Welcome!

Alaska Opportunity Area Spatial Planning Workshop

Agenda Review

- Early framing presentations to set the stage for group work
- Small group exploration of data layer topics via core questions
- Informal, anonymous polling with instant response technology
- Small group report backs to the large group
- Highlight key takeaways as we conclude today's event

NOAA FISHERIES

Alaska Region
AOA Spatial Planning Workshop

Overview and Purpose

Alicia Bishop, *NOAA Fisheries Alaska Regional Aquaculture Coordinator*

NOAA JNU AOA Spatial Planning Workshop
March 26-27, 2024

NCCOS
NATIONAL CENTERS FOR COASTAL OCEAN SCIENCE

Alaska AOA Spatial Planning Workshop

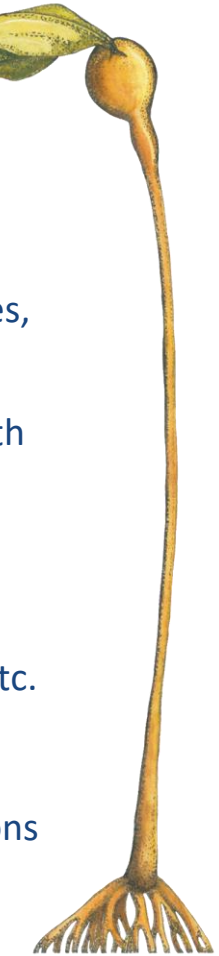
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), and the State of Alaska are jointly convening a day-long workshop to discuss the ongoing Aquaculture Opportunity Area (AOA) identification process in Alaska state waters.

Workshop Goals

- Learn about NOAA's spatial planning approach and discuss available spatial data within Alaska AOA study areas
- Document data gaps and help identify points of contact for additional data
- Increase transparency, local capacity, and resources to support aquaculture planning
- Further develop an engaged community to inform NOAA's AOA identification process in Alaska state waters

Day 1: Workshop Sessions

1. ***Boundaries:*** state and federal boundaries, locations for existing military activities, area management plans, and designated parks and refuges, etc.
2. ***Oceanographic Data:*** meteorological and oceanographic conditions, water depth and slope (bathymetry), buoys and weather forecasting stations, etc.
3. ***Natural Resources:*** information about protected species and sensitive habitats
4. ***Cultural and Social Resources:*** cultural, subsistence, personal and traditional/historical uses of the environment, demographic data, shipwrecks, etc.
5. ***Fisheries:*** areas where both commercial and sport fisheries are active
6. ***Industries and Navigation:*** locations of vessel traffic, key industrial considerations (shipping lanes, pipelines, submarine cables), and outfalls, etc..



Core Data Questions

1. What are your concerns or questions about the data layers just presented?

1. Are you aware of any data that are missing from the list but available? If yes, what type of data and can you provide a point of contact from whom we could acquire that data?

1. What data gaps exist? In considering the list of identified data gaps in group discussion, what stands out as a high priority?

Day 2

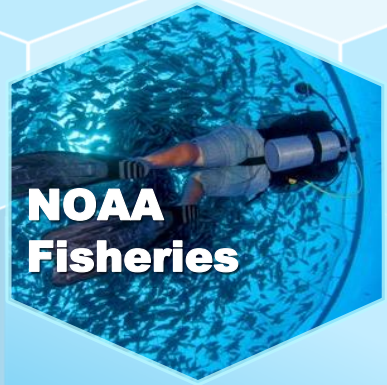
1. *Welcome and Recap of Day 1*
2. *Tribal Engagement and AOA Process*
3. *Remaining Questions and Next Steps*

AOA Process Overview

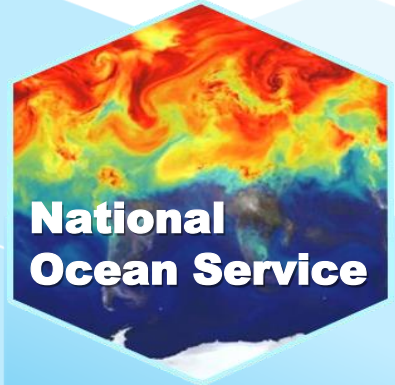
NOAA FISHERIES

NOAA Aquaculture Program

These organizations partner across NOAA to advance sustainable aquaculture in the United States through policy, outreach, science, research, grants, and extension.



