological avoidance areas on the survey area map.***

3. Sites of oil and gas operations (e.g., well locations, platform sites, and/or pipelines), when available at the time of report preparation.
 4. Sites of former oil and gas operations (e.g., abandoned well locations, platform sites, and/or pipelines).
- E. An analysis of the potential for prehistoric sites within the survey area that includes:
1. A discussion of relict geomorphic features and their archaeological potential that includes the type, age, and association of the mapped features; the acoustic characteristics of channels and their fill material; evidence for preservation or erosion of channel margins; evidence for more than one generation of fluvial downcutting; and the sea level curves you used in the assessment.
 2. A discussion, based on the capabilities of current technology in relation to the thickness and composition of sediments overlying the area of a potential site, of the potential for identification and evaluation of buried prehistoric sites.
- F. A current review of existing records for reported shipwreck locations in the survey area and adjacent areas, and the following, as appropriate:
1. A table of the unidentified magnetic anomalies with the OCS block, shot point, and survey line location (corrected for sensor offset); gamma intensity; lateral extent (duration); whether the anomaly is characterized by a dipolar, monopolar, or complex signature; the magnetometer sensor tow height off seafloor; the NAD 27 decimal degree coordinates of the center of each unidentified anomaly; and the recommended avoidance zone. Below is an example of a suggested format for this unidentified magnetic anomaly table;

Anomaly Number	Line No.	Shot Pt.	Tow Height (feet)	Signature	Intensity (gammas)	Duration (feet)	NAD 27 Coordinates (in decimal degrees)	Minimum Avoidance Dist. (feet)
1	0020	11.4	20	Dipole	15	75		100

2. A table of sidescan sonar contacts with the lease block, shot point, and survey line location (corrected for sensor offset); size; shape; height of protrusion above the seafloor; the NAD 27 decimal degree coordinates; and recommended avoidance distance of each. A suggested format for this unidentified sidescan sonar contact table is included below;

Anomaly	Magnetometer	Dimensions	Shape	NAD 27	Minimum
----------------	---------------------	-------------------	--------------	---------------	----------------

Number	Association	LxWxH (ft)		Coordinates (in decimal degrees)	Avoidance Dist. (feet)
1	Mag. Anomaly 1, Line 0020, Shot Point 11.4	100 x 50 x 5	Linear		100

3. A discussion of any magnetic anomalies and acoustic survey contacts of unknown source in terms of their potential as historic shipwrecks (include an analysis of reported nearby wrecks and their potential association with these contacts/anomalies on the basis of vessel size and anomaly characterization);
 4. A discussion of any correlation between magnetic anomalies or acoustic survey contacts-and known or probable sources;
 5. For any archaeological resources that can be positively identified from remote-sensing records, an analysis of their possible significance and recommendations for any further research or special precautions that may be necessary.
 6. A discussion of the potential for shipwreck preservation in terms of bottom sediment type and thickness, and the effects of past and present marine processes in the survey area; and
 7. A discussion of the potential for identification and evaluation of potential shipwrecks considering the capabilities of current technology in relation to the water depth, probable thickness and composition of sediments overlying the potential shipwreck location, and the preservation potential.
- G. Representative data samples from each survey instrument to demonstrate the quality of the records. If appropriate, include the following data samples, which you may use in lieu of the representative data samples:
1. A sample of subbottom profiler data for each type of relict landform that is identified. When more than one generation of fluvial channeling is evident, include a sample that depicts each generation. Each sample should be readable and include horizontal and vertical scales. Provide any interpretive highlighting or annotation of the sample data on a separate overlay or a copy of the sample data. Do not highlight original survey data.
 2. Copies of all acoustic survey data where contacts representing unidentified objects are recorded. Make sure that the copies are readable and include the scale. If you want to provide any interpretive highlighting or annotation of the sample acoustic

survey data, provide either a separate overlay or a copy of the sample data. Do not highlight original acoustic survey data. Include a digital copy of the computer-generated mosaics as a geo-referenced Tagged Image Format (TIF) file.

- H. A summary of conclusions and recommendations supported by the field survey data including:
 - 1. A discussion of all known or potential physical, biological and archaeological resources; and
 - 2. Recommendations for avoidance or for further investigations.
- I. A discussion of the data and results from any additional investigations that are required by NOAA Fisheries and the EPA.
- J. Hydrological Measurements: Reporting of the hydrological measurements (waves and currents) should contain a thorough description of the methods employed including the instrumentation used, location and depth of deployment, deployment periods and field procedures involved in the deployment, maintenance and retrieval of equipment. Descriptions should also include the number of cells (bins) measured, and data averaging protocols for the instruments used and how the data were processed and analyzed. Any problems or issues should also be discussed in the methods section.

The results should provide a description of maximum, minimum and average currents and tidal excursions and include a current rose plot of depth averaged currents and a rose plot for near surface, mid-water and near bottom currents. A plot of the tidal ellipse (magnitude and inclination of the major axis and magnitude of minor axis) should also be included.

The processed wave and current data used in the analysis should be submitted to NOAA and the EPA on CD_ROM or DVD.

APPENDIX C

Screening Discussion for the Velella Project Gulf of Mexico – Exempted Fishing Permit

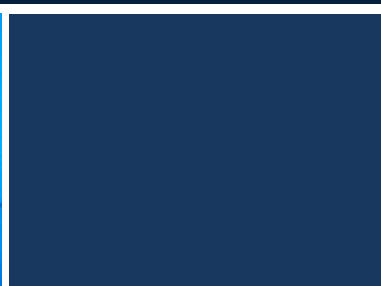


SCREENING DISCUSSION FOR THE VELELLA PROJECT GULF OF MEXICO – EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT



**Ken Riley, Lisa Wickliffe, James Morris, Jr. and
the NCCOS Coastal Aquaculture Spatial Team**

NOAA National Ocean Service
National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science





Agenda:

1. Velella Epsilon Project
2. Alternative Siting Analysis
3. Environmental Modeling

Additional topics:

1. Baseline Environmental Assessment
2. Environmental Monitoring Plan
3. Best Management Practices Plan



Our Aquaculture Mission

We develop decision support tools enabling coastal managers to safeguard the environment while supporting aquaculture development in the coastal zone.

Our Aquaculture Priorities

Environmental Interactions
Coastal Planning and Siting
Ecosystem Services





CASS Team Members



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Dr. Jud Kenworthy
Habitat Scientist



Dr. Najat El Moutchou
Agriculture Scientist



Troy Rezek,
Aquaculture Biologist



Jennica Hawkins
Aquaculture Biologist



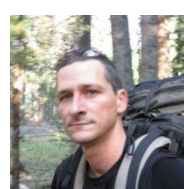
Amit Mahaltra
Marine Spatial



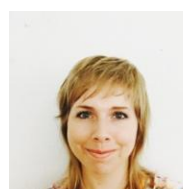
Doug Munroe
Admin Assistant



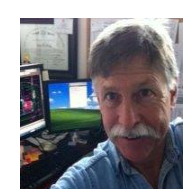
Chris Katalinas
Communications



Rodney Guajardo
Marine Spatial



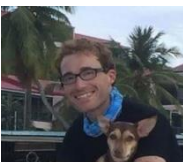
Ginny Crothers
Marine Spatial



Barry King, P.E.,
Engineer/Modeler



Gary Fisher
Biological Tech



Jon Jossart
Marine Spatial

Aquaculture Coastal Planning Tools

Marine Spatial Planning

- Regional ocean mappers
- State siting atlases
- Habitat digitizer (delineate habitats from geo-referenced images)

Examples:

- NOAA Digital Coast
- Gulf AquaMapper
- North Carolina Shellfish Aquaculture Siting Tool

Environmental Models

AquaModel

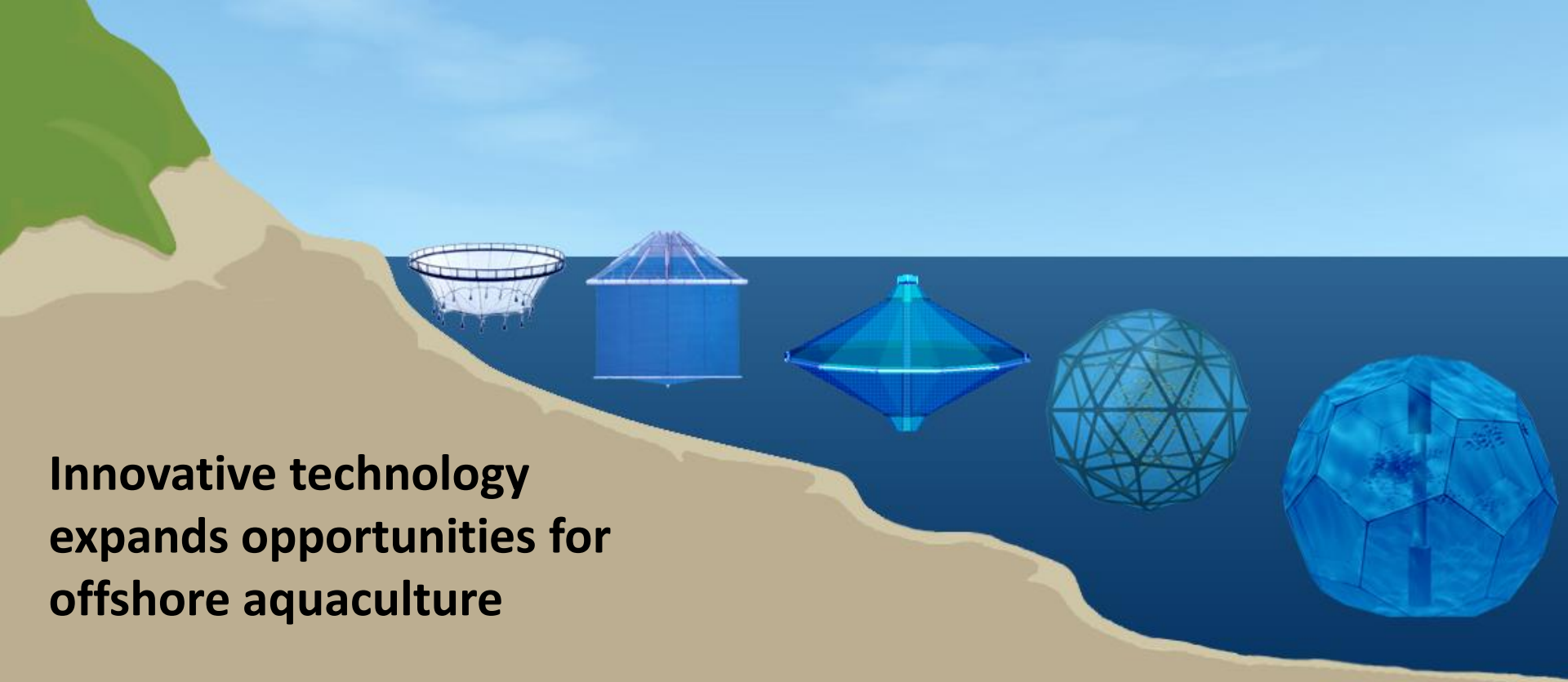
- *Hawaii*
- *California*
- *Gulf of Mexico*

Farm Aquaculture Research Model (FARM)

- *Long Island Sound*
- *Chesapeake Bay*

Tool and Data Center

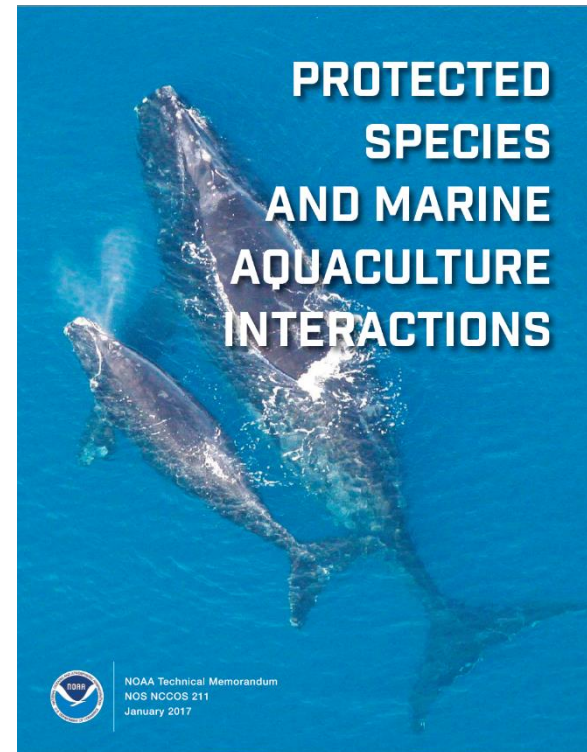
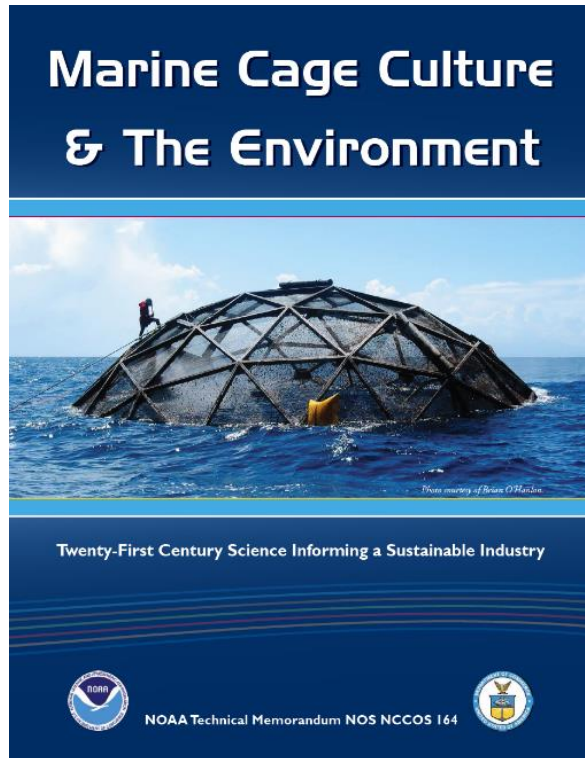
- Marine Cage Culture and the Environment
- Guidelines for Environmental Monitoring Offshore Aquaculture Operations
- Best Management Practices for Offshore Aquaculture in the US Caribbean



Innovative technology expands opportunities for offshore aquaculture

	Floating Flexible & Rigid	Floating Flexible	Submersible Flexible	Submersible Rigid	Emerging Technology
Deployment Distance	Nearshore	Open Ocean	Open Ocean	Open Ocean	Open Ocean
Cage Diameter (m)	10-50	40-60	40-60	15-45	> 75
Production (MT)	25-440	300-725	50-225	50-170	> 1,800

Environmental Interactions



Coastal Aquaculture Planning Portal (CAPP)



~80 aquaculture tools!

A Toolbox for Sustainable Aquaculture Coastal Planning and Siting

The Coastal Aquaculture Planning Portal (CAPP) is a toolbox of coastal planning tools designed to assist managers, planners, and industry with sustainable aquaculture development. This toolbox was developed in partnership with [Digital Coast](#), a product of the [NOAA](#) National Ocean Service [Office of Coastal Management](#).

Choose one of the subportals below.



SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE PLANNING & SITING



FINFISH AQUACULTURE PLANNING & SITING



ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTIONS



ENVIRONMENTAL MODELING

A NOAA scientific diver inspects an offshore netpen for finfish aquaculture. Credit: NOAA

New Aquamapper Tool Available for Aquaculture Siting in the Gulf of Mexico

Published on: 02/14/2018

Research Area(s): [Marine Spatial Ecology / Coastal Aquaculture Siting and Sustainability](#)

Region(s) of Study: [Waterbodies / Gulf of Mexico](#)

Primary Contact(s): james.morris@noaa.gov

NCCOS is excited to release the newly created [Gulf Aquamapper](#), a web-based tool for exploration, permitting and siting of offshore aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf Aquamapper is a geodatabase featuring aquaculture-relevant GIS data for biological, navigational, military, social, economic, physical and chemical parameters. The Gulf Aquamapper can be used as a one-stop screening solution for industry and coastal managers focused on identifying suitable and unsuitable areas for aquaculture development. With over 50 data types, the Gulf Aquamapper is the first spatial planning tool designed specifically for aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico. In particular, the tool aims to streamline the permitting process established by the [Gulf Aquaculture Fishery Management Plan \(PDF\)](#) in 2016, by reducing logistical and economic inefficiencies for coastal managers and aquaculture investors. Multiple data layers can be viewed simultaneously for a more comprehensive assessment of competing uses, and maps can be printed and shared to inform a more detailed site assessment to verify environmental conditions and establish site-specific designs.



A screenshot of the Gulf Aquamapper tool's online interface, which provides data to help with permitting and siting of potential offshore aquaculture ventures. Credit: NOAA

Alternative Siting Analysis Methods

- Determined farming parameters and area of interest
- Identified major constraints within the area of interest
- Developed alternatives that comply with farming parameters
- Rank alternatives based on number and interaction type

Velella Epsilon Farming Parameters:

Max distance from port(s): 50 miles

Depth requirements: $\geq 40\text{m}$

Substrate requirements: coarse sand

Min and max seawater temp: 18°C to 34°C

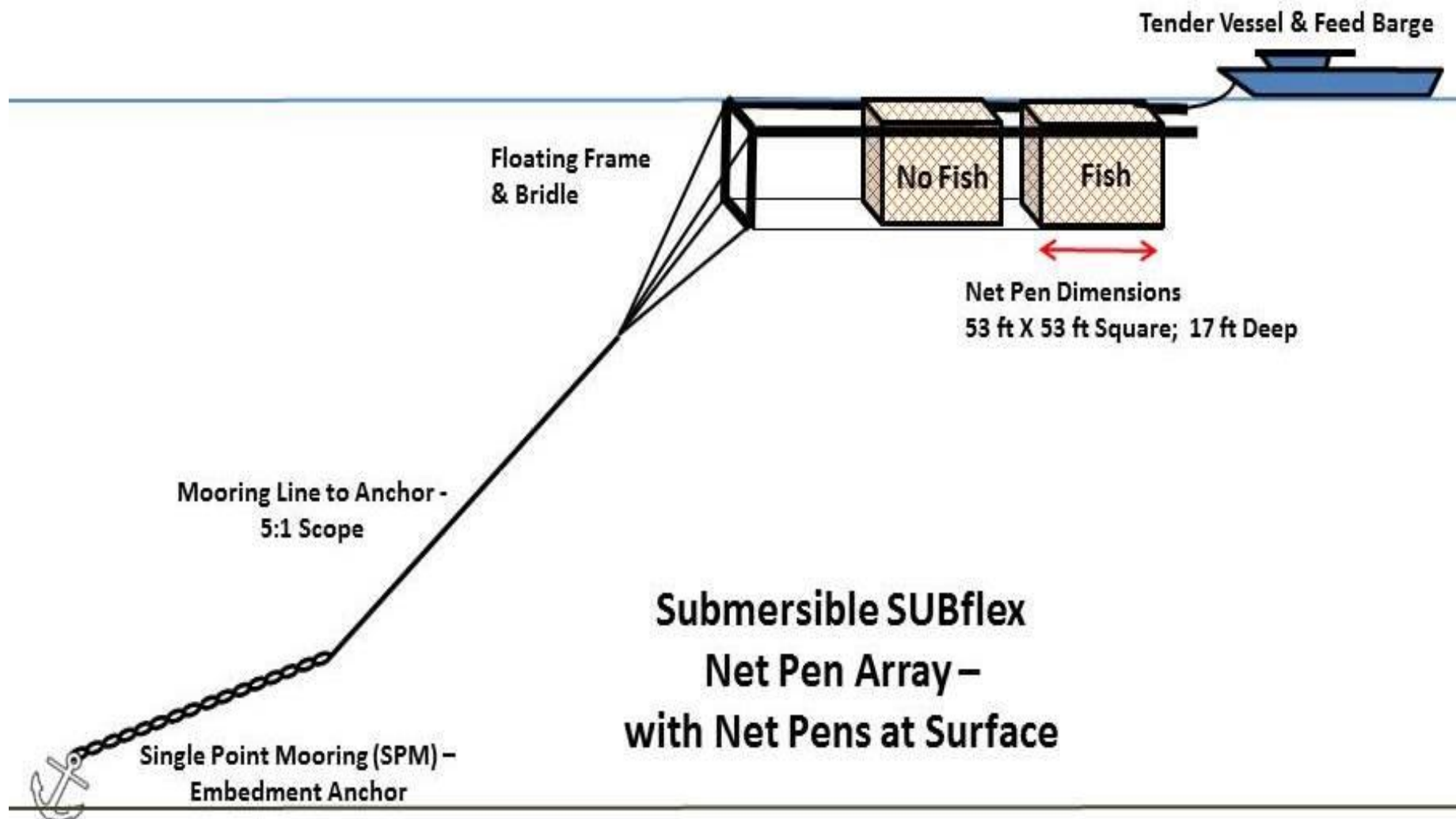
Min and max current velocity: $>0.1\text{ m/s}$ and $<0.8\text{ m/s}$

