

# FLORIDA AQUACULTURE

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## 2008 AQUACULTURE GRANT PROGRAM CHECKS MAILED

The State of Florida received \$341,806 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the state's portion of a \$50 million feed stimulus grant under the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Commissioner of Agriculture Charles H. Bronson noted that, "Sky-high feed costs in 2008 triggered fish farm closings throughout the Southeast. We moved these funds to Florida farmers as quickly as we could and are very appreciative of the opportunity to expedite the 2008 Aquaculture Grant Program." No federal funds were used for administrative costs.

Applications were mailed June 18th to 595 farms that

possessed the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration in 2008 and were continuing to farm in 2009.

As prescribed by USDA, applicants were required to provide feed invoices or notarized statements from feed manufacturers that proved feed costs and amounts purchased since 2003.

To be considered farmers had to document that 2008 feed cost were at least 25% greater than the preceding five year industry average (2003-2007), as established by the Department and each farmer had to certify that his 2008



feed costs represented at least 25% of his total annual cost of production.

The Division received 35 applications by the July 24th deadline of which 25 farms submitted feed volume and cost data. Two of the 25 applications failed to meet the program thresholds. The remaining 23 fish farmers substantiated claims of nearly \$600,000. This necessitated approximately a 43% reduction to each of the 23 claims. Feed stimulus checks were mailed on August 19, 2009.

ARRA-Aquaculture Grant Program information is available at [http://www.recovery.gov/?q=content/program-plan&program\\_id=7743](http://www.recovery.gov/?q=content/program-plan&program_id=7743).

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## ALLIGATOR FARMERS COLLECT FEWER EGGS

Each summer Florida alligator farmers organize collection of wild alligator eggs under the supervision of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). A \$5 per egg fee is paid to the FWC that supports alligator management efforts and product marketing. Farmers also pay all of the egg collection costs in-

cluding aerial survey by a small helicopter.

This year 32,451 eggs were collected, down slightly from the 2008 collection of 39,000 eggs. The Lake Okeechobee region was a bright spot this year with good water levels and yielded 6,600 eggs versus almost no production over the last two years. Water

Conservation Areas were a disappointment with little nesting and only 600 eggs collected versus 5,000 eggs in 2008.

Fewer farms participated this year as a result of a dramatic decrease in demand for alligator meat and hides. Hides prices are down 60% from the same time last year.

### 10th Anniversary 1999 ~ 2009

Ten years ago the Division of Aquaculture was created by the Florida Legislature to: reduce the regulatory burden on Florida's aquacultural community, support aquafarming growth, and conserve and protect Florida's natural lands, waters, fish, and wildlife.

It has been our privilege as state employees to serve the citizens of Florida, the Florida Aquaculture Review Council, oyster harvesters, shellfish processors, and Florida farmers.

Thank you,  
R. Sherman Wilhelm

## FLORIDA FIRM APPROVED TO IRRADIATE OYSTERS

“IRRADIATION OFFERS A COST EFFECTIVE AND ENERGY EFFICIENT METHOD FOR PROVIDING SAFER OYSTER PRODUCTS FROM FLORIDA.”

The Division of Aquaculture has licensed Food Technology Services Incorporated (FTSI) in Mulberry Florida to use irradiation to produce safer oyster products. This is the first facility in the nation to use this process since the original approval was issued by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2005.

“Providing this process for a safer food supply was a truly cooperative effort with participation by the department, FDA, FTSI, the University of Florida, and the Florida oyster industry,” Commissioner of Agriculture Charles H. Bronson said. “Irradiation offers a cost effective and energy efficient method for providing safer oyster products from Florida.”

The FTSI treatment has been fully validated in commercial trials conducted by the University of Florida’s Food Science & Human Nutrition Department. Irradiation can reduce certain potentially

harmful bacteria without altering the flavor and appearance of live, raw oysters. The oysters are pre-packaged on pallets and exposed for a very short time to a controlled amount of radiation that selectively kills certain types and amounts of bacteria. The treatment will kill the marine bacterium called *Vibrio vulnificus*, which can be found in oysters and seawater during warmer months. *Vibrio vulnificus* has caused serious illnesses and death in a very small number of consumers with high risk conditions such as chronic illness of the liver, stomach, blood or immune disorders. Irradiated oysters provide a safer alternative for high risk consumers that love fresh oysters.

Irradiation and other commercially available post harvest processes to reduce *Vibrio vulnificus* have been developed by the oyster industry to help the Gulf States achieve the National Shellfish Sanitation Program required illness rate reduction.

*Are irradiated foods still nutritious and wholesome?* Yes. Nutritional loss is less than or equal to cooking or freezing.

*Does irradiation make food radioactive?* No. The irradiation process involves passing food through an irradiation field. The food never contacts a radioactive substance and the ionizing radiation is not strong enough to disintegrate the nucleus of even one atom of a food molecule

*For what other purposes is irradiation technology used in the United States?* In addition to cancer treatment, irradiation is used for: security checks on hand luggage at airports, making tires more durable, sterilizing manure for gardens, making non-stick cookware coatings, purifying wool, sterilizing medical products like surgical gloves, and destroying bacteria in cosmetics.

For additional information, contact David Heil, 850-488-4033, or Dr. Steve Otwell, 352-392-4221.

## A NATURAL PROGRESSION: COLLECTOR, FARMER, CONSERVATIONIST



Ken Nedimyer’s love for diving, marine biology, and the Florida Keys has led him through several careers as harvester of wild marine life for the aquarium trade, live rock farmer, and a coral restoration pioneer.

