



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Releases Aquaculture: Effects on Fish Habitat along the Atlantic Coast

Arlington, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission announces the release of the 16th publication in its Habitat Management Series, entitled *Aquaculture: Effects on Fish Habitat along the Atlantic Coast*. The document provides a broad description of current and common marine aquaculture (mariculture) practices, siting considerations, and some potential effects on fish habitats. It's intended to serve as an introduction to the topic and facilitate a discussion of the intersection of aquaculture planning and fishery habitat conservation.



Floating oyster bags and suspended systems are popular oyster culture techniques in Florida. Photo credit: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Mariculture is an important source of sustainable seafood production and a growing industry that creates jobs, supports communities, and promotes international trade. The U.S. aquaculture and mariculture industry was valued at \$1.4 billion and produced 627 million pounds of meat and 1.2 million jobs in 2015. As the human population continues to grow, there will be an ever-increasing demand for seafood. Aquaculture and mariculture can help meet that demand.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species.

From a fish habitat perspective, it is important to carefully consider spatial planning before establishing an aquaculture operation. Habitats such as submerged aquatic vegetation, coral reefs, or mangroves should be avoided as they are sensitive to nutrient fluxes, sedimentation, and disturbance, as well as being important habitats for a variety of organisms, including many Commission-managed species. Additionally, it's important to consider if a particular location will have spatial conflicts with other individuals that use the area, namely fishermen, boaters, or landowners. Since there are many misconceptions about the impacts of aquaculture, it is important to raise awareness about both the potential benefits and adverse impacts to the public or any stakeholders that may be involved.

Aquaculture: Effects on Fish Habitat along the Atlantic Coast is available at http://www.asmfc.org/files/Habitat/HMS16_Aquaculture_May2020.pdf. For more information on aquaculture, visit the Commission website at <http://www.asmfc.org/habitat/hot-topics> or contact Dr. Lisa Havel, Habitat Committee Coordinator, at lhavel@asmfc.org.

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