Max wave energy: not specified

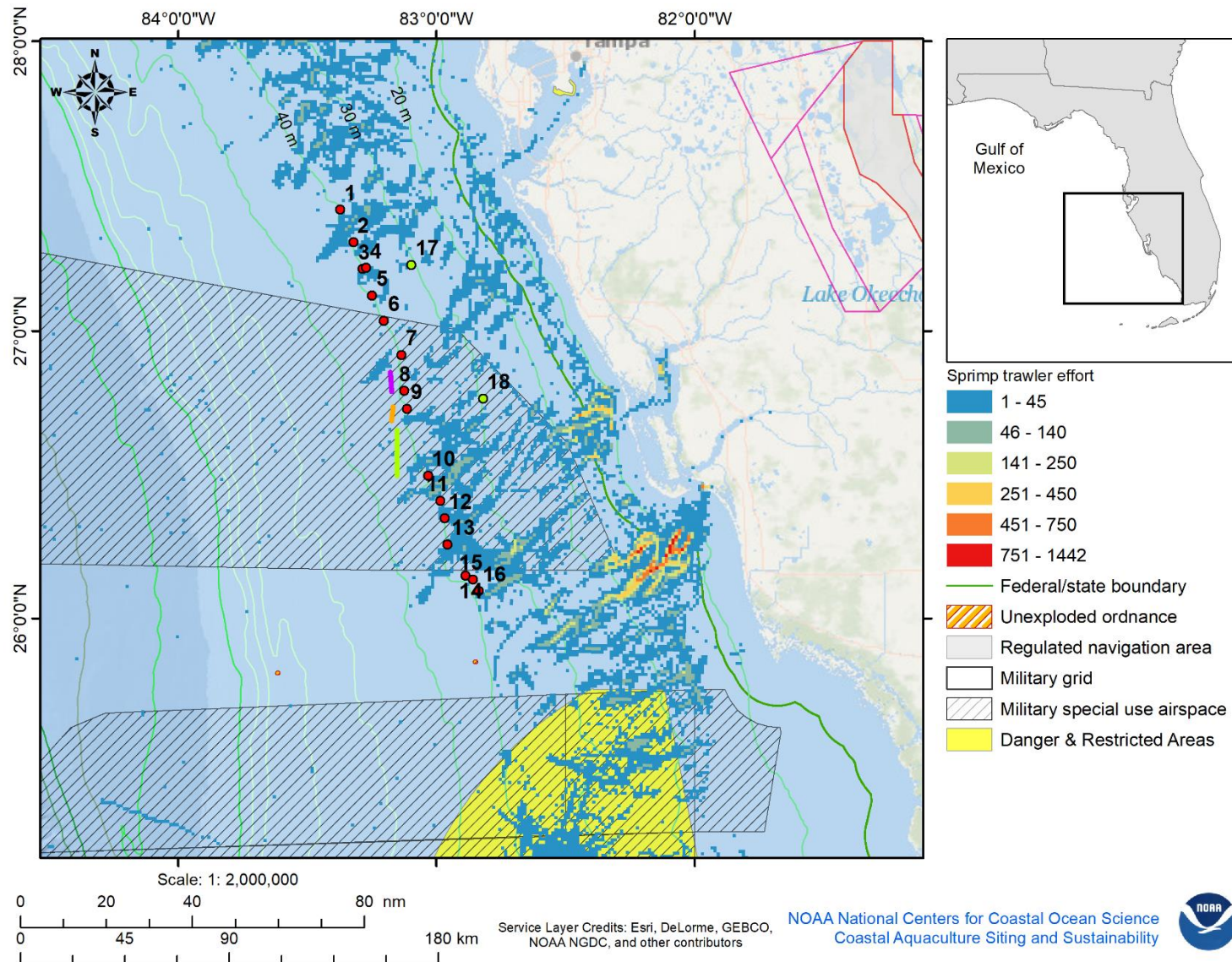
Project footprint (including anchorage): 0.3 km^2 (0.1 mi^2)

Max footprint (including navigation buffer): 2.0 km^2 (0.5 mi^2)

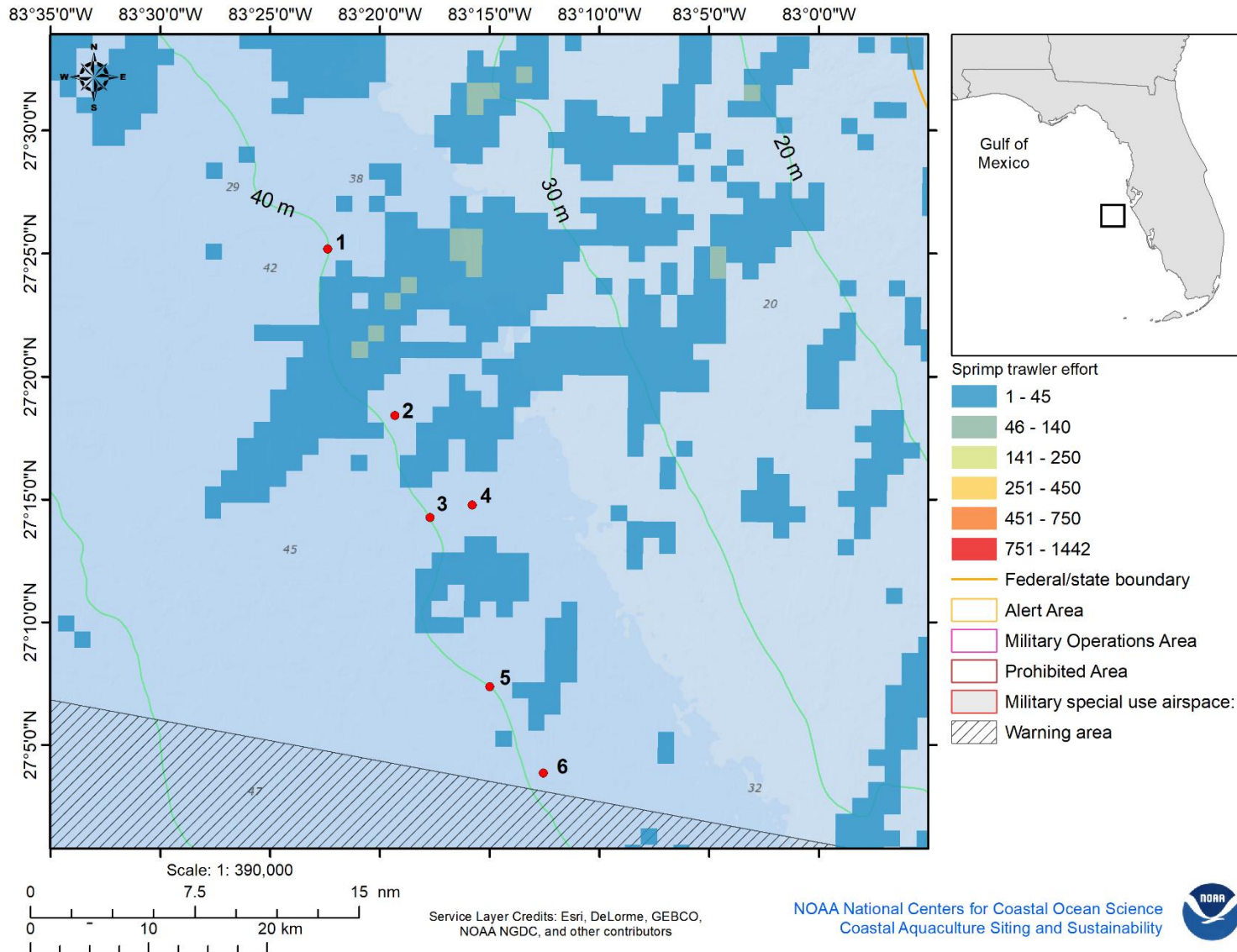




Alternative Sites – Military and Commercial Fishing

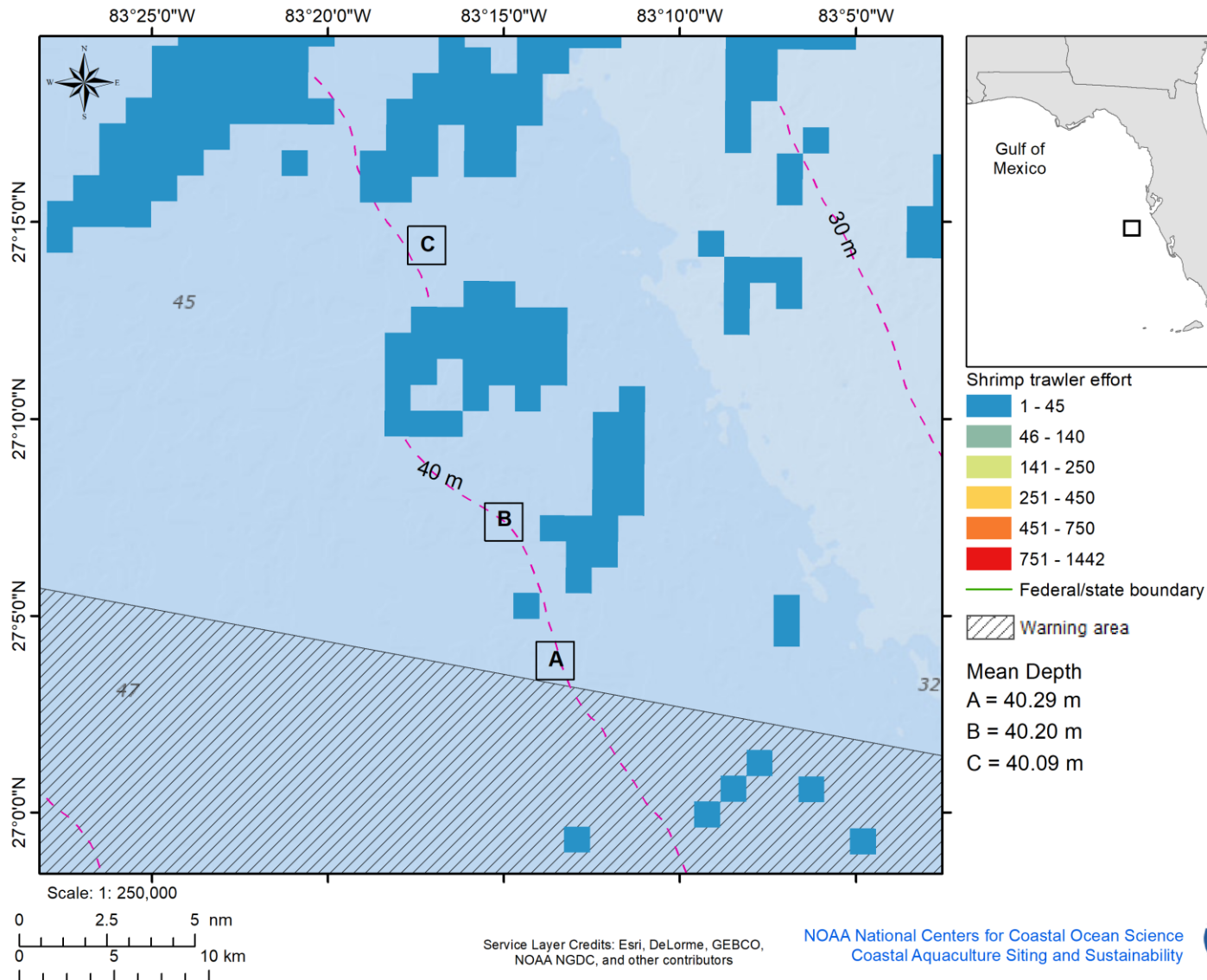


Alternative Sites – Military and Commercial Fishing



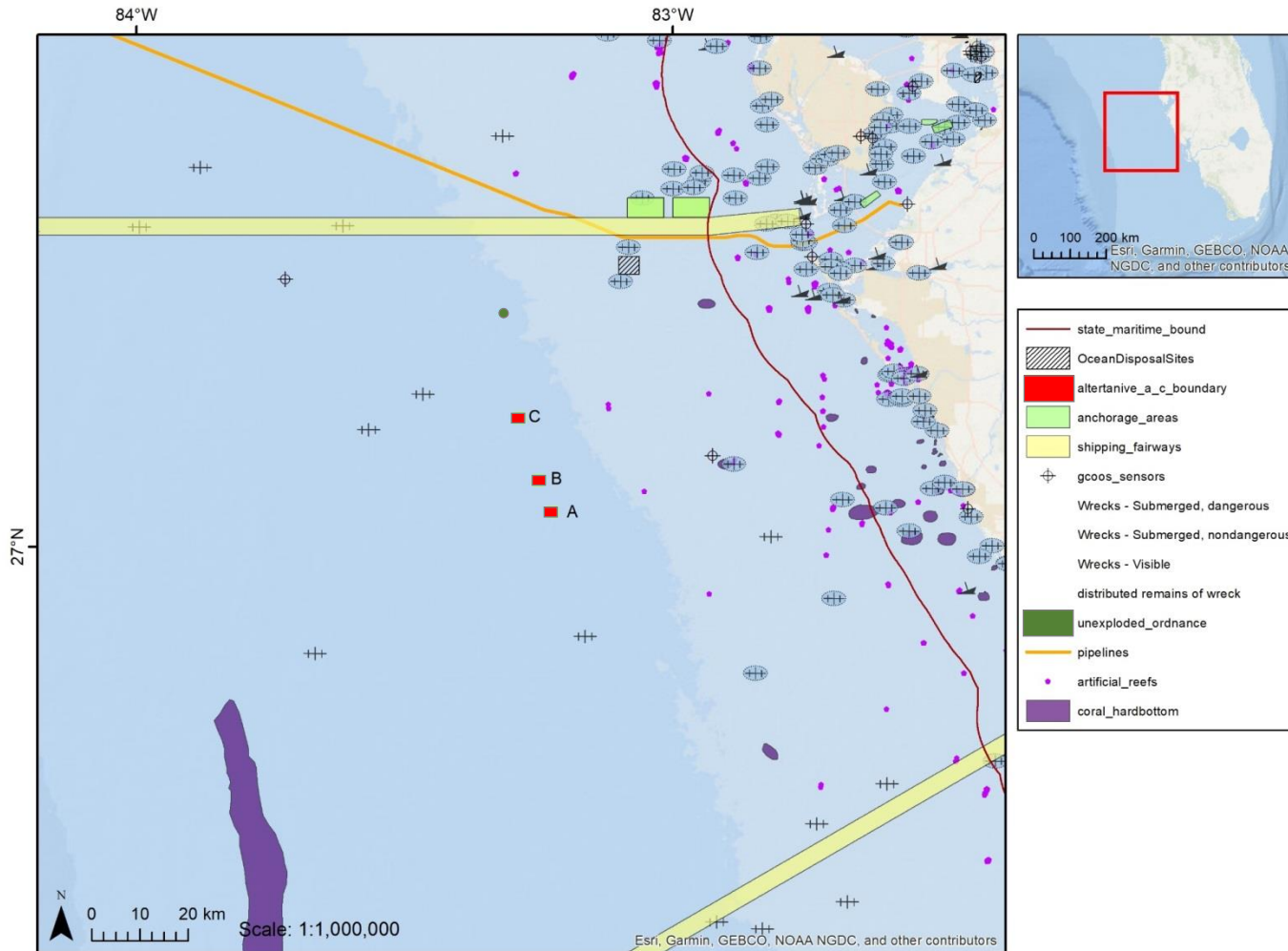
Most Desired Alternative Sites

Area of interest – 2 km²



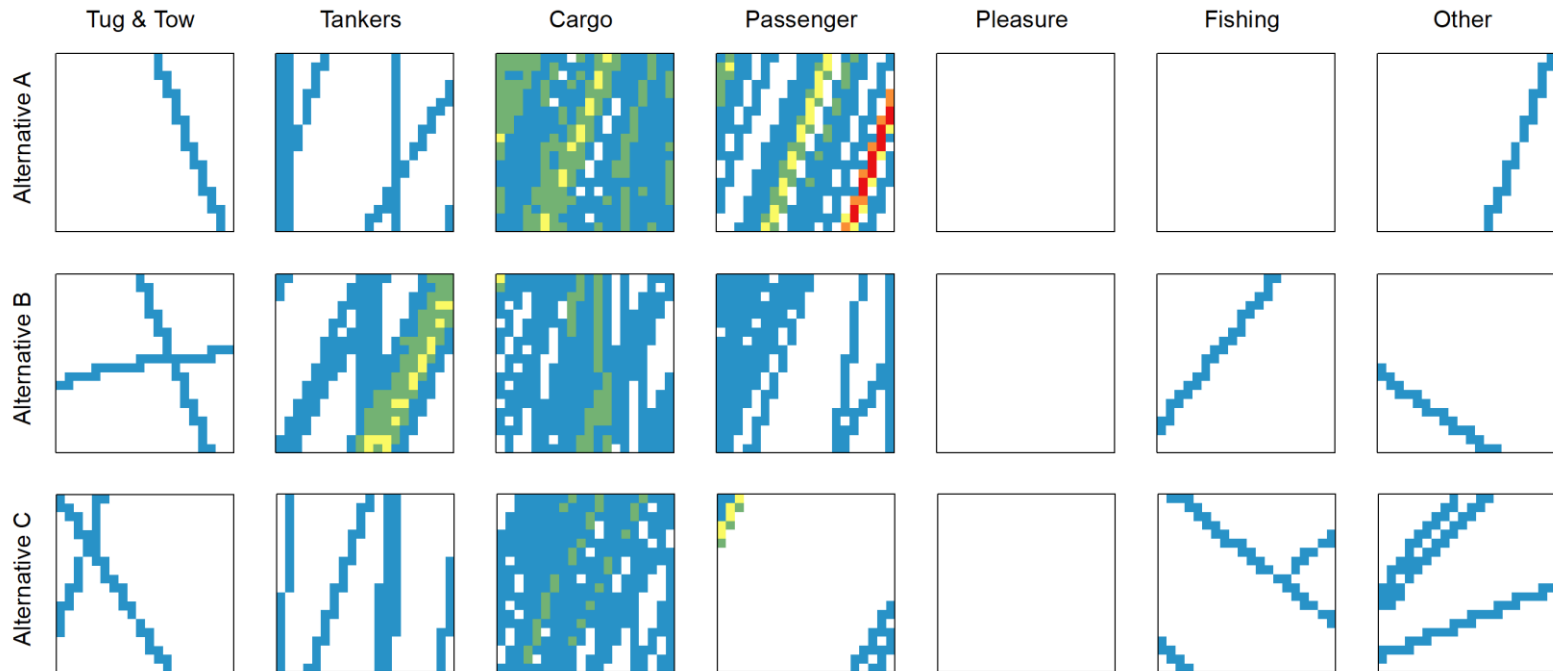
Most Desired Alternative Sites

Area of interest – 2 km²

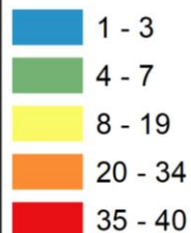


No overlap with ocean disposal sites, submarine cables, shipping lanes, anchorage areas, wrecks, or artificial reefs

Vessel Traffic (AIS Data – 2013)

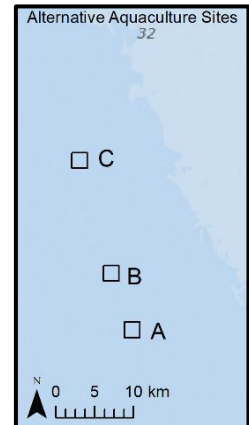


Count of Vessel Trips



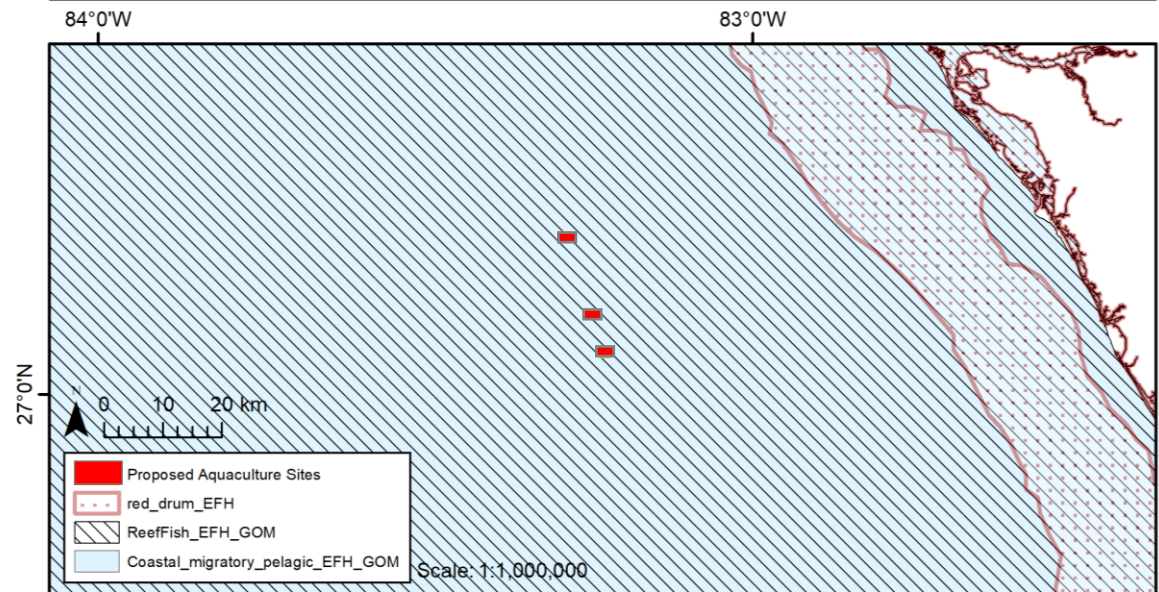
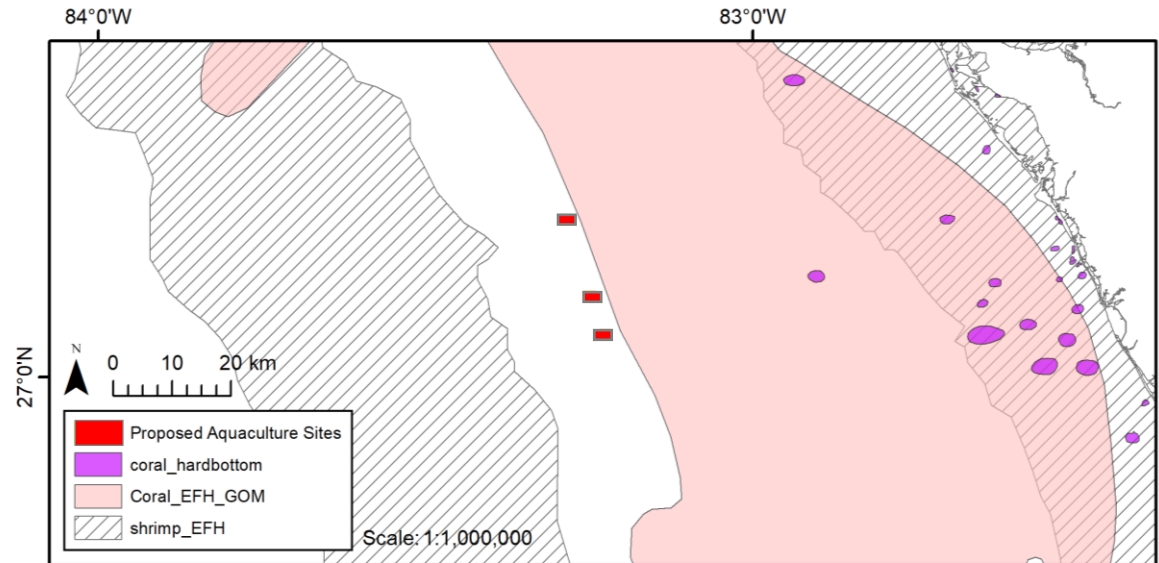
Each box is 2 km x 2 km, each cell is 100 m x 100 m
the count is of vessel trips is the sum of
all vessels that passed
through a cell during the course of a year.

