Message

From: Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Sent: 1/17/2020 3:40:55 PM
To: Tyler, Kip [Tyler.Kip@epa.gov]
Subject: RE: EPA considering first fish farm in Gulf of Mexico

thank you

From: Tyler, Kip <Tyler.Kip@epa.gov>
Sent: Friday, January 17, 2020 10:40 AM
To: Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Subject: RE: EPA considering first fish farm in Gulf of Mexico

Hi Michael.

The EPA has not made the final decision to issue the NPDES permit. After considering all of the comments received on the draft permit and supporting documents, during the public comment period, EPA will make a final permit decision. Hope this helps.

Kip Tyler
w 404.562.9294 | m 404.323.6094

From: Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Sent: Friday, January 17, 2020 10:35 AM
To: Tyler, Kip <Tyler.Kip@epa.gov>
Subject: RE: EPA considering first fish farm in Gulf of Mexico

Thank you Tyler,
Do I understand the pilot project has the go ahead and the meeting is for informational purposes only? Or am I mistaken and will public input have influence on the decision to go ahead?
Enjoy the day
Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)

From: Tyler, Kip <Tyler.Kip@epa.gov>
Sent: Friday, January 17, 2020 8:46 AM
To: Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Subject: RE: EPA considering first fish farm in Gulf of Mexico

Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)

Thank you for contacting us. Please see the below website link that contains the draft NPDES permit and many supporting documents that explains the proposed facility. Also, the EPA is having a public hearing on the draft NPDES permit issuance on January 28th in Sarasota, FL – the link also contains information about the public hearing and how to register. Let me know if you have any more questions.

https://www.epa.gov/publicnotices/19fl00002-public-hearing-and-extended-comment-period-draft-national-pollutant

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From: Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Sent: Thursday, January 9, 2020 4:01 PM
To: R4NPDES.Kampachi <R4NPDES.Kampachi@epa.gov>
Subject: FW: EPA considering first fish farm in Gulf of Mexico

From: Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Sent: Thursday, January 09, 2020 3:59 PM
To: wahlstrom-ramler.meghan@epa.gov
Subject: EPA considering first fish farm in Gulf of Mexico

Hi Meghan,
I just now read the article below and would like to know where to find out more. As a resident of the area and concerned about our environment (Red Tide is awful!) and at the same time excited to see innovative ideas and technologies appear, I would like to know more. I am an old guy who has seen many promising ideas turn into bad results. This project concerns me. For example where can I find what type of land based food Kampachi is proposing to use? Has it been used before? Has the waste created by the fish been analyzed to be the equal/similar as what is produced in nature? How is it the same, how is it different? Growing up and living in rural Wisconsin it is understood what any animal eats not only affects what comes out the other end but it also has affects on anything it comes in contact with. sometimes good, sometimes not. Where do I find how the pilot project is going to be monitored and by who? Where do I find the EPA analysis quoted in the article that says it would not have a detrimental environmental impact? There may be easy answers to my questions, and I would love to hear them. Any information you can pass along would be greatly appreciated.
Enjoy the day
(b) (6)

EPA considering first fish farm in Gulf of Mexico

Environmental & fishing groups oppose the Hawaii-based company's plan.

A Hawaii based company wants to launch the first-ever offshore fish farm in the Gulf of Mexico about 45 miles west of Sarasota. This would be its third after opening similar operations in Hawaii and Mexico. This photo shows the pen used in the Hawaii operation, which is similar to what's planned for the Gulf of Mexico. Photo by Rick Decker courtesy of Kampachi Farms [Courtesy of Kampachi Farms by Rick Decker]
By **Craig Pittman**
Published Sep. 26, 2019
Updated Sep. 27, 2019

A Hawaii-based company wants to open the first offshore fish farm in the Gulf of Mexico about 45 miles west of Sarasota. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which approved a draft permit in August, is seeking public comment on issuing a final permit on the project through Sunday.

Fishing and environmental groups have already raised objections to the proposal by Kampachi Farms to anchor a chain-link mesh pen offshore to raise 20,000 Almaco jack fish – a relative of the popular amberjack – for human consumption. The company plans to hatch the fish from eggs in tanks on shore, then when they become fingerlings move them to the open ocean pen.