Ken began the first live rock farm in the Keys in 1994. He noticed staghorn coral settling

on his rock a few years later (it’s never settled since and is now listed as a threatened species). Ken nurtured these corals from 1997 to 2000. In late 2000, after attending the Marine Ornamentals conference in Orlando and talking to federal biologists about the need for coral nurseries, Ken decided to do work with the

staghorn corals growing on his live rock.

With his daughter Kelly, he started a coral nursery as part of a 4-H project. Their first restoration effort occurred in 2003 and involved transplanting six corals to a ship grounding site. As a result of breakage, those six corals

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have turned into over 350 corals that are continuing to colonize the damaged area. Their nursery now has over 3,500 corals, most of which are direct descendants (clones) of the original settlers. And they have received permits to add new, wild collected staghorn genotypes to the nursery and are tracking multiple "generations" of about 50 different genotypes. They have transplanted over 350 corals to 16 different restoration sites, and have permits in-hand to transplant another 300 corals to 12 more sites within the next year.

This past winter Ken received permits to start two experimental nurseries for the threatened elkhorn coral. At these nurseries he will be developing *in situ* cloning techniques with the eventual goal of producing second and third clonal lines that can be used for restoration purposes. This nursery

may be the first of its kind for elkhorn coral.

In 2007 Ken helped to reorganize a non-profit organization into the Coral Restoration Foundation (<http://coralrestoration.org>), and all of their nursery and restoration work is now being done under that name.

In July NOAA announced it will fund a coral restoration proposal submitted by the Nature Conservancy in conjunction with the Coral Res-



toration Foundation and several other partners. As part of this grant, coral nurseries like Ken's in the Upper

Keys will be established in several Florida and Virgin Island locations. Wild collected broken coral fragments will be used to populate the nurseries, and as second and third clonal lines of these fragments are big enough to transplant, they

will be placed on various reefs throughout South Florida and the Virgin Islands. Initially, the other partners will be working with staghorn coral. Ken will work with elkhorn coral. As he develops *in situ* nursery techniques the other groups will be trained and start elkhorn nurseries.

Ken is expecting to receive funding from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Wildlife Legacy program to do a comparative study of staghorn growth, survival, and reef competency of corals grown in an offshore nursery vs. corals grown in a completely closed system at the Florida Aquarium or UF-Tropical Aquaculture Lab vs. corals grown in an upland facility with an open flow system at the NOVA Southeastern University. The Florida Aquarium leads this project. Ken will be providing the corals and outplanting cultured corals to determine reef competency.



Images courtesy the Coral Restoration Foundation.

## FRESH FROM FLORIDA LOGO PERFECT FOR CLAM SEED!

Florida hard clam seed producers are encouraged to add "Produced in Florida" and/or the *Fresh from Florida* logo that features a hard clam to their invoices, packaging, business card, or bills-of-sale.

Hard clam farmers should look for and buy "Produced in Florida" or *Fresh from Florida* identified clam seed. Remember that the Aquaculture Best Management Practices

and your sovereign submerged lands lease agreement require that you plant clam seed produced from Florida broodstock and that source documentation must be obtained from the hatchery or nursery where you bought your seed.

Seed imported from out-of-state sources must be accompanied by a certificate of veterinarian inspection certifying

that the seed does not show clinical signs of any disease pathogen. Retain all of these documents for record inspection by Division of Aquaculture personnel.

Clam seed producers interested in using the *Fresh from Florida* logo should call the Bureau of Seafood and Aquaculture Marketing at 850-488-0163 or visit <http://www.fl-seafood.com/>.



CHARLES H. BRONSON  
COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE

Division of Aquaculture  
1203 Governor's Square Boulevard  
Suite 501  
Tallahassee, Florida 32301-2961  
R. Sherman Wilhelm, Director

Phone: 850-488-4033  
Fax: 850-410-0893  
Email: wilhels@doacs.state.fl.us  
Webpage: www.FloridaAquaculture.com

OFFICE OF AGRICULTURAL LAW  
ENFORCEMENT  
TOLL-FREE: 800-342-5869



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## FWC PROHIBITS COMMERCIAL TURTLE HARVEST

Increased demand for freshwater turtles in Asian and South American markets led the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to approve a rule on July 20<sup>th</sup> prohibiting commercial harvest.

The rule prohibits taking turtles from the wild that are listed on Florida's imperiled species list. Individuals cannot take species that look similar to the imperiled species; these include common snapping turtles, Escambia map turtles and cooters. In addition, the ban includes collecting freshwater turtle eggs. The closed season for the take of softshell turtles, May 1 to July 31, will not change under the new rule. Also, the possession limit of two Escambia map turtles (*Graptemys ernsti*), diamond-backed terrapins (*Malaclemys terrapin*), box turtles (*Terrapene Carolina*), or loggerhead musk turtles (*Sternotherus minor*) remains.

Individuals will be allowed to take one freshwater turtle per day per person from the wild for noncommercial use. People cannot transport more than one turtle at a time without a temporary

transport permit, Class III license for the Exhibition or Sale of Wildlife, proof of purchase indicating that the turtles were legally obtained, or an Aquaculture Certification of Registration.

Some turtle farms depend on collection of wild freshwater turtles for broodstock. A new FWC permit for turtle farms will allow broodstock collection. In addition, fish farms possessing an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration can capture turtles that invade their production ponds and sell them to a Division certified turtle farm.

"I believe this industry should be moved to aquaculture. That's the logical place for it to be," said Rodney Barreto, FWC chairman. "This is the right thing to do."

Certified farms that sell or trade freshwater turtles must include their Aquaculture Certification of Registration number on all bills of sale and lading or invoices or when transporting turtles carry a copy of their Certificate on their person or in their vehicle.

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Division of Aquaculture  
1203 Governor's Square Blvd, Suite 501  
Tallahassee, FL 32301-2961