Data is from MarineCadastre Zone 17 2013 AIS data.



Essential Fish Habitat

- Red Drum
- Snapper-Grouper Complex
- Coastal Migratory Species





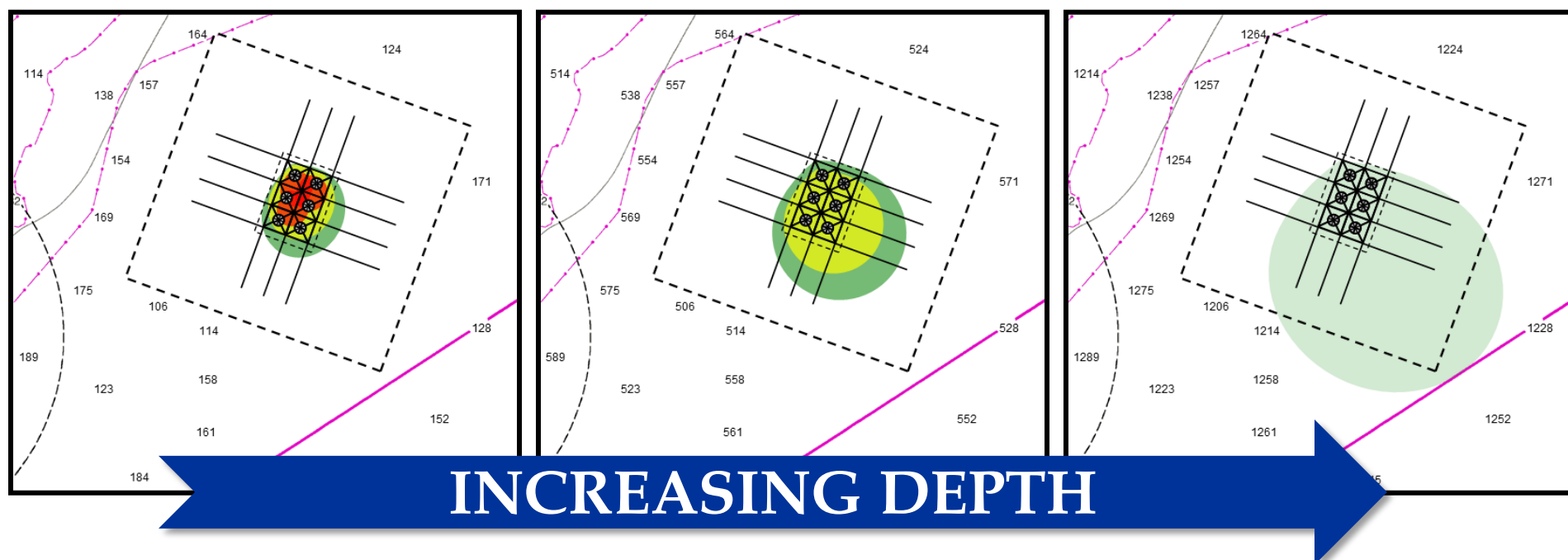
Agenda:

- ✓ 1. Velella Epsilon Project
- ✓ 2. Alternative Siting Analysis
- 3. Environmental Modeling

Additional topics:

- 1. Baseline Environmental Assessment
- 2. Environmental Monitoring Plan
- 3. Best Management Practices Plan

Environmental Modeling

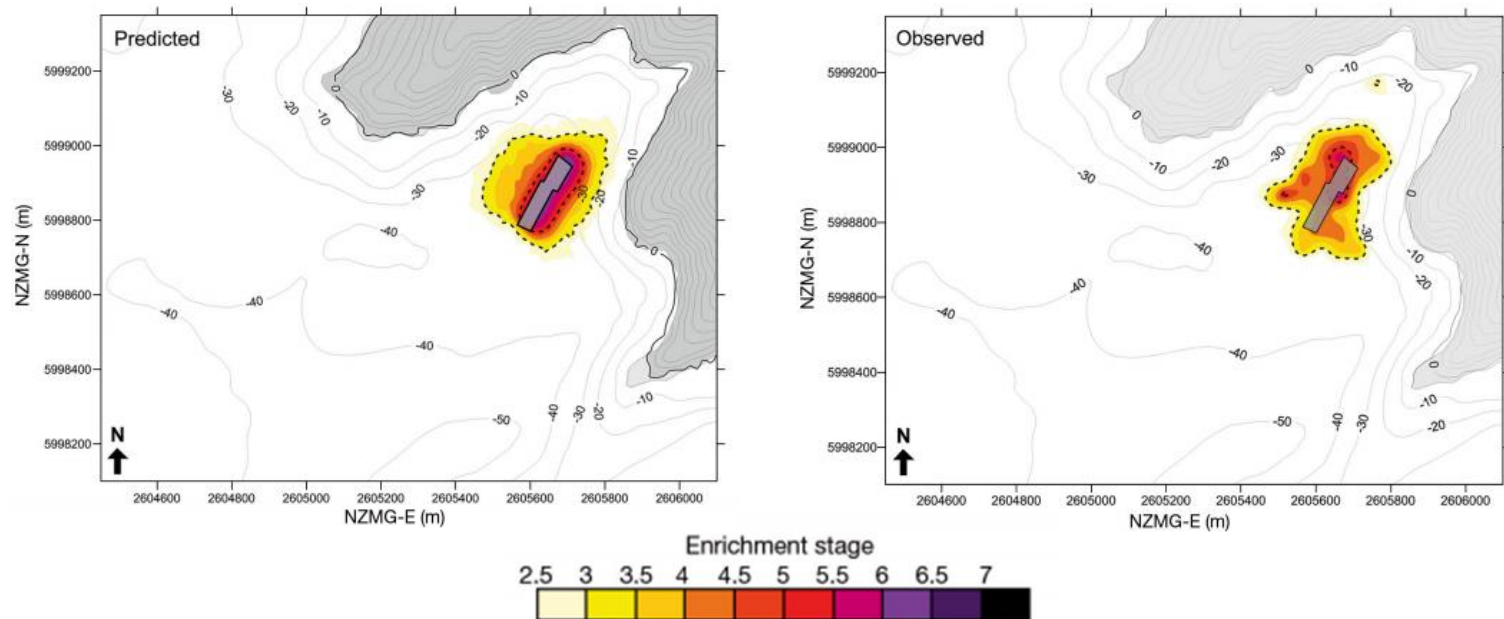


USING MODELS AS GUIDANCE FOR SITING AND ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

- Locations: Hawaii, California, Gulf of Mexico
- Production format: marine cage operations

DEPOMOD

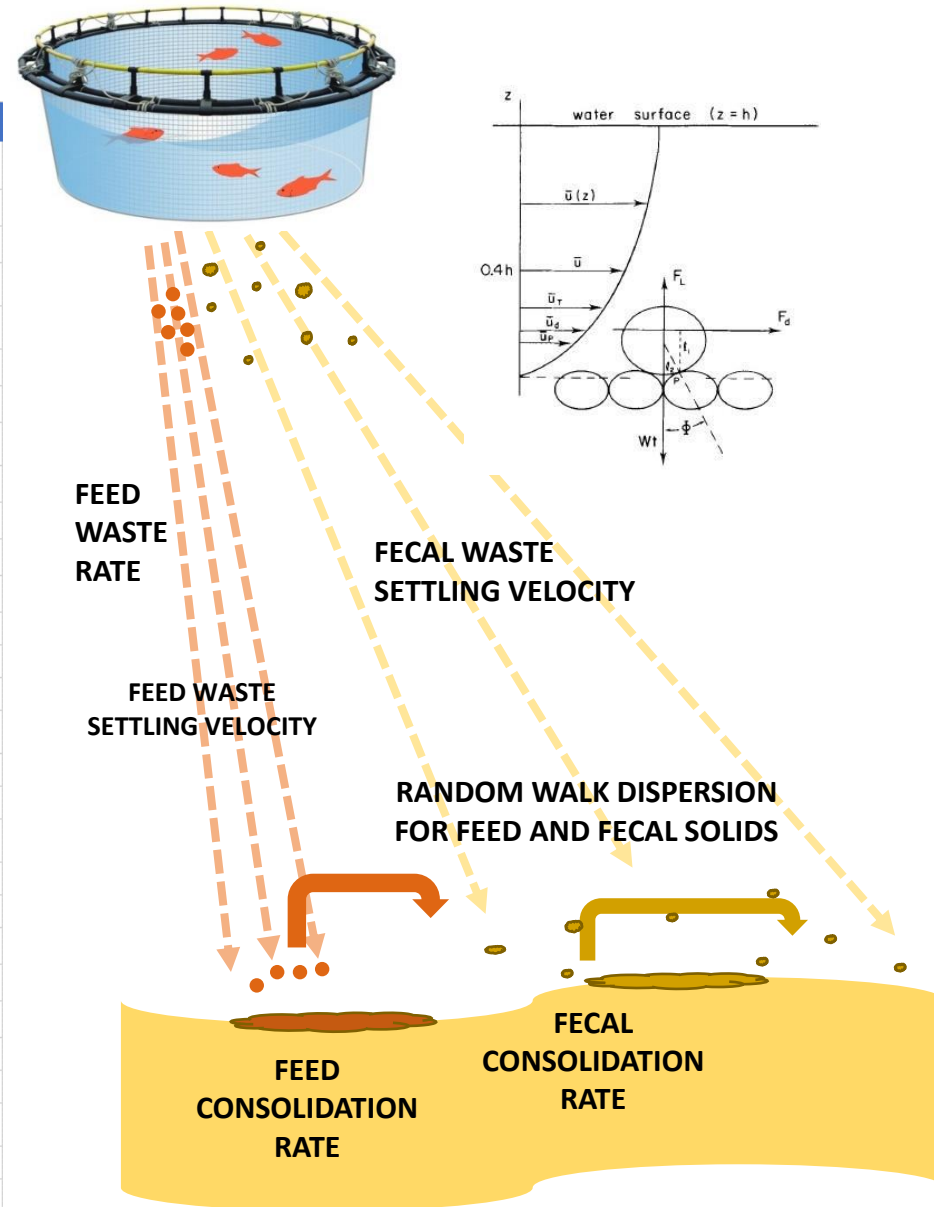
- Deposition model for feed and wastes
- Predicts benthic impacts through particle tracking and resuspension
- Temporal/spatial characteristics solids settlement
- Predicts worst-case scenario
- Validated and well published



(Adapted from Keeley et al 2013)

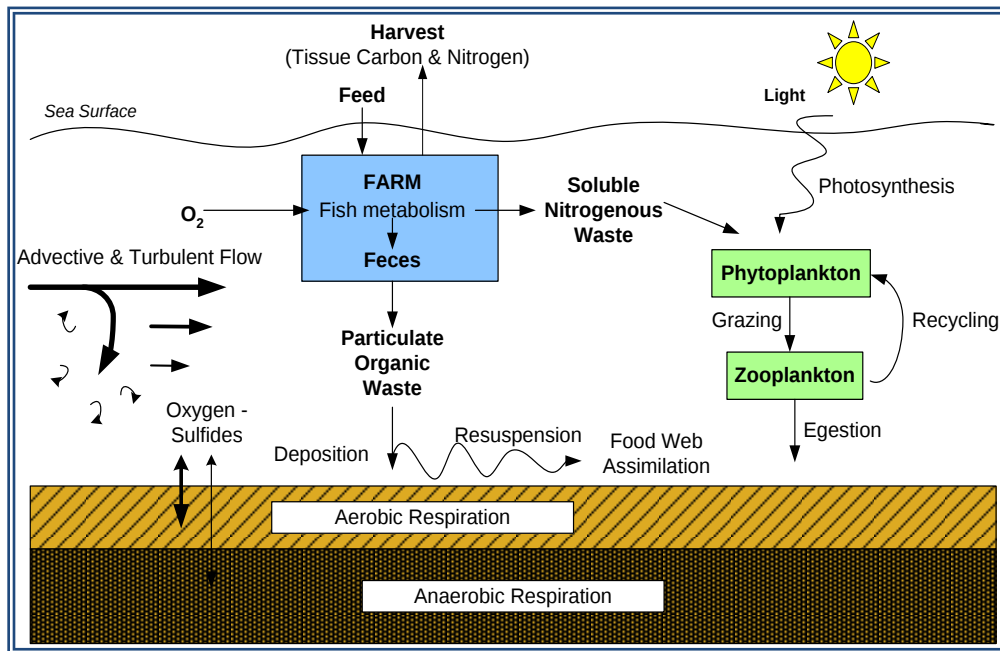
Model Parameters

Parameter	Value
Domain	1500 X 1500 m
Grid Generation Module	
Grid Cell Dimensions	25 X 25 m
Number of Major Grid Cells	60 X 60
Specific Feed Rate SFR	1.05%
Particle Tracking Module	
Material Type	g of Carbon
Release	Continuous
Particle Parameters	
Feed Water Content	9%
Feed Digestibility	85%
Feed Wasted as % of feed fed	3%
Carbon as % of Dry Feed Pellets (dry weight)	57%
Carbon as % of fecas (dry weight)	30%
Settling Velocity of Feed Pellets (1 particle group)	9 cm/s
Settling Velocity of feces (1 particle group: +/- SD)	1.49 cm/s
Current Velocity Data	
Current Velocity Data	Recorded
Current Velocity time step	1 hour
Turbulence model	
Random Walk	Yes
Dispersion coefficient x	0.1 m ² /s
Dispersion coefficient y	0.1 m ² /s
Dispersion coefficient z	0.001 m ² /s
Particle Trajectory model	
Number of particles (for each particle type, per cage,	1
Trajectory evaluation accuracy (model time step)	High (60 s)
Resuspension module	
Number of loops to run model	1
Consolidation time of Particles	40 days





AquaModel provides a real-time, three-dimensional simulation of the growth and metabolic activity of penned fish as well as the associated flow and transformation of nutrients, oxygen, and particulate wastes in adjacent waters and sediments

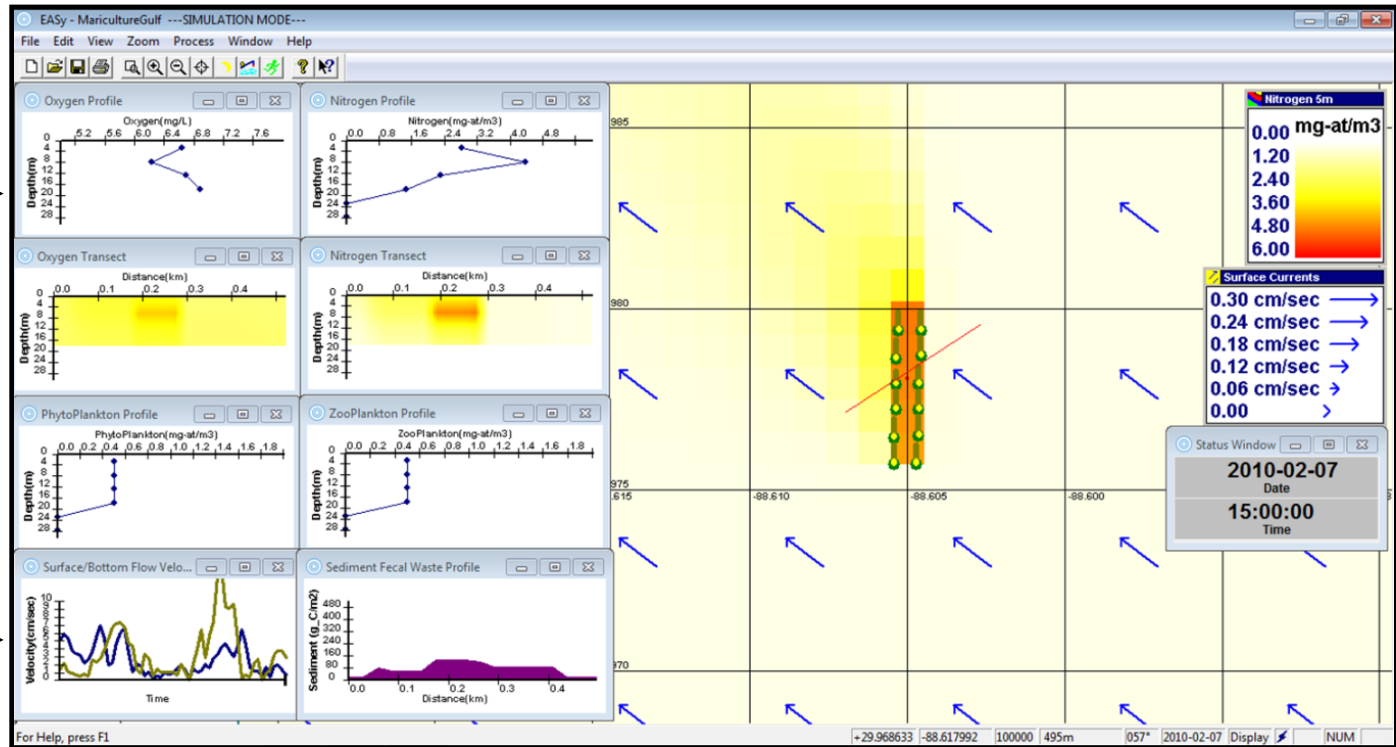


AquaModel Output

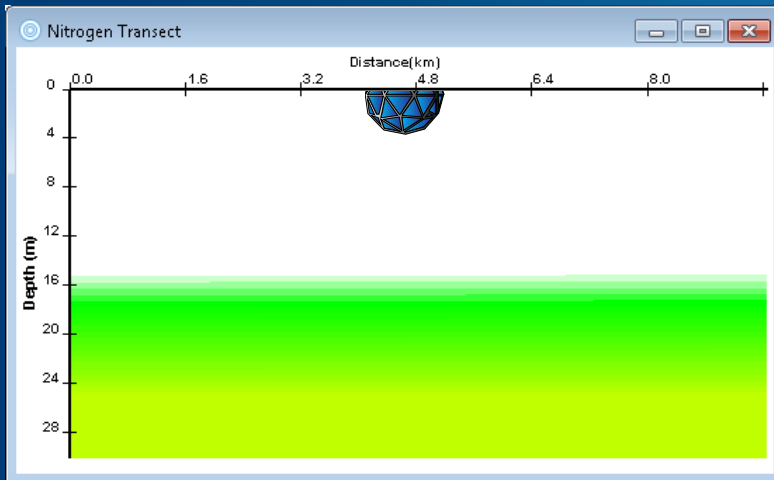
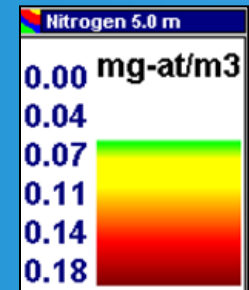
Depth
profile
plots



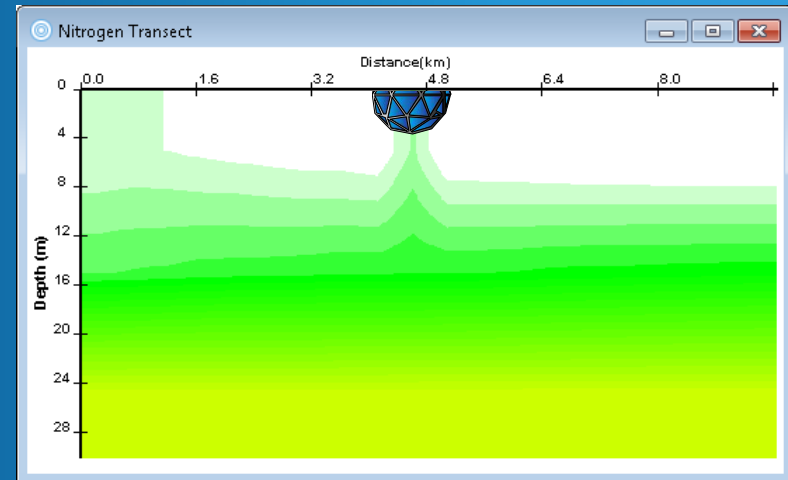
Time
series
plots



Dissolved nitrogen (5-m depth)



Time: 3 months
Biomass: 2,100 kg
Feed: 45 kg/d



Time: 10 months
Biomass: 12,000 kg
Feed: 98 kg/d



Agenda:

- ✓ 1. Velella Epsilon Project
- ✓ 2. Alternative Siting Analysis
- ✓ 3. Environmental Modeling

Additional topics:

- 1. Baseline Environmental Assessment
- 2. Environmental Monitoring Plan
- 3. Best Management Practices Plan

Thanks for Partnering With Us!

