

Concerns and Talking Points

Verella Epsilon Offshore Aquaculture Facility



The proposed Verella Epsilon project is an offshore fish farm that involves the concentrated cultivation of finfish in net pens, pods, and cages. These industrial ocean fish farms allow free exchange between the cage and the surrounding ecosystem and can have many dangerous impacts to public health, the environment, and the economy, including:

Pollution of the ocean:

Pollution is already a serious concern for the Gulf of Mexico. Offshore aquaculture would exacerbate the existing problem by discharging a wide range of toxins into the ocean. