



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901

Phone: 302-674-2331 | FAX: 302-674-5399 | www.mafmc.org

Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | P. Weston Townsend, Vice Chairman

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 11, 2020
To: Chris Moore, Executive Director
From: José Montañez, Staff
Subject: Pre-application Meeting for Blue Water Fisheries Proposal

On December 10, 2020, Blue Water Fisheries, LLC (BWF) held a pre-application meeting via webinar with staff from various regulatory agencies (e.g., NOAA Fisheries, Coast Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils) to update interested parties on the pre-application status of a finfish farm for commercial sale and research off the coast of New Hampshire in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This aquaculture project intends to raise steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and lumpfish (*Cyclopterus lumpus*).¹

The Farm will utilize Innovasea's SeaStation² submersible fish pens in a grid configuration. When fully built-out, the Farm will consist of two 2x10 grids (20 pens) that will occupy a total area of approximately 0.36 mi² (229 acres). The Farm will be constructed on a phased schedule (initially 4 pens); thereby, assuring the stability and integrity of each phase before installing subsequent phases. Full production with two operational grids is estimated at 12,800 tons (25.6 million pounds) of steel head trout annually. The project summary indicates that, the Farm will acquire diploid, all female, trout eggs from Trout Lodge or Riverance hatcheries on the West coast of the United States. The eggs are certified disease free before shipping to the Farm's New Hampshire land-based freshwater hatchery. The eggs will be hatched and reared in the Farm's freshwater hatchery for six to eight months before being acclimatized to saltwater, and then transferred to the offshore SeaStation net pens once the fry achieve a mean size of 200g (7.1 ounces). The fry will then be grown for an additional ten to twelve months at which point they will be harvested for land-based processing and sale.

The main purpose of this webinar was to update regulatory agencies on the status of the pre-application proposal and solicit any objections to the preferred alternative sites, and any other issues that are under consideration.

In addition, at this meeting, NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) provided background information and results for a Site Suitability Analysis (Siting Analysis) conducted for the proposed operations in New Hampshire (see NCCOS' September 2020

¹ A small number of lumpfish will be used as part of a University of New Hampshire research project on the use of lumpfish as a natural way to maintain healthier ocean raised fish stocks.

² <https://www.innovasea.com/open-ocean-aquaculture/submersible-aquaculture-systems/seastation/>

report). Taking into account BWF's technical production requirements, NCCOS identified eight potential sites suitable for these aquaculture activities (see Figure 1 below). These potential sites were identified taking into consideration national security concerns, transportation infrastructure, fishing activity, recreation and cultural considerations, energy infrastructure, protected species, and EFH, amongst others. Five specific sites with consistent depth and low slope and relatively low vessel traffic were determined to provide good site choices (Sites 1-5).

During the webinar, BWF staff asked for initial input from webinar participants regarding the feasibility of the preferred site choices (Sites 1-5). BWF's staff indicated that getting early input on the preferred sites would be beneficial as the pre-application process moves forward. Solicitation of input was emphasized at this meeting. BWF noted that any red flag, "No not that location" objections would be valuable earlier rather than later after the survey work occurred. The deadline for pre-application input is December 23, 2020.

The next step is for the project proponent, NOAA Fisheries, and permitting agencies to provide answers to any questions and outstanding concerns. Then NOAA Fisheries will seek Department of Defense clearinghouse response to the preferred sites. A Baseline Environmental Survey will be conducted once survey parameters have been established. The Baseline Environmental Survey will be used to support the permitting application for offshore marine aquaculture permits that will be submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency. BWF also indicated that they would continue to engage stakeholders on the development of this project. Public input can also be provided during the permit application rulemaking process.

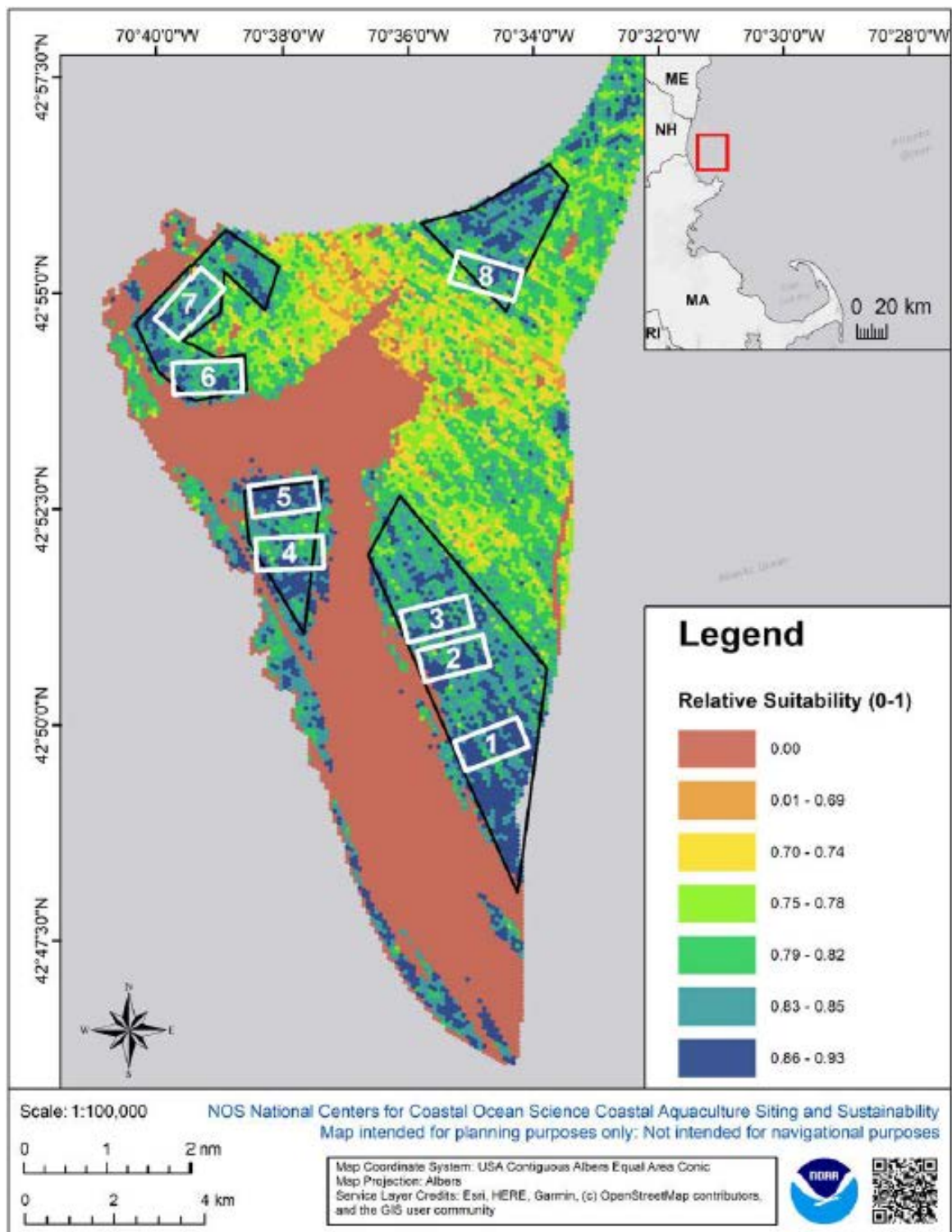


Figure 1. Map of final suitability cluster analysis of the eight site locations for the proposed BWF fish farm. Source: NCCOS' September 2020 report.