Questions?

Contact: Dr. Ken Riley

NOS/NCCOS Coastal

Aquaculture Siting and
Sustainability

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Dr. James Morris
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Dr. Lisa Wickliffe
NOAA NOS

APPENDIX D
Guidance and Procedures for
Genetic Requirements for Gulf Aquaculture Permits

Guidance and Procedures for Genetic Requirements for Gulf Aquaculture Permits

February 12th, 2016

Purpose

To provide information on the requirements for broodstock sourcing, as well as information on genetic improvement techniques, for cultured juveniles stocked into offshore aquaculture facilities in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf). The Fishery Management Plan for Regulating Offshore Marine Aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico (FMP) and implementing regulations at 50 CFR § 622, Subpart F contain requirements pertaining to broodstock and cultured juveniles aimed at ensuring that escaped cultured animals present minimal genetic risk to the local wild stock from which they originated.

Background

NOAA Fisheries has the authority to issue Gulf Aquaculture Permits (GAPs) under the FMP. Final regulations for this FMP can be found at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/aquaculture/documents/pdfs/gulf_aquaculture_fmp_fr.pdf. The FMP, which was developed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, requires a GAP for aquaculture operations in federal waters of the Gulf that intend to grow species managed by the Council (with the exception of shrimp and corals, which are not allowed).

A list of species allowed for culture in the Gulf can be found in at <http://gulfcouncil.org/Beta/GMFMCWeb/downloads/species%20managed.pdf>. **Note** that shrimp and coral species **cannot** be cultured under the FMP and regulations.

Requirements for Gulf Aquaculture Permit Holders

A. Broodstock Sourcing

Under the regulations, applicants must certify that all broodstock or progeny of such broodstock will be or were originally harvested from U.S. waters of the Gulf, will be or were harvested from the same population or sub-population that occurs where the facility is located,

and that no genetically engineered or transgenic animals will be used or possessed at the aquaculture facility.

The terms population and subpopulation are defined in the NOAA Fisheries Glossary¹ (Glossary) as follows:

Population is defined as a number of individuals of a particular species that live within a defined area. It is equivalent to the term stock. Stock is defined in both the Glossary and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (amended 2007; §3, 104-297(42)). Therein, a **stock** is 1) a part of a fish population usually with a particular migration pattern, specific spawning grounds, and subject to a distinct fishery or 2) a species, subspecies, geographical grouping, or other category of fish capable of management as a unit.

Subpopulation is defined as geographically or otherwise distinct groups in the population between which there is little exchange.

Other relevant fishery terms not defined here that may provide further context, if desired, include species, management (or conservation) unit (often equivalent to stock), and evolutionarily significant unit (see also distinct population segment).

Additional broodstock requirements and restrictions include:

- Permittees must submit certification to NOAA Fisheries that all original broodstock have been harvested from U.S. waters of the Gulf.
- Each individual brood animal must be marked or tagged (e.g., via a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT), coded wire, dart, or internal anchor tag) at the hatchery to allow for identification of those individuals used in spawning.
- Permittees must submit fin clips for each individual brood animal to NOAA Fisheries. If permittees do not own or operate the hatchery, they must obtain a signed certification from the owner(s) of the hatchery indicating that this requirement has been met and furnish a copy of this certification to NOAA Fisheries. Procedures for procuring and submitting fin clips can be found in Appendix B.
- Permittees must submit certification to NOAA Fisheries that no genetically engineered or transgenic animals are used or possessed at the aquaculture facility.² A **genetically**

¹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) (2006) NOAA Fisheries Glossary, Revised Edition. United States Department of Commerce, NOAA, Technical Memorandum NMFS-F/SPO-69.

² *Aquaculture facility* means an installation or structure, including any aquaculture system(s) (including moorings), hatcheries, equipment, and associated infrastructure used to hold, propagate, and rear allowable aquaculture species in the Gulf EEZ under authority of a GAP.

engineered animal is defined as an animal modified by recombinant DNA (rDNA) techniques, including the entire lineage of animals that contain the modification. The term genetically engineered animal can refer to both animals with heritable rDNA constructs and animals with non-heritable rDNA constructs (e.g. modifications intended for gene therapy). A **transgenic** animal is defined as an animal whose genome contains a nucleotide sequence that has been intentionally modified in vitro, and the progeny of such an animal. **Note** that an animal that has been altered such that its ploidy has been changed (e.g., a triploid animal) is not considered to be genetically engineered, provided that that animal does not contain genes that have been introduced or otherwise altered by modern biotechnology.

- F₁ individuals (i.e., first generation offspring of original wild-caught broodstock) can be used for broodstock purposes without further justification. Permittees who wish to use F₂₊ individuals (i.e., second or higher generation offspring bred in captivity) for broodstock purposes must first submit a genetics management plan to NOAA Fisheries for review and approval. This plan must include a risk assessment. Supporting information may include results from modeling (e.g., OMEGA³), pedigree analysis (e.g., using P-LOCI⁴ to track parentage), population genetic analyses, certification of sterility in the stocked animals (e.g., via triploidy), or other applicable data.
- When using the offspring of original wild caught broodstock as broodstock, permittees must still abide by all requirements outlined above and in the regulations.

NOAA Fisheries anticipates that the following four species will be initially targeted for offshore aquaculture in the Gulf: almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*), cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*), red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*), and red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*). Appendix A includes guidelines for sourcing broodstock for these species in relation to the geographic location of the aquaculture facility. These guidelines are based on the best available science at this time and may be modified in the future.

³ The Offshore Mariculture Escapes Genetics Assessment (OMEGA) model is freely available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/aquaculture/science/omega_model_homepage.html.

⁴ Matson S.E., M.D. Camara, W. Eichert, M.A. Banks. 2008. P-LOCI: a computer program for choosing the most efficient set of loci for parentage assignment. Molecular Ecology Resources 8:765-768.

B. Genetic Improvement Techniques

Genetic improvement is a process through which the incidence or expression of desirable traits (e.g., improved growth, higher product quality, resistance to stress or diseases) are increased in a cultured population.

Genetic improvement programs that include the use of genetic engineering or transgenics are **prohibited** (see definitions of *genetically engineered* and *transgenic* above). Allowable genetic improvement techniques may include one or more of the following: selective breeding, chromosome manipulation, hybridization, and sex control. These terms are defined and described below.

1) *Selective breeding* is a process by which animals are intentionally bred to produce progeny with desirable traits. Selective breeding is an often long-term process, with potentially permanent heritable genetic gains, as each generation of broodstock is selected based on desired characteristics and individuals are interbred in a controlled manner. Selective breeding programs commonly focus on traits such as growth rate, survival, stress tolerance, disease resistance, and meat quality and yield.

2) *Chromosome manipulation* is a modification of the number, identity, or origin of chromosomes within somatic or sex (typically egg) cells. Examples of this technique include induction of polyploidy and maintaining inbred lines.

a. Polyploidy

Triploidy is the most commonly produced polyploid state in aquaculture. Triploid animals contain three sets of chromosomes in their somatic cells. Triploid animals are often sterile, which can be an effective management tool for protecting wild populations by preventing reproduction with farmed conspecifics. Moreover, with triploid-induced sterility, physiological resources are used for bodily maintenance and growth rather than producing eggs and sperm, which can result in improved growth, survival, and meat quality.

b. Inbred lines

The making of inbred lines involves the creation of genetically identical or nearly identical populations. This technique can be used to produce large numbers of offspring with specific desirable characteristics in one generation by making multiple copies of high performance or selectively bred individuals. Maintenance of inbred lines may be coupled with hybridization (see below) to produce superior characteristics in an F_1 generation (i.e., hybrid vigor).

3) Hybridization occurs when genetically distinct individuals are crossed to produce heterozygous offspring, which contain two different alleles at a given gene or genes. Hybridization between different breeds, strains, or varieties of the same species (intraspecific) is allowed. Hybridization between species (interspecific) is prohibited. Hybridization may result in heterosis, or hybrid vigor, in which heterozygous offspring display enhanced performance (usually growth). Because heterosis requires hybridization, its effect is often restricted to the F_1 generation and not heritable. Therefore, ensuring a consistent supply of heterotic F_1 individuals requires the maintenance of multiple strains at the aquaculture operation.

4) Sex control means manipulating sex determination or sex ratio, typically with skew toward a monosex culture. Controlling sex may allow for more efficient exploitation of desirable sex-specific traits.

APPENDIX A: Species-Specific Requirements for Sourcing Wild Broodstock⁵

These guidelines are based on the best available science at this time and may be modified in the future if additional scientific data becomes available. For species that are allowed to be cultured under the regulations, but are not specified in this Appendix, permittees must provide NOAA Fisheries with information supporting the proposed collection range. NOAA Fisheries will use this information to determine whether or not the proposed collection range is suitable.

Permittees must submit a *Request to Harvest Broodstock* form to NOAA Fisheries at least 30 days prior to each time a permittee or their designee intends to harvest broodstock from the EEZ or state waters. NOAA Fisheries must approve any broodstock harvest activities before harvest can occur. This form can be found at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/operations_management_information_services/constituency_services_branch/permits/permit_apps/.

Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*)

There are no studies of population genetic structure in almaco jack in the Gulf or elsewhere. Other commonly cultured seriolids include Japanese amberjack (*S. quinqueradiata*), greater amberjack (*S. dumerili*), and yellowtail amberjack (*S. lalandi*). Population genetic studies in these species show little to no divergence within water masses, similar to other pelagic finfish, such as tuna and billfish. For example, Gold and Richardson (1998a⁶) found evidence of two stocks of greater amberjack off the southeastern U.S., one in the northern Gulf and a second along the western Atlantic coast. Thus, research to date in closely related species indicates that almaco jack within the Gulf may be a single panmictic population.

Collection Range: Wild almaco jack broodstock may be collected within U.S. state or federal waters of the Gulf.

⁵ Broodstock collection requirements listed for almaco jack, cobia, red drum, and red snapper only.

⁶ Gold JR, Richardson LR (1998a) Population structure in greater amberjack, *Seriola dumerili*, from the Gulf of Mexico and western Atlantic Ocean. Fish Bull 96:767-778.

Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*)

Gold et al. (2013)⁷ found no evidence of structure among western US Atlantic and northern Gulf populations. Thus, research to date indicates that cobia within the Gulf may be a single panmictic population.

Collection Range: Wild cobia broodstock may be collected within U.S. state or federal waters of the Gulf.

Red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*)

Gold et al. (1993⁸, 1994⁹, 1999¹⁰) and Seyoum et al. (2000¹¹) reported weak genetic divergence between Atlantic and Gulf populations. In the northern Gulf alone, Gold et al. (1999¹²) found isolation by distance (positive correlation between genetic and geographic distance), possibly attributable to sex-specific behaviors, and suggested a geographic neighborhood size relative to genetic migration of 500-600 km. Gold and Turner (2002¹³) reported similar results, with a neighborhood size of 700-900 km. Most recently, tagging studies in the Tampa Bay region indicated fairly high spawning site fidelity (~60%) and natal homing, although there was some mixing with a population 132 km to the south and another ~30-40% of tagged fish presumably spawned out of the range of monitoring.¹⁴ Although this level of migration outside of the monitored region would homogenize allele frequencies across a broader geographic range, the known migratory radius is therefore 132 km. Thus, research to date suggests red drum display a minimum geographic neighborhood size of roughly 260 km.

Collection Range: Wild red drum broodstock may be collected within an 82 mile (~132 km radius) of the site of the permitted aquaculture operation.

⁷ Gold JR, Giresi MM, Renshaw MA, Gwo J-C (2013) Population genetic comparisons among cobia from the northern Gulf of Mexico, U.S. western Atlantic, and southeast Asia. *N Am J Aquacult* 75:57-63.

⁸ Gold JR, Richardson LR, Furman C, King TL (1993) Mitochondrial DNA differentiation and population structure in red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) from the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean. *Mar Biol* 116: 175-185.

⁹ Gold JR, King TL, Richardson LR, Bohlmeier DA, Matlock GC (1994) Allozyme differentiation within and between red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) from the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean. *J Fish Biol* 44: 567-590.

¹⁰ Gold JR, Richardson LR, Turner TF (1999) Temporal stability and spatial divergence of mitochondrial DNA haplotype frequencies in red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) from coastal regions of the western Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. *Mar Biol* 133:593-602.

¹¹ Seyoum S, Tringali MD, Bert TM, McElroy D, Stokes R (2000) An analysis of genetic population structure in red drum, *Sciaenops ocellatus*, based on mtDNA control region sequences. *Fish Bull* 98:127-138.

¹² Gold JR, Richardson LR, Turner TF (1999) Temporal stability and spatial divergence of mitochondrial DNA haplotype frequencies in red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) from coastal regions of the western Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. *Mar Biol* 133:593-602.

¹³ Gold JR, Turner TF (2002) Population structure of red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) in the northern Gulf of Mexico, as inferred from variation in nuclear-encoded microsatellites. *Mar Biol* 140:249-265.

¹⁴ S Lowerre-Barbieri, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, personal communication.

Red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*)

Several studies have found no evidence of red snapper population genetic structure in the Gulf (e.g., Gold and Richardson 1998b¹⁵, Garber et al. 2004¹⁶, Pruett et al. 2005¹⁷) despite evidence of relative site fidelity of adults and homing in juveniles from tagging (e.g. Szedlmayer 1997¹⁸, Workman et al. 2002¹⁹). More recent work employing genetics, tagging, and otolith microchemistry, however, suggests a metapopulation stock structure in which semi-independent, local populations are variably connected by migration, extinction, and recolonization (Pruett et al. 2005²⁰, Patterson 2007²¹, Saillant et al. 2010²²; see also Smedbol et al. 2002²³). Patterson (2007), for example, found that while many adults display site fidelity, some may move hundreds of km, and larger fish moved greater distances than smaller and younger fish. These non-equilibrium conditions may homogenize allele frequencies among populations, accounting for the lack of stock structure in earlier research.

Stock assessments for red snapper treat the species as two relatively independent stocks separated by the Mississippi River²⁴, a conclusion putatively based on otolith elemental signatures (Patterson et al. 1998²⁵; Cowan et al. 2002²⁶; Patterson et al. 2008²⁷). However, this is based on water mass signatures and may not reflect smaller

¹⁵ Gold JR, Richardson LR (1998b) Genetic homogeneity among geographic samples of snappers and groupers: evidence of continuous gene flow? *Proc Gulf Caribbean Res Inst* 50:709-726.

¹⁶ Garber, AF, Tringali MD, Stuck KC (2004) Population structure and variation in red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) from the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Coast of Florida as determined from mitochondrial DNA control region sequence. *Mar Biotechnol* 6:175-185.

¹⁷ Pruett CL, Saillant E, Gold JR (2005) Historical population demography of red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) from the northern Gulf of Mexico based on analysis of sequences of mitochondrial DNA. *Mar Biol* 147:593-602.

¹⁸ Szedlmayer ST (1997) Ultrasonic telemetry of red snapper, *Lutjanus campechanus*, at artificial reef sites in the northeast Gulf of Mexico. *Copeia* 1997:846-850.

¹⁹ Workman I, Shah A, Foster D, Hataway B (2002) Habitat preferences and site fidelity of juvenile red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*). *ICES J Mar Sci* 54:543-550.

²⁰ Pruett CL, Saillant E, Gold JR (2005) Historical population demography of red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) from the northern Gulf of Mexico based on analysis of sequences of mitochondrial DNA. *Mar Biol* 147:593-602.

²¹ Patterson III WF (2007) A review of movement in Gulf of Mexico red snapper: implications for population structure. *Am Fish Soc Symp* 60:221-235.

²² Saillant E, Bradfield SC, Gold JR (2010) Genetic variation and spatial autocorrelation among young-of-the-year red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) in the northern Gulf of Mexico. *ICES J Mar Sci* 67:1240-1250.

²³ Smedbol RK, McPherson A, Hansen MM, Kenchington E (2002) Myths and moderation in marine 'metapopulations'? *Fish Fisheries* 3:20-35.

²⁴ C Porch, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center, personal communication.

²⁵ Patterson III WF, Cowan Jr JH, Graham EY, Lyons WB (1998) Otolith microchemical fingerprints of age-0 red snapper, *Lutjanus campechanus*, from the northern Gulf of Mexico. *Gulf of Mexico Science* 16:83-91.

²⁶ Cowan Jr JH, Woods M, Patterson III W, Nieland D (2002) Otolith microchemistry (and reproductive biology) *In*: Stock structure of red snapper in the northern Gulf of Mexico: is their management as a single stock justified based on spatial and temporal patterns of genetic variation, otolith microchemistry, and growth rates. National Marine Fisheries Service, Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN) Grant NA87FF0425.

²⁷ Patterson III WF, Cowan Jr JH, Wilson CA, Chen Z (2008) Temporal and spatial variability in juvenile red snapper otolith elemental signatures in the northern Gulf of Mexico. *Trans Am Fish Soc* 137:521-532.

scale population heterogeneity. In terms of genetics, Saillant et al. (2010) reported significant spatial autocorrelation among young-of-the-year at ~50-100 km, with a potential isolation by distance effect at < 100 km and patchiness at > 100 km, which indicates largely local recruitment with restricted dispersal, and concluded that management should maintain local spawning populations throughout the Gulf.

Most recently, Gold and Portnoy (2014²⁸) found genetic heterogeneity among northern Gulf populations, indicating that the species is not a single panmictic stock. Thus, research to date suggests red snapper display a metapopulation stock structure, although the structuring is weak and geographic stock boundaries have yet to be determined, with the most definitive genetic research suggesting greater potential for genetic similarity within a neighborhood of roughly 200 km.

Collection Range: Wild red snapper may be collected within a 62 mile (~100 km) radius of the site of the permitted aquaculture operation.

²⁸ Gold JR, Portnoy DS (2014) Population structure and genetic demography of red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) in the U.S. south Atlantic and connectivity with red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. Southeast Data, Assessment & Review (SEDAR) Report SEDAR41-RD32.

APPENDIX B: Procedures for Collecting Broodstock Fin Clip Samples

Purpose

Permittees are required to submit fin clip samples to NOAA Fisheries for each brood animal used in spawning. This requirement will allow for identification of source broodstock and for comparison of broodstock to offspring stocked into offshore cages. It will also allow for enforcement and monitoring in the event that the use of genetically modified or transgenic organisms is suspected.

Fin clip samples should be collected prior to, or immediately following, spawning events and should be sent to NOAA Fisheries within 30 days of collection. Fish are to be sexed and each brood animal is required to be individually marked or tagged (e.g., PIT, coded wire, dart). For additional information or questions, please contact NOAA Fisheries at 727-824-5301 or nmfs.ser.aquaculture@noaa.gov.

Procedures

Follow these steps to obtain a fin clip sample:

- 1) Clean all instruments used to extract samples with ethanol. Remove dirt and any visible parasites from tissues as these can affect genetic analyses. Obtain two hole punches or one dime-sized sample of the fin from each brood animal. Clean all instruments with ethanol between samples to minimize sample cross-contamination.
- 2) Place hole punch samples from each fish into separate clean vials (or, cut dime sized sample into half and place into separate vials). Fill each vial with enough 70-100% non-denatured ethanol²⁹ to cover the sample and store the sample in a freezer (-20°C to -80°C) until it is shipped to NOAA Fisheries. **Note:** Samples are to be sent to NOAA Fisheries within 30 days of collection.
- 3) Using a permanent marker, clearly label each vial with an ID# specific to the brood animal (e.g., PIT tag number, sequential number). Each ID# should be logged on the *Fin Clip Log* spreadsheet with all required information for that animal. The Fin Clip Log spreadsheet can be found at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/aquaculture/. Permittees should store samples from each animal in a freezer (-20°C to -80°C).