- Office of Aquaculture
- Regional Offices
- Science Centers



- National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science

- National Sea Grant College Program

AOA Interagency Working Group

- Composed of state and federal aquaculture regulatory agencies
  - **State**: Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Alaska Department of Natural Resources
  - **Federal**: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries

AOA Goals

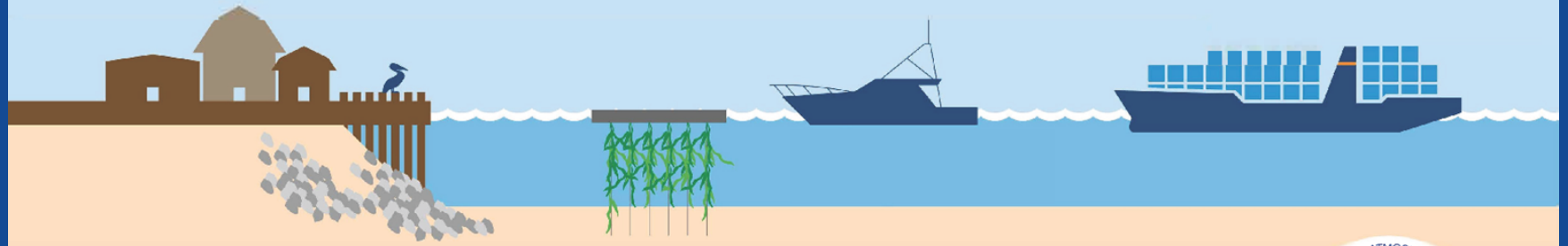
- **Utilize a science-based approach to inform marine aquaculture planning**
- Meet the directives of Executive Order 13921
- Find areas that could be suitable for multiple future aquaculture projects
- Address interests and concerns regarding seaweed and invertebrate aquaculture siting
- Address the increasing demand for seafood
- Promote American seafood competitiveness, food security, economic growth while also sustaining and conserving marine resources

What is an Aquaculture Opportunity Area?

AOAs will expand economic opportunities in coastal and rural areas, and increase our nation's seafood security.

AOAs use the best available science to find appropriate spaces for sustainable aquaculture.

AOAs minimize interactions with other users, such as shipping, fishing, subsistence activities, and the military.



Aquaculture Opportunity Areas show high potential for commercial aquaculture. A science and community-based approach to identifying these areas helps minimize interference with other enterprises, account for current fishing patterns, subsistence and cultural activities, and protect the ecosystem.

NOAA
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

What is the Process?

- The AOA process is anticipated to take approximately four years.
  - 2 years suitability analysis
  - 2 years environmental review (NEPA)
- Some of the products of this process include: spatial analysis (Atlas) and environmental review (NEPA).
- The AOA identification process is public driven. Public input is essential in the design and location of AOAs.

NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act

Key Points

- Multi-year planning process, not regulatory, no new NOAA authorities
- AOAs are *not* pre-permitted sites. Federal and state leasing and permit requirements remain the same
- In Alaska, AOAs will be sited in state waters and will support **seaweed** and **invertebrate** aquaculture (finfish farming is prohibited)
- Identification of AOA location(s) will not be made until end of NEPA process
- Aquaculture projects don't have to be located in an AOA

NOAA FISHERIES

How does this process help?

- Aligns with the leasing and permitting questions farmers need to answer
- Minimizes user conflict
- Identifies biologically and physically appropriate sites for the species/gear of interest in Alaska

Alaska AOA Process Timeline
2023-2024

June 2023

Now: March 2024

Coming soon!

Alaska Next Steps:
Announce start of process to identify Aquaculture Opportunity Areas in Alaska
Engagement and data collection. Gather feedback on study area parameters
RFI in October 2023; Nov/Dec three listening sessions
Finalize study areas based on public input
NCCOS data collection and modeling for siting analysis
Spring 2024 Mapping Workshops
NCCOS draft Aquaculture Opportunity Atlas; peer review