The farm, a pilot project, would not only be a first for the gulf, but would also be the first in the federal waters of the continental United States. If it works, then look for others to follow, both here and elsewhere, said Kampachi co-founder Neil Anthony Sims.

"We think the gulf coast of Florida around Tampa offers the most advantageous location, given the criteria we're looking at," Sims said. Other companies are eyeing potential fish farm locations off of California and Long Island, he said.

RELATED STORY: Seafood wars ahead? Reflecting on farm-raised fish.

That's the main reason the Kampachi proposal is drawing opposition from environmental groups and commercial fishing operations: They don't want offshore fish farms to start popping up all around the country, because they view them as a threat to clean water and a thriving fishing industry.

That the EPA's analysis says it won't have a detrimental environmental impact "is folly, just folly," said Hallie Templeton, senior oceans campaigner for Friends of the Earth.

She cited potential problems with untreated fish feces, pollution from antibiotics and other medical waste and the risk of sick fish escaping from the mesh cage and spreading illnesses among wild fish stocks. She also predicted the mesh might entangle migratory birds and marine mammals in the gulf, including the Bryde's whale, recently classified as endangered.

While other countries do allow offshore aquaculture projects like Kampachi's, just last month Denmark officials said they would not allow the opening or expansion of any more offshore fish farms beyond the 19 they already have permitted. They cited environmental problems from the existing fish farms as the reason.

"We have major challenges with oxygen deficiencies," environmental minister Lea Wermelin said, "and we can see that nitrogen emissions are not falling as expected."

But Sims said his company, founded in 2010, has successfully opened similar offshore fish farms off Mexico and Hawaii, and used that experience in selecting a prime spot in the gulf that's in 130 feet of water. That allows the owners to lower the cage deep for protection when a Category 4 or 5 hurricane passes by.

Newsart graphic: [STEVE MADDEN | Environmental Protection Agency]

He contends concerns about pollution from what he called “fish poo” were overblown. After all, he said, there used to be a lot more of it in the world’s oceans, until anglers caught so many fish. It’s “a natural part of the ecosystem,” he said.

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And the EPA draft says that “any potentially harmful discharge ... should disperse rapidly,”

The concentration of thousands of fish swimming in one spot, though, is what raises the concern about fish waste among environmental groups. Gulf currents wouldn't necessarily just whisk it away, either, according to Robert Weisberg, a University of South Florida College of Marine Sciences physical oceanographer.

"Sometimes currents would carry things out of there and sometimes they wouldn't, because it's variable," Weisberg said. ""You can't simply say it's always hunky-dory."

Sims seemed less prepared for questions about how the company would deal with a Red Tide algae bloom in the gulf. One such bloom that began 40 miles out in the gulf in November 2017 plagued the state for more than a year, killing thousands of fish as well as manatees and sea turtles.

RELATED STORY: Red Tide bloom now touching all three coasts.

As with a hurricane, he said, the company would try to ride out any toxic algae bloom by cranking the cage down beneath the waves. However, he said, "we don't have any absolute certainty" that that tactic would work. That's the whole point of starting off with a pilot project, to see how it goes, he said.

Sims said his company is negotiating with Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota and the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science to handle the on-shore part of the project producing the fingerlings. He said his company has no estimate of the total cost of the pilot program, but added, "it's an expensive demonstration."

Should the EPA greenlight the project, that's not the last permit required to get started, Sims said. The company must also get permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers because of the need to anchor in navigable federal waters.

He contended that far from hurting Florida's other industries, the fish pen would attract lots of other wild fish and it would turn into a popular spot for snorkelers and divers. "It's like 'Blue Planet' in real life," he said.

HOW TO COMMENT: You may comment on the proposed action in writing, using Email, FAX or mail before Sept. 29. Submit comments to:

Email: Meghan Wahlstrom (wahlstrom-ramler.meghan@epa.gov)

Fax: 404-562-9772

Mailing address: US EPA – WD/PGB ATTN: Meghan Wahlstrom61 Forsyth Street SW Atlanta, GA 30303

CRAIG PITTMAN

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