²⁹ A license is required to purchase non-denatured ethanol as this is listed as a controlled substance.

- 4) Send one sample from each fish along with the *Fin Clip Log* spreadsheet to NOAA Fisheries. Include a completed chain of custody form with each shipment. Contact NOAA Fisheries at least 24 business hours prior to shipping to coordinate receipt of samples. Samples should be shipped early in the week to ensure that someone is available to receive the package during normal business hours. Pack samples in excepted quantities and ship according to hazardous materials guidelines³⁰. Permittees should store the other half of the sample (or second hole punch) from each fish at their facility in a freezer (-20°C to -80°C) as a back-up.

³⁰ Federal rules have been established which govern the shipment of ethanol. Please consult with your shipping company regarding any special instructions.

APPENDIX E

Draft-Final Protected Species Plan

Draft-Final

**Marine Mammal, Sea Turtle, and Seabird Monitoring and Data Collection Plan
For the Velella Epsilon Project –
Pioneering Offshore Aquaculture in the Southeastern Gulf of Mexico**



Submitted to:

Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS),
Southeast Regional Office (SERO)
National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Prepared by:

Gulfstream Aquaculture, LLC
and
Ocean Era, Inc.

September 2020

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EA	Environmental Assessment
ft.	foot / feet
m	meter
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
SERO	Southeast Regional Office
POC	point of contact
VE Project	Velella Epsilon Project
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Marine Mammal, Sea Turtle, and Seabird Monitoring and Data Collection Plan

The purpose of this Marine Mammal, Sea Turtle, and Seabird Monitoring and Data Collection Plan (hereafter referred to as “Protected Species Monitoring Plan” [Plan]) is to provide monitoring protocols and data collection efforts for marine mammal, sea turtles, seabirds, and other marine protected species that may possibly be encountered (e.g., smalltooth sawfish, giant manta ray) during the proposed exempted fishery activity to validate the feasibility of deploying a temporary, small-scale, demonstration net pen and rearing two consecutive cohorts of the Federally managed species, almaco jack (kampachi; *Seriola rivoliana*), in Gulf of Mexico (GOM) waters off southwest Florida, generally located southwest of Sarasota, Florida. This PSM Plan was developed in cooperation with, and in support of, the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application (50 CFR § 600.745[b]) by Ocean Era, Inc. (Kampachi Farms, LLC 2018), and the National Marine Fisheries Service’s (NMFS) Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4331 et seq.), (NMFS 2018).

Marine species monitoring and data collection will be conducted before, during, and after the single point mooring (SPM) and net pen array deployment; fish stocking, rearing, and harvesting activities; and decommissioning activities associated with the VE Project, as detailed in Section 2.3. Monitoring will represent an important minimization measure to reduce the likelihood of any unforeseen potential injury to marine mammals, sea turtles, and other protected marine species. The data collection will provide valuable insight to resource managers about potential interactions between aquaculture operations and protected species.

1.2 Scope and Timing

The scope of this Plan includes net pen deployment; fish stocking, rearing, and harvesting; and decommissioning activities that are necessary for the Velella Epsilon Project (VE Project). Marine mammals, sea turtles, sea birds, and other protected resources (as practicable) will be included in monitoring and data collection efforts. Protected species monitoring and data collection would be integrated with other marine environmental monitoring as required as a result of NMFS’ NEPA review and/or as a condition of approval by NMFS and/or other regulatory agencies. The VE Project is concurrently applying for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 10 permit (12/28/2017, Department of Army Permit Number: SAJ-2017-03488-KRD; "Velella Epsilon Project/Aquaculture"), as well as a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) National Pollutant Discharge and Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

This Plan will be implemented during the approximate period of June, 2021 through May, 2022, in support of the VE Project in-water activities.

1.3 Management

The Plan will be managed by Ocean Era, Inc. Marine mammal, sea turtle, and seabird monitoring and data collection will be carried out by their employees, volunteers, and university students supporting the VE Project. Ocean Era, Inc. will also be responsible for the preparation of the Monitoring Report.

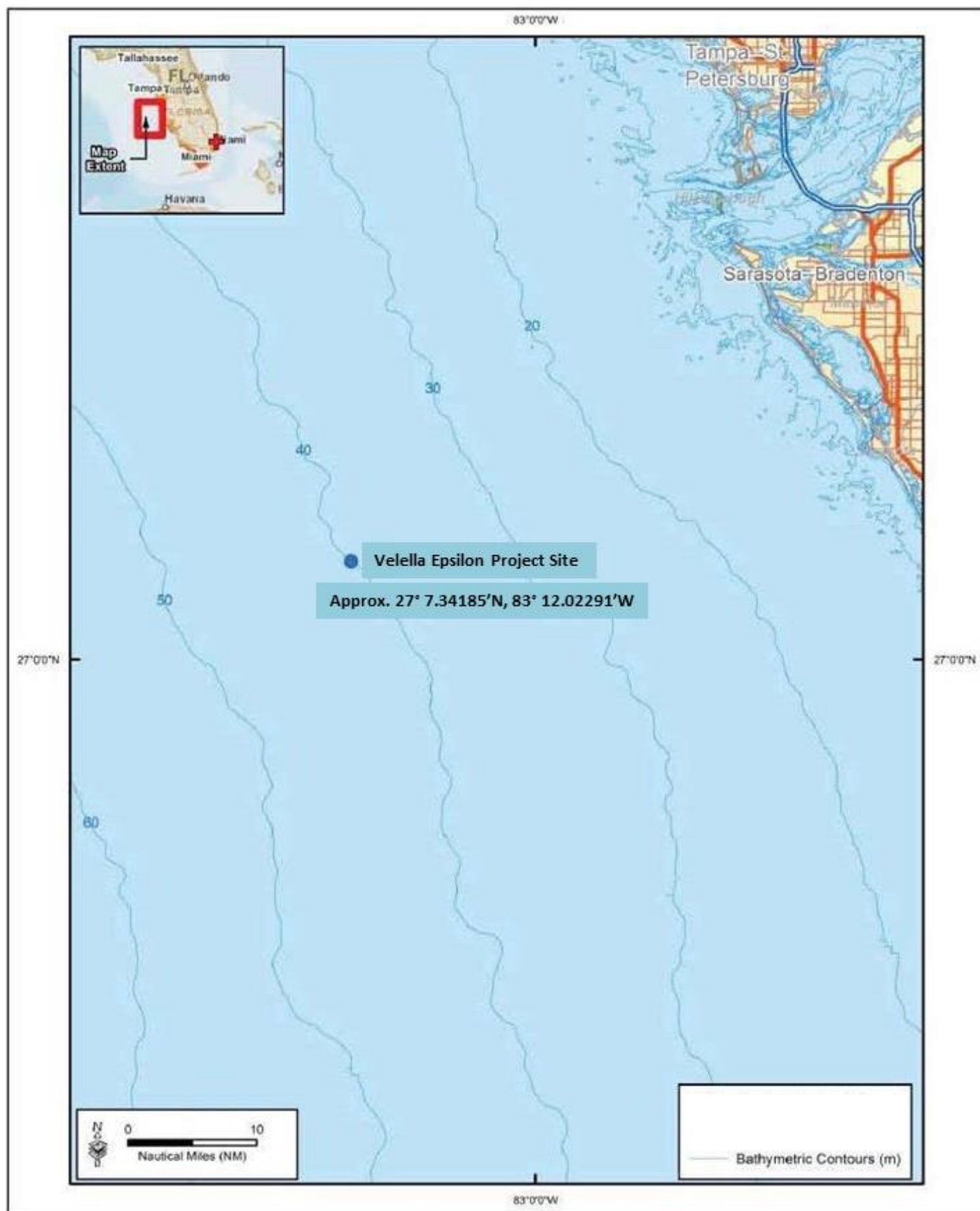


Figure 1-1. Approximate Location – 45 Miles Southwest of Sarasota, Florida

2.0 VE PROJECT

Refer to the VE Project EA (USEPA, 2020) and Supplemental Information (Ocean Era, 2020) for a full description of the VE Project.

2.1 Project Area

The project area is in the GOM in approximately 40m water depth off southwest Florida, generally located 45 miles southwest of Sarasota, Florida (see Figure 1-1). Figure 1-1 provides the approximate site location, as the extensive siting analysis determined a larger area for consideration and permitting, based upon the quantity of unconsolidated sediments (sand) found at the time of actual deployment of the mooring system. This larger area is defined by the following coordinates:

Upper Left Corner	27° 7.70607' N	83° 12.27012' W
Upper Right Corner	27° 7.61022' N	83° 11.65678' W
Lower Right Corner	27° 6.77773' N	83° 11.75379' W
Lower Left Corner	27° 6.87631' N	83° 12.42032' W

Overlap with Protected Species

Based on the location of this project, the site will be within the range of the common bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus truncatus*) continental shelf stock which is bounded by the 20 and 200m isobaths in the Gulf of Mexico (Hayes et al. 2017). The site will also overlap with the Northern Gulf of Mexico Stock of spotted dolphins (*Stenella frontalis*) which occupy the Florida shelf (Hayes et al. 2017). Although there are other marine mammal species in the Gulf, nearly all others are typically found in depths greater than the 100m or 1000m isobaths (Hayes et al. 2017). Sea turtles that may occur in the project area include sea turtles: the loggerhead, northwestern Atlantic (*Caretta caretta*) distinct population segment (DPS), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), green (*Chelonia mydas*) NWA DPS, and Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*). Smalltooth sawfish (*Pristis pectinata*) may possibly be present in the project area, but are a bottom-dwelling species, thus are not expected to interact with proposed activity if they are present in the area. We do anticipate some seabirds may be present in the project area; at this time we are uncertain what species. Other species protected under the ESA that occur in the Gulf of Mexico that likely have only remote chance of occurring in the project area in the recently listed Giant Manta Ray (*Manta birostris*).

2.2 Activities to be Monitored

Activities which would be subject to marine mammal monitoring and data collection include the following:

- Installation of the SPM including the anchor, chain, and line
- Deployment of the net pen array
- Stocking, rearing, and harvesting of two, back-to-back, consecutive fish trials
- Removal of the SPM and net pen array

Marine mammal monitoring will be performed to ensure that in-water activities are performed in such a manner that avoids any injury to marine mammals, and provides data on marine mammal behavior around the nets to help illuminate risk of

entanglement. Monitoring methods and data collection methods are described in Section 3 of this document.

2.3 Activity Protective Measures

2.3.1 During transit navigation to, at, and from the mission site, establish trained observers will be onboard all vessels.

- Trained observers will look for the presence of protected marine species (marine mammals and sea turtles) and advise the Captain of potential encounters in order to prevent entanglement or vessel strike. Personnel will adhere to NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Region's Vessel Strike Avoidance Measures and Reporting for Mariners (Appendix A).
- Trained observers will look for Sargassum mats, as well as inform the Captain, to facilitate avoiding the mats to the maximum extent practicable.

2.3.2 Vessels will operate at slow speeds when performing work within and around the VE Project area. Vessels will travel at speeds necessary for safe and efficient navigation, i.e., at speeds necessary to maintain steerage if towing equipment, but not so fast that objects in the water cannot be avoided. These considerations are expected to further reduce the potential for vessel strike of protected marine species.

2.3.3 Before discarding fish from the farm pen, personnel must ensure that no marine mammals are present. It is harmful and illegal to feed or attempt to feed wild marine mammals.

2.3.4 Activities will comply with NMFS' "Sea Turtle and Smalltooth Sawfish Construction Conditions" dated March 26, 2006.

2.3.4 If a marine mammal take/interaction occurs during any portion of this operation or related activities, the following measures must be conducted:

2.3.5. Report any capture/entanglement immediately.

- Marine mammal capture/entanglements (live or dead) must be reported immediately to the Southeast Region Marine Mammal Stranding Hotline at 1-877-433-8299.
 - Take/interaction details should also be reported to: Jessica Powell, Marine Mammal Biologist, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Protected Resources Division at Jessica.Powell@noaa.gov or 727 824 5327. Further discussions on the interactions/entanglement and potential risk reduction solutions will be discussed once report is received.
- In the event of mortality, the animal should be hauled aboard and retained for pickup by a Stranding Network member.
 - Call the Southeast Region Marine Mammal Stranding Hotline at 1-877-433-8299 for guidance on what to do with the carcass.
- If the animal cannot be hauled aboard or picked up by the stranding network, as a last resort, release the animal after the following necessary information is collected: (1) Photos of the carcass with a scale bar (lateral view of dorsal fin, ventral side including genital slits for sex determination, flank, and signs of

entanglements, scars, and injuries); (2) measure standard length (from the tip of upper jaw to notch in the tail); and (3) document/photograph where in the operation the animal was caught/entangled and how gear was wrapped around the animal, etc.

- If a sea turtle becomes or is observed entangled or injured, the observer must call the Florida Wildlife Commission's 24-hour Wildlife Alert Number at 1-888-404-FWCC (1-888-404-3922).

3.0 MARINE MAMMAL, SEA TURTLE, AND SEABIRD MONITORING AND DATA COLLECTION

3.1 Observers and Procedures

A Ocean Era, Inc. delegate shall conduct a pre-deployment briefing with the contractor, employees, technicians, graduate students, and volunteers. During the briefing, all contractor personnel working in the VE Project area will watch the Marine Species Awareness Training presentation.

Marine mammal observers ("observers") designated by Ocean Era, Inc., will be placed at the best vantage point(s) practicable to monitor for marine mammals and sea turtles. The observers will not have other net pen deployment-related tasks while conducting monitoring.

The contractor will adhere to all applicable requirements of the following:

- National Marine Fisheries Service 2006 Sea Turtle and Smalltooth Sawfish Construction Conditions (Appendix C).
- NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Region Vessel Strike Avoidance Measures and Reporting for Mariners (Appendix A).

3.2 Methods

The observer(s) will be placed at the best vantage point practicable (e.g. from a small boat, construction barges, or any other suitable location) to monitor for marine mammals and sea turtles. Elevated positions are preferable; it shall be the contractor's responsibility to ensure that appropriate safety measures are implemented to protect observers on elevated observation points. If a boat is used for monitoring, the boat will maintain 50-yard distances from species (should they occur).

- During all observation periods, observers would use binoculars and the naked eye to search continuously for marine mammals, sea turtles, and sea birds.

3.2.1 Deployment Monitoring and Data Collection - The VE Project site will be monitored prior to and during the in-water SPM and net pen array deployment activities. The pre-deployment monitoring and data collection will provide an initial baseline of any marine mammal and sea turtle activity within the VE Project area prior to and during the in-water activities. Protected species observations will be captured on the data forms (an example of a marine mammal sighting data form is attached; this form may change upon final design plans and expertise of observers).

3.2.2 During Activity Monitoring and Data Collection- Daily marine mammal observations and data collection will be performed in concert with and conducted by those individuals responsible for conducting routine daily operational farm activities

(feeding, cleaning, environmental monitoring, etc.). Protected species observations will be captured on the marine species data forms.

3.2.3 Removal Monitoring and Data Collection - The VE Project site will be monitored prior to and during the in-water SPM and net pen array removal activities. The SPM and net pen array removal monitoring and data collection will provide information on marine species activity within the VE Project area prior to and during the in-water removal activities. Protected species observations will be captured on the marine species data forms.

3.3 Data Collection

The following information will be collected on effort logs or sighting forms used by observers:

- Date and time that deployment or removal activities begin or end
- Operational activities occurring during each day and at time of sighting
- Weather parameters identified during the monitoring (e.g., water temperature, salinity, percent cloud cover, Beaufort sea state, Secchi (*potentially*) and visibility)
- Tide state and water currents
- Number of vessels and actively fishing vessels

If a marine mammal enters the VE Project area, the following information will be recorded:

- Species, numbers, and if possible age class of marine mammals
- Behavior patterns observed and if any fishery interactions occur
- Location of the observer and distance from the animal(s) to the observer
- Environmental variables
- Number of vessels and activity fishing vessels
- Dorsal fin photographs

If one or more sea turtles enter the VE Project area, the following information will be recorded:

- Species, if known; number, and approximate size
- Behavior patterns observed, and specifically if any fishery interactions occur
- Location of the observer and distance from the animal(s) to the observer

If a seabird enters the VE Project area, the following information will be recorded:

- Species, if known; number, and approximate size
- Behavior patterns observed, and specifically if any fishery interactions occur
- Location of the observer and distance from the animal(s) to the observer

If possible, digital photographs of the animal(s) will be taken and forwarded to the Ocean Era, Inc. point of contact; Jessica Powell, NMFS SERO; and digital copies will be provided with the Monitoring Report.

The data collection forms (Appendix D) shall be furnished to the Ocean Era, Inc. point of contact within a mutually agreeable timeframe.

NMFS SERO is currently working with Ocean Era, Inc. to develop a graduate level project for a master's student to assist with protected marine species data collection and analyses. This student would have access to all completed data collection forms and assist with a fine-scale data collection effort from June 2021 through May 2022.

3.4 Equipment

The observer(s) shall be equipped with the following:

- binoculars (7 x 50 power or greater) to ensure sufficient visual acuity while investigating sightings
- portable marine radios to rapidly communicate with the appropriate deployment contractor and/or operational farm personnel to initiate any precautionary actions, as needed
- a digital camera with telephoto lens for photographing any marine species sighted
- data collection forms, clipboards, and pens
- Compass/GPS
- Range finder

3.5 Observer Monitoring Locations

In order to effectively monitor the VE Project site, protected species observers will be positioned at the best practicable vantage point(s), taking into consideration the behavior of the species likely to enter the area, safety, and space limitations on the tender vessel or net pen array infrastructure, in order to properly monitor the area. Observers may be stationed in small vessels utilized for other daily environmental monitoring and data collection activities.

3.6 Interagency Notification

If observers encounter an injured, sick, or dead marine mammal, NMFS will be notified immediately. Such sightings will be called into the NMFS Stranding Hotline for the Southeast at 1-877-WHALE HELP:

The observer will provide NMFS with the species or description of the animal(s), the condition of the animal (including carcass condition if the animal is dead), location, the date and time of first discovery, observed behaviors (if alive), and photo or video (if available). The observer will be instructed by the stranding responder on specific response.

4.0 REPORTING

A draft report of any marine species observations and activity within the VE Project area will be forwarded to NMFS / USFWS no later than 30 days after project closure and the removal of the SPM and net pen array (July 2021, estimated). A final report will be prepared and submitted to NMFS within 30 days following receipt of comments on the draft report from NMFS. The VE Project staff will update Jessica Powell, NMFS SERO, on a 30-day basis. If any marine mammal interactions or entanglements with gear occur, they need to be reported immediately.

5.0 REFERENCES

- Hayes S. A., E. Josephson, K. Maze-Foley, and P. Rosel, Editors; 2017. US Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Marine Mammal Stock Assessments – 2016. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-NE-241. June 2017.
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), 2018. Environmental Assessment for the Implementation of the Exempt Fishing Permit for the Velella Epsilon Project – Pioneering Offshore Aquaculture in the Southeastern Gulf of Mexico; NOAA Sea Grant 2017 Aquaculture Initiative.
- NMFS, 2006. Sea Turtle and Smalltooth Sawfish Construction Conditions. NMFS, Southeast Regional Office 263 13th Avenue South St. Petersburg, FL 33701.
- Kampachi Farms, LLC, 2018. Exempt Fishing Permit for the Velella Epsilon Project – Pioneering Offshore Aquaculture in the Southeastern Gulf of Mexico; NOAA Sea Grant 2017 Aquaculture Initiative.

PROTECTED SPECIES MONITORING PLAN

APPENDIX A

**NOAA FISHERIES, SOUTHEAST REGION VESSEL STRIKE
AVOIDANCE MEASURES AND REPORTING FOR MARINERS**



Vessel Strike Avoidance Measures and Reporting for Mariners NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Region

Background

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has determined that collisions with vessels can injure or kill protected species (e.g., endangered and threatened species, and marine mammals). The following standard measures should be implemented to reduce the risk associated with vessel strikes or disturbance of these protected species to discountable levels. NMFS should be contacted to identify any additional conservation and recovery issues of concern, and to assist in the development of measures that may be necessary.

Protected Species Identification Training

Vessel crews should use an Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico reference guide that helps identify protected species that might be encountered in U.S. waters of the Atlantic Ocean, including the Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of Mexico. Additional training should be provided regarding information and resources available regarding federal laws and regulations for protected species, ship strike information, critical habitat, migratory routes and seasonal abundance, and recent sightings of protected species.

Vessel Strike Avoidance

In order to avoid causing injury or death to marine mammals and sea turtles the following measures should be taken when consistent with safe navigation:

1. Vessel operators and crews shall maintain a vigilant watch for marine mammals and sea turtles to avoid striking sighted protected species.
2. When whales are sighted, maintain a distance of 100 yards or greater between the whale and the vessel.
3. When sea turtles or small cetaceans are sighted, attempt to maintain a distance of 50 yards or greater between the animal and the vessel whenever possible.
4. When small cetaceans are sighted while a vessel is underway (e.g., bow-riding), attempt to remain parallel to the animal's course. Avoid excessive speed or abrupt changes in direction until the cetacean has left the area.
5. Reduce vessel speed to 10 knots or less when mother/calf pairs, groups, or large assemblages of cetaceans are observed near an underway vessel, when safety permits. A single cetacean at the surface may indicate the presence of submerged animals in the vicinity; therefore, prudent precautionary measures should always be exercised. The vessel shall attempt to route around the animals, maintaining a minimum distance of 100 yards whenever possible.