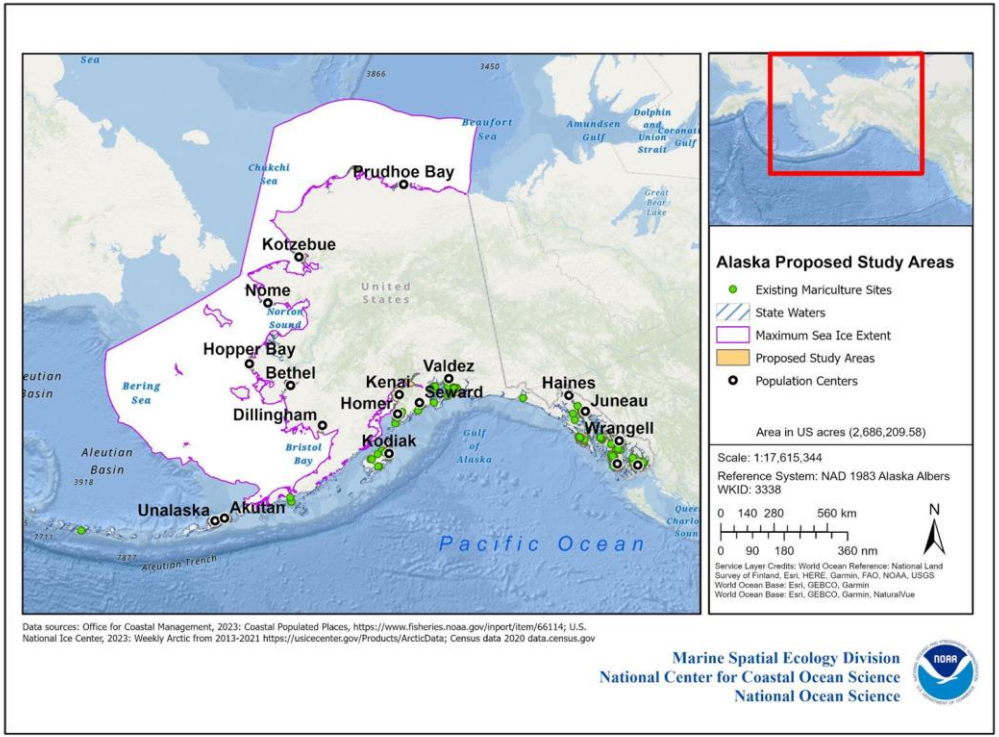
*Tasks and timeframes may shift due to resource restrictions or need

NOAA FISHERIES

Request for Information

NCCOS | NATIONAL CENTERS FOR COASTAL OCEAN SCIENCE

- State waters within 25-mile radius of coastal population centers in Alaska (2010 census data)
- Waters the do not regularly experience significant sea ice cover (aggregate maximum sea ice extents between 2013-2021)
- Identified 16 Proposed Study Areas across Southeast, South Central and Southwest AK)