6. Whales may surface in unpredictable locations or approach slowly moving vessels. When an animal is sighted in the vessel's path or in close proximity to a moving vessel and when safety permits, reduce speed and shift the engine to neutral. Do not engage the engines until the animals are clear of the area.

Additional Requirements for the North Atlantic Right Whale

1. If a sighted whale is believed to be a North Atlantic right whale, federal regulation requires a minimum distance of 500 yards be maintained from the animal (50 CFR 224.103 (c)).
2. Vessels entering North Atlantic right whale critical habitat are required to report into the Mandatory Ship Reporting System.
3. Mariners shall check with various communication media for general information regarding avoiding ship strikes and specific information regarding North Atlantic right whale sighting locations. These include NOAA weather radio, U.S. Coast Guard NAVTEX broadcasts, and Notices to Mariners. Commercial mariners calling on United States ports should view the most recent version of the NOAA/USCG produced training CD entitled "A Prudent Mariner's Guide to Right Whale Protection" (contact the NMFS Southeast Region, Protected Resources Division for more information regarding the CD).
4. Injured, dead, or entangled right whales should be immediately reported to the U.S. Coast Guard via VHF Channel 16.

Injured or Dead Protected Species Reporting

Vessel crews shall report sightings of any injured or dead protected species immediately, regardless of whether the injury or death is caused by your vessel.

Report marine mammals to the Southeast U.S. Stranding Hotline: 877-433-8299

Report sea turtles to the NMFS Southeast Regional Office: 727-824-5312

If the injury or death of a marine mammal was caused by a collision with your vessel, responsible parties shall remain available to assist the respective salvage and stranding network as needed. NMFS' Southeast Regional Office shall be immediately notified of the strike by email (takereport.nmfs@noaa.gov) using the attached vessel strike reporting form.

For additional information, please contact the Protected Resources Division at:

NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office

263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Tel: (727) 824-5312

Visit us on the web at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

[Print Form](#)[Submit by Email](#)

NOAA Fisheries Service

Southeast Region Ship Strike Report

Reporter Information

Reporting Vessel/Aircraft Name or #

Reporter's Name

Reporter's phone

Date of Report

Strike Vessel Information *(complete all that apply)*

TYPE OF VESSEL: Check all that apply

☐ Container☐ Towing☐ Other☐ Tanker☐ GovernmentSpecify ☐ Freight☐ Whale watch☐ Research☐ Ferry☐ Fishing☐ RecreationalDraft ☐ Feet ☐ MetersForward Aft Mean

Name of Vessel involved in Strike

Gross Tonnage

Vessel Length

☐ Feet☐ Meters

Vessel Make

Vessel Model

Propulsion

Engine Make

Distance between shafts

Horsepower

Prop Diameter

Prop Pitch

Observed or Noted Strike Information *(strike was noted visually or impact felt)*

Date of Strike

Time of Strike

☐ Local☐ GMT

General Location

North Latitude

West Longitude

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AT TIME OF STRIKE

Lighting

Weather

Visibility

Distance of Visibility

☐ Kilometers☐ Miles

Air Temperature

☐ Degrees F☐ Degrees C

Wind Speed

Direction (degrees)

Current Speed

Direction (degrees)

Water depth

Wave Height

☐ Feet☐ Meters

Swell Height

☐ Feet☐ Meters

Water Depth

☐ Feet☐ Meters

NOAA Fisheries Service

Southeast Region Ship Strike Report - Continued

NAVIGATION INFORMATION AT TIME OF STRIKE

Vessel Activity

Engine RPMs

Engine Speed (Knots)

Vessel Course (Degrees)

☐ Autopilot ON

☐ Autopilot OFF

Total # of watchstanders

on Navigation Bridge

on Observation Bridge

on Bow

Other

INCIDENT INFORMATION

Part of vessel struck by whale

Describe what was seen, felt, heard, etc.

Was avoidance action taken

Describe action taken, or reasons why avoidance not possible

Comments on damage to vessel

NOAA Fisheries Service

Southeast Region Ship Strike Report - Continued

ANIMAL INFORMATION

Time elapsed between sighting and collision

Distance from vessel when first sighted

Animal's orientation to the vessel

Estimated size/species of whale

Other marine mammals present?

Approximate number

Species

What direction was the whale traveling

Briefly describe whale's behavior prior to strike

Briefly describe whale's behavior after collision (*if seen*)

Portion of animal struck

Condition post-strike

Blood seen in water after strike

Description of wounds on animal. Use drawings to mark the location of wound(s). Include estimates of length and depth of wounds.

PROTECTED SPECIES MONITORING PLAN

APPENDIX B

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE 2006

SEA TURTLE AND SMALLTOOTH SAWFISH CONSTRUCTION CONDITIONS



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

SEA TURTLE AND SMALLTOOTH SAWFISH CONSTRUCTION CONDITIONS

The permittee shall comply with the following protected species construction conditions:

- a. The permittee shall instruct all personnel associated with the project of the potential presence of these species and the need to avoid collisions with sea turtles and smalltooth sawfish. All construction personnel are responsible for observing water-related activities for the presence of these species.
- b. The permittee shall advise all construction personnel that there are civil and criminal penalties for harming, harassing, or killing sea turtles or smalltooth sawfish, which are protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
- c. Siltation barriers shall be made of material in which a sea turtle or smalltooth sawfish cannot become entangled, be properly secured, and be regularly monitored to avoid protected species entrapment. Barriers may not block sea turtle or smalltooth sawfish entry to or exit from designated critical habitat without prior agreement from the National Marine Fisheries Service's Protected Resources Division, St. Petersburg, Florida.
- d. All vessels associated with the construction project shall operate at "no wake/idle" speeds at all times while in the construction area and while in water depths where the draft of the vessel provides less than a four-foot clearance from the bottom. All vessels will preferentially follow deep-water routes (e.g., marked channels) whenever possible.
- e. If a sea turtle or smalltooth sawfish is seen within 100 yards of the active daily construction/dredging operation or vessel movement, all appropriate precautions shall be implemented to ensure its protection. These precautions shall include cessation of operation of any moving equipment closer than 50 feet of a sea turtle or smalltooth sawfish. Operation of any mechanical construction equipment shall cease immediately if a sea turtle or smalltooth sawfish is seen within a 50-ft radius of the equipment. Activities may not resume until the protected species has departed the project area of its own volition.
- f. Any collision with and/or injury to a sea turtle or smalltooth sawfish shall be reported immediately to the National Marine Fisheries Service's Protected Resources Division (727-824-5312) and the local authorized sea turtle stranding/rescue organization.
- g. Any special construction conditions, required of your specific project, outside these general conditions, if applicable, will be addressed in the primary consultation.

Revised: March 23, 2006

O:\forms\Sea Turtle and Smalltooth Sawfish Construction Conditions.doc



PROTECTED SPECIES MONITORING PLAN
APPENDIX C
VELELLA EPSILON PROJECT SIGHTING SHEET

Date and initial when complete: Data entry_____ Photo Analysis_____ Photo Coverage_____

Sighting No.

Velella Epsilon Project Sighting Sheet

Date _____

Field Hours _____ to _____	Platform_____	Distance from ____ (m)	Time _____ to _____
----------------------------	---------------	------------------------	---------------------

Observers	
------------------	--

Species (i.e., bottlenose dolphin, spotted dolphin, etc.) _____

Clouds % **Secchi** ft/m **Salinity** ppt **Water Temp** F/C **BSS**

Behavior State: Travel Forage Rest Social Mill Fishery-Interaction Other
(Circle predominant for 1st 5 min & Check all see; describe fishery-interaction in section below)

Operational activity (*i.e.*, fish feed, cleaning pens, etc.): _____

FI: Beg	Patrol Net	Patrol Barge	Attempted Depredation	Depredation	Other
----------------	------------	--------------	-----------------------	-------------	-------

(Record Frame No. of interacting animals in comments when possible;; “other activity” should be described in comments)

*Describe in specific details in Comments if injury or entanglement occurs as well as condition of the animal upon release

No. of vessels w/in 500m:_____ **No. of actively fishing vessels w/in 500m:_____**

Field Estimates	MIN	MAX	BEST	Photo Analysis	Pos IDs Not IDed	Final Best
Total Dolphins				Total Dolphins		
Total Calves				Total Calves		
Young of Year				Young of Year		

Comments: _____

[illegible]**Dolphins Sighted:** **ID Confirmation:** P = photo V = visual[illegible]

Photos: (Photographer's Initials: frame to frame) _____

Tape: (reference no.) _____

APPENDIX F
USEPA NPDES Permit Application

FORM 1 GENERAL		U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY GENERAL INFORMATION Consolidated Permits Program (Read the "General Instructions" before starting.)		I. EPA I.D. NUMBER	
LABEL ITEMS		PLEASE PLACE LABEL IN THIS SPACE		GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS	
I. EPA I.D. NUMBER				If a preprinted label has been provided, affix it in the designated space. Review the information carefully; if any of it is incorrect, cross through it and enter the correct data in the appropriate fill-in area below. Also, if any of the preprinted data is absent (the area to the left of the label space lists the information that should appear), please provide it in the proper fill-in area(s) below. If the label is complete and correct, you need not complete Items I, III, V, and VI (except VI-B which must be completed regardless). Complete all items if no label has been provided. Refer to the instructions for detailed item descriptions and for the legal authorizations under which this data is collected.	
III. FACILITY NAME					
V. FACILITY MAILING ADDRESS					
VI. FACILITY LOCATION					
II. POLLUTANT CHARACTERISTICS					
INSTRUCTIONS: Complete A through J to determine whether you need to submit any permit application forms to the EPA. If you answer "yes" to any questions, you must submit this form and the supplemental form listed in the parenthesis following the question. Mark "X" in the box in the third column if the supplemental form is attached. If you answer "no" to each question, you need not submit any of these forms. You may answer "no" if your activity is excluded from permit requirements; see Section C of the instructions. See also, Section D of the instructions for definitions of bold-faced terms .					
SPECIFIC QUESTIONS		Mark "X"		SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	
		YES	NO	FORM ATTACHED	
A. Is this facility a publicly owned treatment works which results in a discharge to waters of the U.S.? (FORM 2A)					
		16	17	18	
C. Is this a facility which currently results in discharges to waters of the U.S. other than those described in A or B above? (FORM 2C)					
		22	23	24	
E. Does or will this facility treat, store, or dispose of hazardous wastes? (FORM 3)					
		28	29	30	
G. Do you or will you inject at this facility any produced water or other fluids which are brought to the surface in connection with conventional oil or natural gas production, inject fluids used for enhanced recovery of oil or natural gas, or inject fluids for storage of liquid hydrocarbons? (FORM 4)					
		34	35	36	
I. Is this facility a proposed stationary source which is one of the 28 industrial categories listed in the instructions and which will potentially emit 100 tons per year of any air pollutant regulated under the Clean Air Act and may affect or be located in an attainment area? (FORM 5)					
		40	41	42	
B. Does or will this facility (either existing or proposed) include a concentrated animal feeding operation or aquatic animal production facility which results in a discharge to waters of the U.S.? (FORM 2B)					
		19	20	21	
D. Is this a proposed facility (other than those described in A or B above) which will result in a discharge to waters of the U.S.? (FORM 2D)					
		25	26	27	
F. Do you or will you inject at this facility industrial or municipal effluent below the lowermost stratum containing, within one quarter mile of the well bore, underground sources of drinking water? (FORM 4)					
		31	32	33	
H. Do you or will you inject at this facility fluids for special processes such as mining of sulfur by the Frasch process, solution mining of minerals, in situ combustion of fossil fuel, or recovery of geothermal energy? (FORM 4)					
		37	38	39	
J. Is this facility a proposed stationary source which is NOT one of the 28 industrial categories listed in the instructions and which will potentially emit 250 tons per year of any air pollutant regulated under the Clean Air Act and may affect or be located in an attainment area? (FORM 5)					
		43	44	45	
III. NAME OF FACILITY					
C. SKIP					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
IV. FACILITY CONTACT					
A. NAME & TITLE (last, first, & title)					
B. PHONE (area code & no.)					
C. 2					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
V. FACILITY MAILING ADDRESS					
A. STREET OR P.O. BOX					
C. 3					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
B. CITY OR TOWN					
C. STATE					
D. ZIP CODE					
C. 4					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
VI. FACILITY LOCATION					
A. STREET, ROUTE NO. OR OTHER SPECIFIC IDENTIFIER					
C. 5					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
B. COUNTY NAME					
C. 6					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					
C. CITY OR TOWN					
D. STATE					
E. ZIP CODE					
F. COUNTY CODE (if known)					
C. 6					
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60					

VII. SIC CODES (4-digit, in order of priority)										
A. FIRST					B. SECOND					
C					(specify)	C				(specify)
7						7				
15	16	-	19			15	16	-	19	
C. THIRD					D. FOURTH					
C					(specify)	C				(specify)
7						7				
15	16	-	19			15	16	-	19	

A. NAME																																																							B. Is the name listed in Item VIII-A also the owner? ☐ YES ☐ NO																			
8																																																																										
15 16																																																							55 66																			
C. STATUS OF OPERATOR (Enter the appropriate letter into the answer box: if "Other," specify.)																																																																	D. PHONE (area code & no.)									
F = FEDERAL S = STATE P = PRIVATE M = PUBLIC (other than federal or state) O = OTHER (specify)																																													(specify)					C 																								
																																																		A 																								
																																																		15 6 - 18 19 - 21 22 - 26																								

E. STREET OR P.O. BOX		
26	55	

F. CITY OR TOWN																																								G. STATE		H. ZIP CODE		IX. INDIAN LAND		
C																																												Is the facility located on Indian lands?		
B																																												☐ YES ☐ NO		
15	16																																							40	41	42	47	-	51	52

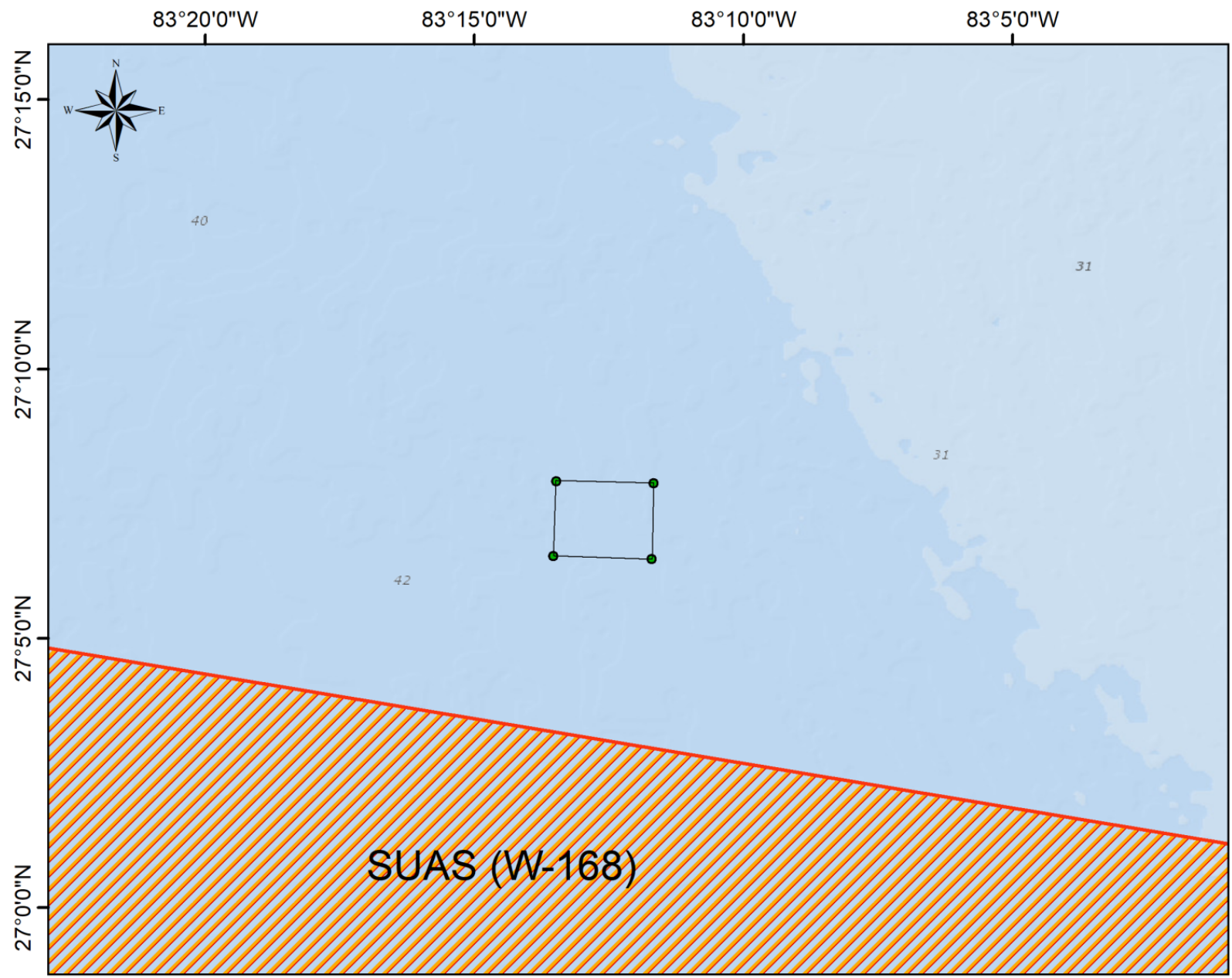
A. NPDES (Discharges to Surface Water)														D. PSD (Air Emissions from Proposed Sources)																											
C	T	I												C	T	I																									
9	N													9	P																										
15	16	17	18											30	15	16	17	18											30												
B. UIC (Underground Injection of Fluids)														E. OTHER (specify)																											
C	T	I												C	T	I																									
9	U													9																											
15	16	17	18											30	15	16	17	18											30												
C. RCRA (Hazardous Wastes)														E. OTHER (specify)																											
C	T	I												C	T	I																									
9	R													9																											
15	16	17	18											30	15	16	17	18											30												

Attach to this application a topographic map of the area extending to at least one mile beyond property boundaries. The map must show the outline of the facility, the location of each of its existing and proposed intake and discharge structures, each of its hazardous waste treatment, storage, or disposal facilities, and each well where it injects fluids underground. Include all springs, rivers, and other surface water bodies in the map area. See instructions for precise requirements.

I certify under penalty of law that I have personally examined and am familiar with the information submitted in this application and all attachments and that, based on my inquiry of those persons immediately responsible for obtaining the information contained in the application, I believe that the information is true, accurate, and complete. I am aware that there are significant penalties for submitting false information, including the possibility of fine and imprisonment.

A. NAME & OFFICIAL TITLE <i>(type or print)</i>	B. SIGNATURE 	C. DATE SIGNED
---	--	----------------

[illegible]



The center point of the site is 4 nm away from the Special Use Air Space (SUAS); the southwest corner point (closest) is 3.2 nm from the SUAS.

Legend

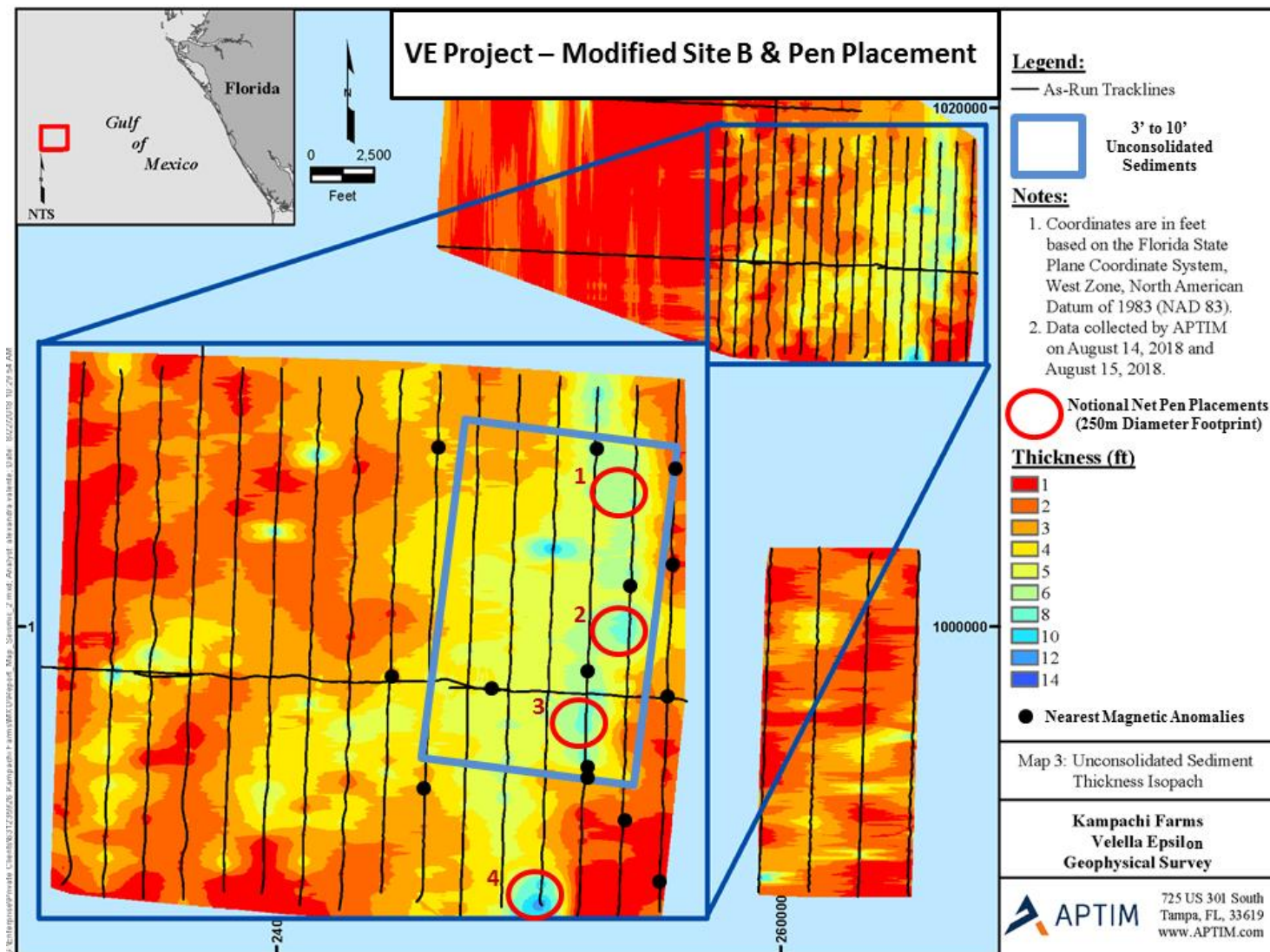
-  Site
-  Site corner points
-  Special Use Air Space (SUAS)

Scale: 1:200,000

Map intended for planning purposes only: Not intended for navigational purposes



Service Layer Credits: Esri, DeLorme, GEBCO, NOAA NGDC, and other contributors
Esri, HERE, DeLorme, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community
Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, DeLorme, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors



Position	° Decimal ' Latitude	° Decimal ' Longitude	Decimal ° Latitude	Decimal ° Longitude	Perimeter (km)	Area (km ²)
Modified Site B from BES Report						
Upper Left	27° 7.86863' N	83° 13.45827' W	27.131143° N	83.224303° W	11.1571	7.7237
Upper Right	27° 7.83079' N	83° 11.63237' W	27.130512° N	83.193872° W		
Lower Right	27° 6.43381' N	83° 11.69349' W	27.107230° N	83.194890° W		
Lower Left	27° 6.50261' N	83° 13.52658' W	27.108377° N	83.225442° W		
Center	27° 7.11266' N	83° 12.58604' W	27.118543° N	83.209767° W		
Targeted Subset Area of Modified Site B from BES Report (3' to 10' Unconsolidated Sediments)						
Upper Left	27° 7.70607' N	83° 12.27012' W	27.128445° N	83.204502° W	5.2273	1.6435
Upper Right	27° 7.61022' N	83° 11.65678' W	27.126837° N	83.194278° W		
Lower Right	27° 6.77773' N	83° 11.75379' W	27.112962° N	83.195897° W		
Lower Left	27° 6.87631' N	83° 12.42032' W	27.114605° N	83.207005° W		
Center	27° 7.34185' N	83° 12.02291' W	27.122365° N	83.200382° W		
Notional Net Pen Placements within Modified Site B from BES Report						
1	27° 7.54724' N	83° 11.85393' W	27.125787° N	83.197565° W	0.7854	0.0491
2	27° 7.17481' N	83° 11.82576' W	27.119580° N	83.197095° W		
3	27° 6.93930' N	83° 11.94780' W	27.115655° N	83.199130° W		
4	27° 6.52579' N	83° 12.09175' W	27.108763° N	83.201530° W		

Disclaimer

This is an updated PDF document that allows you to type your information directly into the form, print it, and save the completed form.

Note: This form can be viewed and saved only using Adobe Acrobat Reader version 7.0 or higher, or if you have the full Adobe Professional version.

Instructions:

1. Type in your information
2. Save file (if desired)
3. Print the completed form
4. Sign and date the printed copy
5. Mail it to the directed contact.

C. ☐ TOPOGRAPHIC MAP			
D. TYPE OF CONTAINMENT, STORAGE AND CAPACITY			
1. Type of Containment	Total Capacity (in gallons)		
☐ Lagoon			
☐ Holding Pond			
☐ Evaporation Pond			
☐ Other: Specify _____			
2. Report the total number of acres contributing drainage: _____ acres			
3. Type of Storage	Total Number of Days	Total Capacity (gallons/tons)	
☐ Anaerobic Lagoon			
☐ Storage Lagoon			
☐ Evaporation Pond			
☐ Aboveground Storage Tanks			
☐ Belowground Storage Tanks			
☐ Roofed Storage Shed			
☐ Concrete Pad			
☐ Impervious Soil Pad			
☐ Other: Specify _____			
E. NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN			
Note: Effective February 27, 2009, a permit application is not complete until a nutrient management plan is submitted to the Permitting Authority.			
1. Please indicate whether a nutrient management plan has been included with this permit application. ☐ Yes ☐ No			
2. If no, please explain: It is anticipated, that should a Nutrient Management Plan be required as part of this NPDES permit, that EPA will work collaboratively with Kampachi Farms to develop one, based on the limited size of this pilot scale project. See attached Excel file providing weekly, monthly, and maximum fish production and feed requirements.			
3. Is a nutrient management plan being implemented for the facility? ☐ Yes ☐ No			
4. The date of the last review or revision of the nutrient management plan. Date: _N/A_____			
5. If not land applying, describe alternative use(s) of manure, litter, and/or wastewater:			
F. LAND APPLICATION BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES			
Please check any of the following best management practices that are being implemented at the facility to control runoff and protect water quality:			
☐ Buffers ☐ Setbacks ☐ Conservation tillage ☐ Constructed wetlands ☐ Infiltration field ☐ Grass filter ☐ Terrace			

III. CONCENTRATED AQUATIC ANIMAL PRODUCTION FACILITY CHARACTERISTICS					
A. For each outfall give the maximum daily flow, maximum 30-day flow, and the long-term average flow.				B. Indicate the total number of ponds, raceways, and similar structures in your facility.	
1. Outfall No.	2. Flow (gallons per day)			1. Ponds	2. Raceways
	a. Maximum Daily	b. Maximum 30 Day	c. Long Term Average	C. Provide the name of the receiving water and the source of water used by your facility.	
				1. Receiving Water	2. Water Source
D. List the species of fish or aquatic animals held and fed at your facility. For each species, give the total weight produced by your facility per year in pounds of harvestable weight, and also give the maximum weight present at any one time.					
1. Cold Water Species			2. Warm Water Species		
a. Species	b. Harvestable Weight (pounds)		a. Species	b. Harvestable Weight (pounds)	
	(1) Total Yearly	(2) Maximum		(1) Total Yearly	(2) Maximum
E. Report the total pounds of food during the calendar month of maximum feeding.			1. Month	2. Pounds of Food	
IV. CERTIFICATION					
I certify under penalty of law that I have personally examined and am familiar with the information submitted in this application and all attachments and that, based on my inquiry of those individuals immediately responsible for obtaining the information, I believe that the information is true accurate and complete. I am aware that there are significant penalties for submitting false information, including the possibility of fine and imprisonment.					
A. Name and Official Title (print or type)			B. Telephone (_____) _____		
C. Signature				D. Date Signed	

INSTRUCTIONS

GENERAL This form must be completed by all applicants who check “yes” to Item II-B in Form 1. Not all animal feeding operations or fish farms are required to obtain NPDES permits. Exclusions are based on size and whether or not the facility discharges proposed to discharge. <i>See</i> the description of these exclusions in the CAFO regulations at 40 CFR 122.23. For aquatic animal production facilities, the size cutoffs are based on whether the species are warm water or cold water, on the production weight per year in harvestable pounds, and on the amount of feeding in pounds of food (<i>for cold water species</i>). Also, facilities which discharge less than 30 days per year, or only during periods of excess runoff (<i>for warm water fish</i>) are not required to have a permit. Refer to the Form 1 instructions to determine where to file this form. Item I-A See the note above to be sure that your facility is a “concentrated animal feeding operation” (CAFO). Item I-B Use this space to give owner/operator contact information. Item I-C Check “proposed” if your facility is not now in operation or is expanding to meet the definition of a CAFO in accordance with the CAFO regulations at 40 CFR 122.23. Item I-D Use this space to give a complete legal description of your facility’s location including name, address, and latitude/longitude. Also, if a contract grower, the name and address of the integrator. Item II Supply all information in item II if you checked (1) in item I-A. Item II-A Give the maximum number of each type of animal in open confinement or housed under roof (either partially or totally) which are held at your facility for a total of 45 days or more in any 12 month period. Provide the total number of animals confined at the facility. Item II-B Provide the total amount of manure, litter, and wastewater generated annually by the facility. Identify if manure, litter, and wastewater generated by the facility is to be land applied and the number of acres, under the control of the CAFO operator, suitable for land application. If the answer to question 3 is yes, provide the estimated annual quantity of manure, litter, and wastewater that the applicant plans to transfer off-site. Item II-C Check this box if you have submitted a topographic map of the entire operation, including the production area and land under the operational control of the CAFO operator where manure, litter, and/or wastewater are applied with Form 1.	Item II-D 1. Provide information on the type of containment and the capacity of the containment structure (s). 2. The number of acres that are drained and collected in the containment structure (s). 3. Identify the type of storage for the manure, litter, and/or wastewater. Give the capacity of this storage in days. Item II-E Provide information concerning the status of submitting a nutrient management plan for the facility to complete the application. In those cases where the nutrient management plan has not been submitted, provide an explanation. If not land applying, describe the alternative uses of the manure, litter, and wastewater (<i>e.g.</i>, composting, pelletizing, energy generation, etc.). Item II-F Check any of the identified conservation practices that are being implemented at the facility to control runoff and protect water quality. Item III Supply all information in Item III if you checked (2) in Item I-A. Item III-A Outfalls should be numbered to correspond with the map submitted in Item XI of Form 1. Values given for flow should be representative of your normal operation. The maximum daily flow is the maximum measured flow occurring over a calendar day. The maximum 30-day flow is the average of measured daily flow over the calendar month of highest flow. The long-term average flow is the average of measure daily flows over a calendar year. Item III-B Give the total number of discrete ponds or raceways in your facility. Under “other,” give a descriptive name of any structure which is not a pond or a raceway but which results in discharge to waters of the United States. Item III-C Use names for receiving water and source of water which correspond to the map submitted in Item XI of Form 1. Item III-D The names of fish species should be proper, common, or scientific names as given in special Publication No. 6 of the American Fisheries Society. “A List of Common and Scientific Names of Fishes from the United States and Canada.” The values given for total weight produced by your facility per year and the maximum weight present at any one time should be representative of your normal operation. Item III-E The value given for maximum monthly pounds of food should be representative of your normal operation. Item IV The Clean Water Act provides for severe penalties for submitting false information on this application form. Section 309(C)(2) of the Clean Water Act provides that “Any person who knowingly makes any false statement, representation, or certification in any application...shall upon conviction, be punished by a fine of no more than \$10,000 or by imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.”
Federal regulations require the certification to be signed as follows: A. For corporation, by a principal executive officer of at least the level of vice president. B. For a partnership or sole proprietorship, by a general partner or the proprietor, respectively; or C. For a municipality, State, federal, or other public facility, by either a principal executive officer or ranking elected official.	Paper Reduction Act Notice The public reporting and recordkeeping burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 9.5 hours per response. The public reporting and recordkeeping burden for development of the nutrient management plan to be submitted with the form is estimated to average 58 hours per response. Send comments on the Agency's need for this information, the accuracy of the provided burden estimates, and any suggested methods for minimizing respondent burden, including through the use of automated collection techniques to the Director, Collection Strategies Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2822T), 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20460. Include the OMB control number in any correspondence. Do not send the completed form to this address.

APPENDIX G
USACE Section 10 Permit Application

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
APPLICATION FOR DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY PERMIT

33 CFR 325. The proponent agency is CECW-CO-R.

Form Approved -
OMB No. 0710-0003
Expires: 01-08-2018

The public reporting burden for this collection of information, OMB Control Number 0710-0003, is estimated to average 11 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or burden reduction suggestions to the Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, at whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dd-dod-information-collections@mail.mil. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Authorities: Rivers and Harbors Act, Section 10, 33 USC 403; Clean Water Act, Section 404, 33 USC 1344; Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, Section 103, 33 USC 1413; Regulatory Programs of the Corps of Engineers; Final Rule 33 CFR 320-332. Principal Purpose: Information provided on this form will be used in evaluating the application for a permit. Routine Uses: This information may be shared with the Department of Justice and other federal, state, and local government agencies, and the public and may be made available as part of a public notice as required by Federal law. Submission of requested information is voluntary, however, if information is not provided the permit application cannot be evaluated nor can a permit be issued. One set of original drawings or good reproducible copies which show the location and character of the proposed activity must be attached to this application (see sample drawings and/or instructions) and be submitted to the District Engineer having jurisdiction over the location of the proposed activity. An application that is not completed in full will be returned. System of Record Notice (SORN). The information received is entered into our permit tracking database and a SORN has been completed (SORN #A1145b) and may be accessed at the following website: <http://dpcl.d.defense.gov/Privacy/SORNsIndex/DOD-wide-SORN-Article-View/Article/570115/a1145b-ce.aspx>

(ITEMS 1 THRU 4 TO BE FILLED BY THE CORPS)

1. APPLICATION NO.	2. FIELD OFFICE CODE	3. DATE RECEIVED	4. DATE APPLICATION COMPLETE
--------------------	----------------------	------------------	------------------------------

(ITEMS BELOW TO BE FILLED BY APPLICANT)

5. APPLICANT'S NAME First - Neil Middle - Anthony Last - Sims Company - Ocean-Era, Inc. E-mail Address - neil@ocean-era.com	8. AUTHORIZED AGENT'S NAME AND TITLE (agent is not required) First - Dennis Middle - Jay Last - Peters Company - Gulfstream Aquaculture E-mail Address - dennis@gulfstreamaquaculture.com
6. APPLICANT'S ADDRESS: Address- PO Box 4239 City - Kailua-Kona State - HI Zip - 96740 Country - USA	9. AGENT'S ADDRESS: Address- 603 Walton Way City - Miramar Beach State - FL Zip - 32550 Country - USA
7. APPLICANT'S PHONE NOS. w/AREA CODE a. Residence b. Business c. Fax (808) 989-2438 (808) 331-1188 (808) 325-3425	10. AGENTS PHONE NOS. w/AREA CODE a. Residence b. Business c. Fax (850) 240-3414 (850) 837-0871 (850) 837-0871

STATEMENT OF AUTHORIZATION

11. I hereby authorize, Dennis Peters to act in my behalf as my agent in the processing of this application and to furnish, upon request, supplemental information in support of this permit application.



SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT

2018-10-29

DATE

NAME, LOCATION, AND DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT OR ACTIVITY

12. PROJECT NAME OR TITLE (see instructions) Velella Epsilon Project – Pioneering Offshore Aquaculture in the Southeastern Gulf of Mexico NOAA Sea Grant 2017 Aquaculture Initiative	
13. NAME OF WATERBODY, IF KNOWN (if applicable) Gulf of Mexico (GOM)	14. PROJECT STREET ADDRESS (if applicable) Address N/A
15. LOCATION OF PROJECT Latitude: °N 27.122364167 Longitude: °W 83.200381833	City - N/A State- N/A Zip- N/A
16. OTHER LOCATION DESCRIPTIONS, IF KNOWN (see instructions) State Tax Parcel ID N/A Municipality N/A Section - N/A Township - N/A Range - N/A	

17. DIRECTIONS TO THE SITE

Approximately 40 to 45 miles West, Southwest offshore from Longboat Pass, Sarasota Bay, Florida in the GOM; approximately located at 27.118543° N and 83.209767° W (See the attached reference materials: Supplemental Data file and the Baseline Environmental Survey [BES] Report).

18. Nature of Activity (Description of project, include all features)

The VE Project will successfully establish and complete a demonstration project for open ocean aquaculture of marine finfish in the GOM, with documented lessons-learned, public outreach experiences, and a detailed permitting pathway for others to follow. The VE Project will utilize a pilot-scale (single net pen) aquaculture system where up to 20,000 almaco jack (kampachi; *Seriola rivoliana*) fingerlings will be reared in Federal waters approximately 45 miles west, southwest of Sarasota, FL. Fish will be stocked as a single cohort of 20,000 fish and reared for approximately 12 months. The expected yield is approximately 17,000 fish (based on an estimated 85% survival rate) with a final fish size of approximately 4.4 pounds (lb.)/fish. Based on these numbers, it is anticipated that an estimated final maximum harvest weight of 74,800 lb. whole weight. These fish will be landed in Florida, marketed, and sold to state- and Federally-licensed dealers, in accordance with state and Federal law. (See the attached: Supplemental Data file and the BES Report)

19. Project Purpose (Describe the reason or purpose of the project, see instructions)

The first purpose is to validate the feasibility of deploying a temporary, small-scale, demonstration net pen and rearing a single cohort of finfish, almaco jack, in GOM waters off southwest Florida, located due west of Sarasota, Florida. A manufactured submersible fish pen will be deployed on an engineered, multi-anchor swivel (MAS) mooring system. It will have up to four (4) anchors for the mooring, with a swivel and a bridle system. The second purpose is to conduct a thorough environmental monitoring program whose goal is to demonstrate that impacts on water quality around the net pen are likely to be immeasurable, due to the low stocking biomass, the careful monitoring of feeding, and the constant, dilutive movement of water through the net pen. The third purpose is to directly address the public misperception of, and fishing industry resistance to, the expansion of open ocean aquaculture in the GOM. This assessment work will include in-person, telephone, and email interviews with established stakeholder interests and provide the baseline data for later evaluation of the effectiveness of the project. (See the attached: Supplemental Data file)

USE BLOCKS 20-23 IF DREDGED AND/OR FILL MATERIAL IS TO BE DISCHARGED

20. Reason(s) for Discharge

N/A

21. Type(s) of Material Being Discharged and the Amount of Each Type in Cubic Yards:

Type Amount in Cubic Yards	Type Amount in Cubic Yards	Type Amount in Cubic Yards
N/A		

22. Surface Area in Acres of Wetlands or Other Waters Filled (see instructions)

Acres N/A

or

Linear Feet N/A

23. Description of Avoidance, Minimization, and Compensation (see instructions)

The VE Project is not anticipated to result in substantial damage to EFH waters (water quality) or substrate (hardbottom components) of the GOM or coastal habitats due to the stationary (MAS) site location and diver-assisted anchor placement of the VE Project; the limited size and duration of the project; operational features that would result in minimal impacts to water quality, and that prevent adverse impacts to shallow habitats. The VE Project has features to help ensure that if gear becomes detached, a notification signal would be sent and the gear would be retrieved. There would be limited vessel activity associated with the project (See the attached: Supplemental Data file and the BES Report).

24. Is Any Portion of the Work Already Complete? ☐ Yes ☒ No IF YES, DESCRIBE THE COMPLETED WORK

25. Addresses of Adjoining Property Owners, Lessees, Etc., Whose Property Adjoins the Waterbody (if more than can be entered here, please attach a supplemental list).

a. Address- N/A

City - N/A

State - N/A

Zip - N/A

b. Address-

City -

State -

Zip -

c. Address-

City -

State -

Zip -

d. Address-

City -

State -

Zip -

e. Address-

City -

State -

Zip -

26. List of Other Certificates or Approvals/Denials received from other Federal, State, or Local Agencies for Work Described in This Application.

AGENCY	TYPE APPROVAL*	IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	DATE APPLIED	DATE APPROVED	DATE DENIED
EPA	NPDES		2018-10-26		

* Would include but is not restricted to zoning, building, and flood plain permits

27. Application is hereby made for permit or permits to authorize the work described in this application. I certify that this information in this application is complete and accurate. I further certify that I possess the authority to undertake the work described herein or am acting as the duly authorized agent of the applicar

	2018-10-29		2018-10-29
SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT	DATE	SIGNATURE OF AGENT	DATE

The Application must be signed by the person who desires to undertake the proposed activity (applicant) or it may be signed by a duly authorized agent if the statement in block 11 has been filled out and signed.

18 U.S.C. Section 1001 provides that: Whoever, in any manner within the jurisdiction of any department or agency of the United States knowingly and willfully falsifies, conceals, or covers up any trick, scheme, or disguises a material fact or makes any false, fictitious or fraudulent statements or representations or makes or uses any false writing or document knowing same to contain any false, fictitious or fraudulent statements or entry, shall be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned not more than five years or both.

NMFS Endangered Species Act Section 7 Checklist

For common, minor coastal construction projects

Updated 08/10/2015

A) Project Identification

Lead Action Agency:

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Agency Contact: (Phone, Email)

(404) 562-9294, tyler.kip@epa.gov

Applicant Name/ Contact: (Phone, Email)

Neil Anthony Sims/(808) 989-2438, neil@ocean-era.com

Project Name & ID #:

Verella Epsilon Project – Pioneering Offshore Aquaculture in the Southeastern Gulf of Mexico

Are any aspects of the proposed project being authorized under a separate consultation? (SAJ general permits, GRBO, SARBO, NWP, Programmatic consultation, etc.)