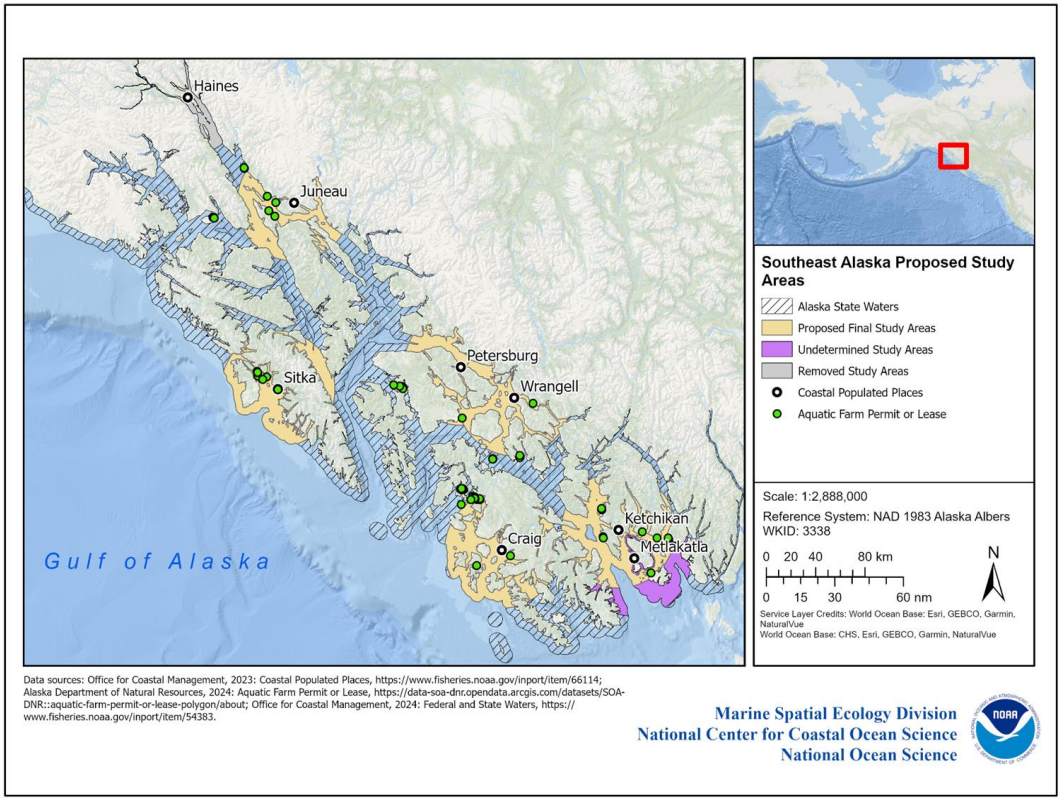
Maps for demonstration only

Final AOA Study Areas

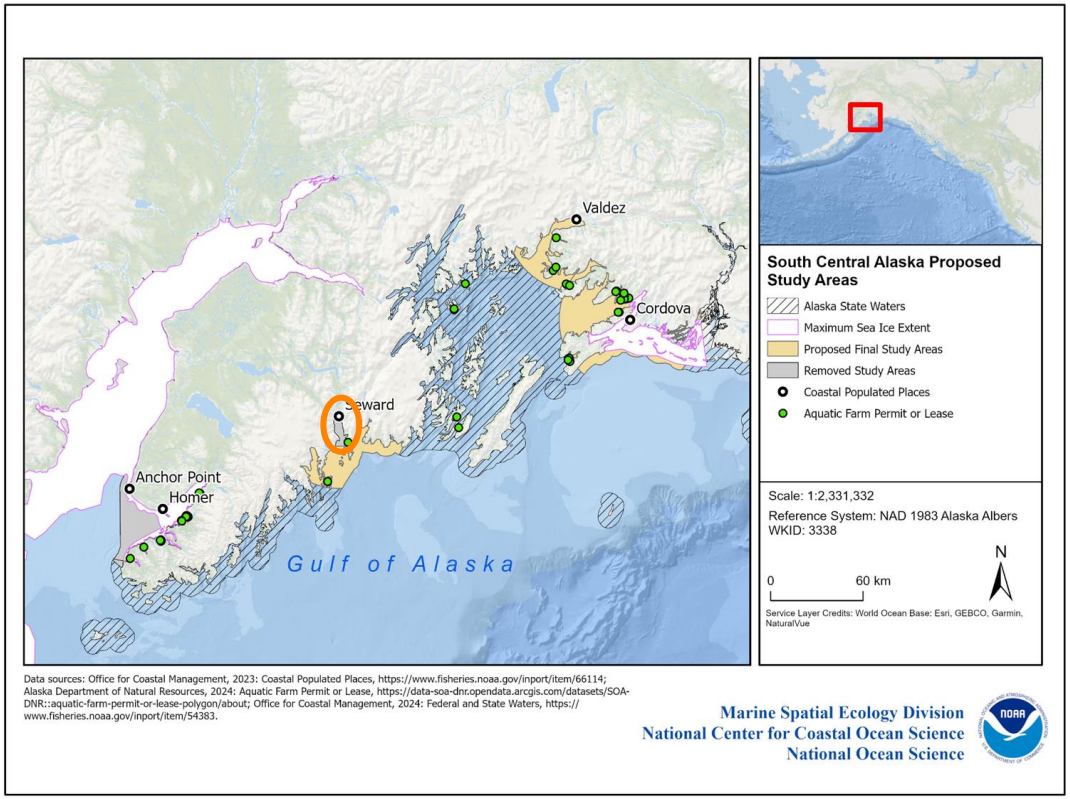
for Alaska

NOAA FISHERIES

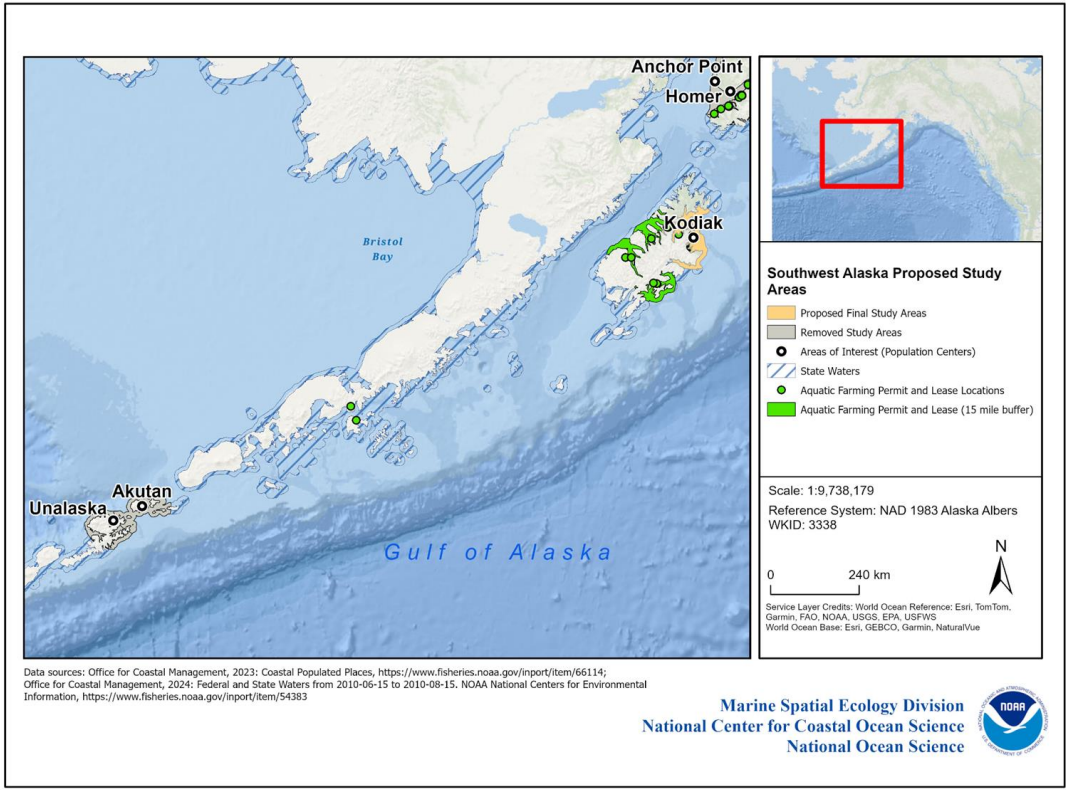
Southeast AOA Study



Southcentral AOA Study

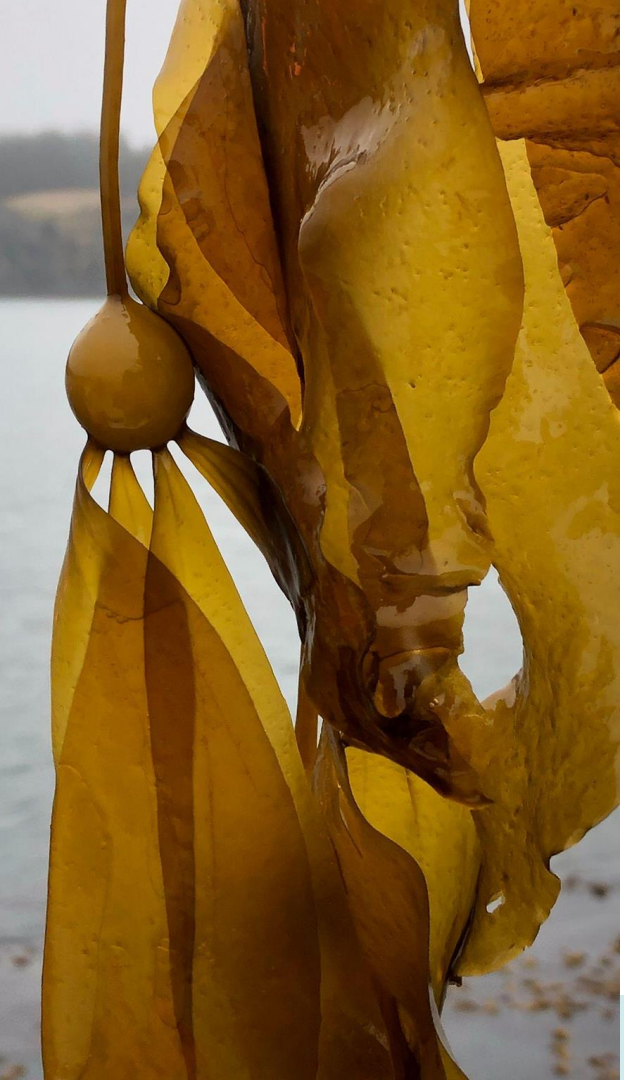


Southwest AOA Study



Opportunities for Engagement

NOAA FISHERIES



Public Engagement Opportunities for AOA Identification

- Request for Information and Listening Sessions
- Spatial Planning Workshops and Data Gathering
- Notice of Intent to Prepare NEPA and Listening Sessions
- Tribal Consultation
- Draft NEPA Review and Listening Sessions

NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act

NOAA FISHERIES

What's Next?

NOAA FISHERIES

Introduction to how we'll use Slido technology during today's workshop

slido

In just a few words, what's your professional relationship with aquaculture?

ⓘ Click **Present with Slido** or install our Chrome extension to activate this poll while presenting.

NOAA FISHERIES

slido

In just a few words, what do you hope to gain from this workshop?

ⓘ Click **Present with Slido** or install our Chrome extension to activate this poll while presenting.

NOAA FISHERIES

slido

Audience Q&A Session

ⓘ Click **Present with Slido** or install our Chrome extension to show live Q&A while presenting.

NOAA FISHERIES

Meet Your Neighbors

NOAA FISHERIES