USACE - Section 10 Permit

EPA - National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit

B) Project Location and Site Description

1. Address, including county and state, and description of property (public, residential, commercial, industrial, etc.):

Gulf of Mexico (GOM)

2. a) Latitude & Longitude:

i. Required to be submitted in Decimal Degrees and Datum (e.g., 27.71622 , -80.25174 [NAD83])

ii. Online conversion: <http://transition.fcc.gov/mb/audio/bickel/DDMMSS-decimal.html>

27.122364167° N and -83.200381833° W

3. Waterbody:

i. Name of the body of water on which the project is located (St. Johns River, Tampa Bay, Suwannee River, etc.)

ii. If riverine or estuarine, approximate navigable distance from marine environment (e.g., Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico)

GOM

C) Project Site Resource Description

1. Existing Structures: (Describe current structures in project area)

i. Marina, riprap, dock, etc.

ii. Number of slips. size (area of overwater structure), linear or square footage, location, orientation, etc.

i. N/A

ii. GOM

2. Existing Conditions: (Describe the project area)

i. Substrate type, water quality, depth, etc.

ii. List any alterations to substrate type, water quality, depth, etc, resulting from the proposed action (qualitative and quantitative)

i. 40m to 45m depth

ii. None

3. Seagrasses & Other Marine Vegetation

i. If a benthic survey was conducted provide date of survey and a copy of the report

ii. Species area of coverage estimates and density of species coverage (percentage) estimates

iii. Location relative to proposed structures. Provide detailed sketch of action area and location of marine vegetation

iv. List any impacts to seagrasses or other marine vegetation resulting from proposed action (square feet)

N/A

4. Mangroves

i. Species (red, black, or white)

ii. Area (square and linear feet). Provide detailed sketch of the action area and location of mangroves.

iii. List any impacts to mangroves resulting from the proposed action (square and linear feet)

N/A

5. Corals

- i. If a benthic survey was conducted provide date of survey and a copy of the report
- ii. Species Present
- iii. Area of coverage and density estimates (percentage, include estimates for each species)
- iv. Location relative to proposed structures. Provide detailed sketch of action area and location of corals.
- v. List any impacts to corals resulting from proposed action (number and size of colonies and/or fragments)

Due to the relatively shallow water depths of the proposed VE Project site location (approximately 40m to 45m), the multi-anchor system (MAS; mooring) securing the tender vessel and supporting the floating net pen can be positioned via diver assistance and/or drop camera systems to ensure that the placement is in an area of unconsolidated sediments (sand bottom), and thus avoiding hardbottoms, corals, and/or other sensitive habitats. Additionally, a Baseline Environmental Survey (BES; sea floor survey [side scan sonar, sub-bottom profile, magnetometer, and hydrologic measurements], oceanographic/hydrographic data, and an analysis report) has been conducted to identify sufficient areas of unconsolidated sediments (sand) on which to set the MAS moorings and to ensure the avoidance of sensitive hardbottoms and coral habitats, as well as any potential cultural resources (See the attached Supplemental Data file and the BES Report for project details).

D) Project Description and Construction Methods

- ☒ Yes, the applicant has agreed to follow the Mangroves and Seagrass Dock Construction Guidelines (Found [here](#))
- ☒ Yes, the applicant has agreed to follow NMFS Johnson's Seagrass Dock Construction Guidelines (Found [here](#))
- ☒ Yes, the applicant has agreed to follow the NMFS Sea Turtle and Smalltooth Sawfish Construction Conditions (Found [here](#))

1. Project: (Please describe)

An aquaculture research activity that focuses on seafood product development and market research.

The VE Project will successfully establish and complete a demonstration project for open ocean aquaculture of marine finfish in the GOM, with documented lessons-learned, public outreach experiences, and a detailed permitting pathway for others to follow. The VE Project will utilize a pilot-scale (single net pen) aquaculture system where up to 20,000 albacore jack (kempchik; *Seriola rivoliana*) fingerlings will be reared in Federal waters approximately 45 miles west, southwest of Sarasota, FL. Fish will be stocked as a single cohort of 20,000 fish and reared for approximately 12 months. The expected yield is approximately 17,000 fish (based on an estimated 85% survival rate) with a final fish size of approximately 4.4 pounds (lb.)/fish. Based on these numbers, it is anticipated that an estimated final maximum harvest weight of 74,800 lb. whole weight will be achieved. These fish will be landed in Florida, marketed, and sold to state- and Federally-licensed dealers, in accordance with state and Federal law (See the attached: Supplemental Data file and the BES Report).

The goal is to prove that a submersible surface net pen will provide optimal growth, survivability, and security during intense storm conditions and hurricanes; maximize access for public outreach benefits; and reduce operating costs. The VE Project will consist of a single offshore-strength (PolarCirkel-style) net pen (17m [56 ft] in diameter, with copper alloy mesh netting, 7m [23 ft] in depth) and tender vessel, which will be moored to the net pen for the duration of deployment (See the Supplemental Data file for additional project details).

2. In Water Structures:

- i. Type of structure(s) (e.g. boat basin, riprap, seawall)
- ii. Square and/or linear feet of structure(s)
- iii. Number of new vessels/slips, if any
- iv. Is this structure new, removal, or replacement?

- i. Net Pen
- ii. 17m (56 ft) diameter x 7m (23 ft) deep
- iii. 1 vessel
- iv. New

3. Overwater Structures:

- i. Will the structure have grated decking?
- ii. Proposed spacing between boards (0.5-inch, 0.75-inch, none, etc.)
- iii. Height above mean high water (MHW) elevation
- iv. Directional orientation of main axis of dock
- v. Overwater area (calculate square footage)
- vi. Is this structure new, removal or replacement?

N/A

4. If the proposed structure is a fishing pier please answer the following:

- i. Is the fishing pier public or private?
- ii. How many people are expected to fish from the pier each day?
- iii. What is the applicant's plan to address hook-and-line captures at the fishing pier?
- iv. Will there be any educational signs posted?

N/A

5. Methods: (For pile installation, please see Pile Installation section below)

- i. Step-by-step construction methodology
- ii. Demolition/ removal of existing structures and debris
- iii. Location of work (barge, upland or both)

The VE Project will consist of a single offshore-strength (PolarCirkel-style) net pen (17m [56 ft] in diameter, with copper alloy mesh netting, 7m [23 ft] in depth) and tender vessel, which will be moored to the net pen array for the duration of deployment. The net pen and MAS mooring equipment will be shipped to Port Manatee (Manatee County Port Authority), located at 300 Tampa Bay Way, Palmetto, Florida 34221-6608, on the southeastern shore of Tampa Bay, FL. From this staging area location, the net pen and MAS will be assembled and off-loaded to a barge that will be navigated to the VE Project site.

Due to the relatively shallow water depths of the proposed VE Project site location (approximately 40m to 45m), the MAS (mooring) securing the tender vessel and supporting the floating net pen can be positioned via diver assistance and/or drop camera systems to ensure that the placement is in an area of unconsolidated sediments (sand bottom), and thus avoiding hardbottoms, corals, and/or other sensitive habitats (See the attached: Supplemental Data file and the BES Report).

The VE Project net pen will have as a minimum, one properly functioning locating device (e.g., global positioning system [GPS] device) to assist in locating the system in the event it is damaged or lost. The VE Project Team contacted the Aids to Navigation (ATON) Officer for USCG, Sector St. Petersburg, FL. It was determined that no permanent aids to navigation are required or necessary (as it is not necessary to chart the net pen array as an 'obstruction to navigation') as long as a tender vessel remains on site. When pens are submerged during storm or other trial events, the area perimeter would be marked with buoys or high flyers (poles) per USCG and NOAA Fisheries regulations.

The net pen design is very flexible and self-adjusts to suit the constantly changing wave and current conditions. As a result, the system can float on the surface of the ocean most of the time at an operational position. When a storm approaches the area, the operating team simply opens a valve to flood the system (the Flotation Capsule) with water, causing the entire net pen array to submerge. A buoy remains on the surface, marking the net pen's position and supporting the air hose. When the net pen approaches the bottom, the system will maintain the cage several meters above the sea floor. Submerged and protected from the storm above, the system is still able to rotate around the MAS and adjust to the currents. After the storm, the operating team pumps air back into the system (the Flotation Capsule) via a hose, making the net pen array buoyant, causing the system to rise back to the surface and resume operational conditions.

GPS transponders aboard the net pen would provide regular automated reporting of the net pen's position. This information would be available only to the VE Project Team members and not to other mariners. Video feeds from security and in-water cameras would be available for monitoring from the tender vessel 24 hours a day. VE Project staff would access the monitor the systems at least twice a day. If staff detect that the net pen is outside of the expected operating area, they would use GPS information to launch an emergency response in a timely manner.

At the conclusion of the Demonstration trial, the net pen and all mooring equipment would be removed from the site and hauled to shore for proper cleaning and storage. The VE Project Team would comply with any requirements for a more detailed project closure plan that may be required by the USACE.

6. Pile Installation (Use additional rows for each combination of pile size and material)

Pile Material	Installation Method	Number of Piles	Pile Size (inches)	Maximum number of piles to be driven per day

Pile Material	Installation Method	Number of Piles	Pile Size (inches)	Maximum number of piles to be driven per day

Will piles be driven in a confined space (150' to nearest sound reflecting object)?

Yes ☐

No ☒

Will noise abatement be used?

Yes ☐

No ☒

Noise abatement details:

N/A

Pile Installation details/notes:

N/A

7. Dredging

Dredge Type: (Hopper, clamshell, etc.)

N/A

Area (sq. ft.) to be dredged:

N/A

Depth of cut:

N/A

Volume of material to be dredged: (cubic yards)

N/A

Sediment testing: (Has the material to be dredged been tested? Is there any contamination?)

N/A

Spoil disposal plans: (location of disposal area, sediment type at disposal area, etc.)

N/A

8. Artificial Reefs

Please refer to the artificial reef program websites for the particular state in which the project will occur:

[Alabama](#); [Florida](#); [additional Florida guidance](#); [Mississippi](#); [Louisiana](#); [South Carolina](#); [North Carolina](#); [Texas](#)

- i. Reef site selection (process details)
- ii. Materials to be used
- iii. Deployment Method
- iv. Deployment schedule

N/A

9. Construction Schedule

- i. Number of days/weeks/months of in-water work
- ii. Daylight construction only?
- iii. Seasonal restrictions?

i. No construction; however, the net pen will be deployed on a MAS mooring for approximately 12 months from June 2021 through May 2022.

ii. The VE Project will be in position, on site 24 hours per day

iii. None

10. Conservation/ Protective Measures

How is conservation, or other protective measures, being incorporated into this project, if at all?

Conservation and protective measures have been established. (See the attached Supplemental Data file and BES Report for details)

The VE Project plans to use almaco broodstock that are native to the GOM (and are not genetically engineered) for the source of eggs during the hatchery production of fingerlings. The VE Project would therefore, utilize first generation offspring of wild-caught fish to stock the net pen. As such, the VE Project would use fingerling fish (first-generation offspring; F1 juveniles) for stocking the net pens from an existing facility (e.g., RSMAS, U of M) that harvests fish to maintain adult broodstock. This is consistent with the Guidance and Procedures for Genetic Requirements for Gulf Aquaculture Permits; February 12th, 2016; as well as with the Decision Process for the Genetic Risk Assessment of Releases Involving Marine Organisms, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, September 2009. Additionally, the VE Project would not result in any substantial increase in harvest of wild almaco jack.

Cultured fish could possibly escape during net pen stocking and harvest activities; however, the VE Project would use methods designed to prevent accidental escapes including using closed containers to transport fingerlings to the net pen. Because stocking would be done using pumps while the net pen is at the surface and the surround net is deployed, few fingerlings if any would likely escape during stocking operations. Considering the equipment and operations that will be put in place to reduce the risk of escape, the potential for escapes during stocking and harvesting is thought to be minimal. Should any fingerlings escape, they would be expected to remain around the net pen (which would, even in this case, act as a fish aggregating device) rather than swimming off into pelagic waters. Large fish that are expected to have become attracted to the net pen such as tunas, billfish, and possibly sharks, would likely consume any escaped fingerlings that are not retrieved.

The fish that would be stocked and maintained in the net pen would be genetically indistinguishable from the local wild population because they are first-generation (F1) offspring from wild-caught fish from the GOM and are the result of mixed broodstock parental crosses. As such, an unforeseen release of small quantities of cultured fish into the wild would not substantially impact the genetic structure of wild fish stocks through genetic introgression and would not reduce the health or fitness of the wild stock.

Disease and parasite transmission from the VE Project are unlikely to have a substantial impact on wild stocks based on:

(a) Fingerlings would be from the Mote or RSMAS certified disease-free hatchery facility. Before stocking the pen, the fish would be examined and therefore the pens would not be stocked with fish showing signs of disease or parasites. (b) Technicians would routinely monitor the health of the fish in the net pen; dead or sick individual fish would be removed. Should a disease outbreak occur or heavy parasite loading be detected, then the net pen would be treated to the extent necessary, following the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Approved Drugs for Use in Aquaculture handbook. (c) Fish are proposed to be stocked at levels that are not expected to result in stress from over-crowding, which has the potential to result in a greater likelihood for diseases. (d) Fish mortalities that occur during the VE Project would be removed during daily maintenance operations. Technicians would not dispose of any mortalities in the GOM.

As guided by any subsequent requirements issued in the NPDES or Section 10 permits, the VE Project will develop an Aquatic Animal Health Plan, tailored to the specific needs of this Demonstration farm project, as required. Guidance will be additionally taken from the National Aquatic Animal Health Plan for the United States; prepared by the National Aquatic Animal Health Task Force; October 2008; as implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Aquaculture/ Aquatic Animal Health Program.

The potential for attraction and interaction of marine mammals and sea turtles at the VE Project site is likely. Despite the potential risks; however, the potential for entanglements are unlikely if anchor lines and nets are kept taut at all times. The VE Project activity is not anticipated to result in collisions between protected marine mammal, sea turtle, or fish species and the net pen or tender vessel. The vessel captain will operate at sea in a manner that would reduce the risk of collisions with marine mammals and sea turtles. The potential for attraction and interaction of marine mammals and sea turtles at the VE Project site is likely. Despite the potential risks; however, the potential for entanglements are unlikely if anchor lines and nets are kept taut at all times. The VE Project activity is not anticipated to result in collisions between protected marine mammal, sea turtle, or fish species and the net pen or tender vessel. The vessel captain will operate at sea in a manner that would reduce the risk of collisions with marine mammals and sea turtles.

No impacts are anticipated on the Gulf sturgeon, as they are not anticipated to occur at the offshore distance of the VE Project site location (40 to 45 miles offshore). No impacts are anticipated on the Nassau grouper, as they are limited to locations including the Yucatan, Tortugas, and Key West.

Due to the relatively shallow water depths of the proposed VE Project site location (approximately 40 m to 45 m), the MAS (mooring) securing the tender vessel and supporting the floating net pen can be positioned via diver assistance to ensure that the placement is in an area of unconsolidated sediments (sand bottom), and thus avoiding hardbottoms and coral habitats.

The VE Project's net pen culture and harvest activities of almaco jack may adversely affect EFH, but would have only a minimal effect on EFH. The VE Project's activities are anticipated to have no effect on EFH Habitats of Particular Concern (HAPC), as none are located in the vicinity of the project area. The Reef and Banks Coral EFH HAPC are located in the northwestern portion of the GOM, off the Texas and Louisiana coasts; and the Pulley Ridge Coral EFH HAPC is located approximately 80 nautical miles southeast of the VE Project site. The Modified Site B identified in the BES report by the VE Project Team does not coincide with any sensitive coral hardbottom, Coral EFH, or Coral HAPC habitats, as demonstrated by the NCCOS spatial analysis team and the BES report.

The VE Project activities are anticipated to result in negligible, short-term impacts on EFH, including the Shrimp, Red Drum, Reef Fish, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Spiny Lobster, Coral and Coral Reefs Stone, and Stone Crab Fishery Management Units (FMUs). The VE Project is not anticipated to result in substantial damage to EFH waters (water quality) or substrate (hardbottom components)

of the GOM or coastal habitats due to the stationary (MAS) site location and diver-assisted anchor placement of the VE Project; the limited size and duration of the project; operational features that would result in minimal impacts to water quality, and that prevent adverse impacts to shallow habitats. The VE Project has features to help ensure that if gear becomes detached, a notification signal would be sent and the gear would be retrieved. There would be limited vessel activity associated with the project.

The VE Project's net pen culture and harvest operations of almaco jack would not result in any anticipated impacts on marine mammals, sea turtles, or other protected species of the GOM. There are 28 different species of marine mammals that may occur in the GOM. All 28 species are protected under the MMPA; six are additionally listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (sperm [Physeter microcephalus], sei [Balaenoptera borealis], fin [Balaenoptera physalus], blue [Balaenoptera musculus], humpback [Megaptera novaeangliae] and North Atlantic right [Eubalaena glacialis] whales).

Other ESA-protected species occurring in the GOM include two threatened sea turtle species (loggerhead [Caretta caretta] and green [Chelonia mydas]); three endangered sea turtle species (Kemp's Ridley [Lepidochelys kempii], leatherback [Dermochelys coriacea], and hawksbill [Eretmochelys imbricata]); two endangered fish species (Gulf sturgeon [Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi] and smalltooth sawfish [Pristis pectinata]); and one threatened fish species (Nassau grouper [Epinephelus striatus]).

Contingency Plan for Entanglements - The MAS system comprises large diameter mooring lines (ropes) that will be approximately 2". The drag load and constant taught lines scenario serves to reduce to de minimis the typical levels of risks and concerns for marine mammal entanglement. The inherent rigidity of the anchor line would make it is extremely unlikely that the line could wrap around a fluke or tail of a marine mammal or entangle a sea turtle. Additionally, since the net pen system consists of a stainless cage, the rigid chain-link mesh pen reduces the risk for catastrophic cage collapse and further reduces to a de minimis level the chance for marine species entanglement. The HDPE flotation system is also very rigid, and is not anticipated to cause any entanglement or injury to protected marine species.

Further, during severe storm events when the net pen array is submerged, marine species have been documented to seek deeper waters and avoid shallower systems or infrastructure, such as the net pen array. Dolphins and whales have the ability to detect changes in salinity of waters near the surface, often caused by heavy rainfall associated with storms, such as hurricanes. Marine mammals have been reported to depart from areas experiencing the heavy rain events associated with the leading edges of hurricanes. As such, marine mammals have sufficient time to exercise precautionary measures and seek refuge away from storms, and thus the VE Project site.

Additionally, nine coral species (elkhorn [Acropora palmata], staghorn [A. cervicornis], Lamarck's sheet [Agaricia lamarcki], lobed star [Orbicella annularis] pillar coral [Dendrogyra cylindrus], elliptical star coral [Dichocoenia stokesii], mountainous star coral [Orbicella faveolata], boulder star coral [Orbicella franksi], rough cactus coral [Mycetophyllia ferox]) are ESA-protected as threatened.

The potential for attraction or interaction of marine mammals and sea turtles at the VE Project site is likely. Despite the potential risks; however, the potential for entanglements are unlikely if mooring lines are kept taut at all times. The MAS is designed to remain taught. The net pen (and any attached vessels) will track around in a 'watch circle' with the current, maintaining taught mooring lines. Additionally, the pen will use a rigid copper alloy mesh, which presents no marine mammal entanglement hazard. The VE Project activity is not anticipated to result in collisions between protected marine mammal, sea turtle, or fish species and the net pen or tender vessel. The vessel captain will operate at sea in a manner that would reduce the risk of collisions with marine mammals and sea turtles. No impacts are anticipated on the Gulf sturgeon, as they are not anticipated to occur at the offshore distance of the VE Project site location (40 to 45 miles offshore). No impacts are anticipated on the Nassau grouper, as they are limited to locations including the Yucatan, Tortugas, and Key West. Due to the relatively shallow water depths of the proposed VE Project site location (approximately 40m deep), the MAS (moorings) securing the tender vessel and supporting the floating net pen would be positioned via diver assistance and/or drop camera systems, as a habitat conservation measure for avoidance and minimization of environmental impacts, thus ensuring that the placements are in areas of unconsolidated sediments (sand bottom) and avoiding hardbottom, coral, or other sensitive habitats, as sited from the BES results.

In cooperation with NOAA Fisheries Protected Resources staff, the VE Project Team has prepared and will implement a Marine Mammal, Sea Turtle, and Seabird Monitoring and Data Collection Plan (Protected Species Plan). Marine protected species are marine mammals, sea turtles, and ESA-listed seabirds. The VE Project staff would monitor marine mammals and other protected species whenever staff are at the VE Project site. A designated representative of the EPA and USACE permits would report immediately to NOAA Fisheries (a) any observed or reported direct physical contact by any marine mammal, sea turtle, or ESA-listed seabird with any part of the net pen array; or (b) any observed or reported injured or entangled marine mammal, sea turtle, or ESA-listed seabird within 330 ft of any part the net pen array. The VE Project staff would suspend all surface activities, including stocking, harvesting operations, and routine maintenance operations when an ESA-listed seabird comes within 330 ft of the activity until the bird leaves the area.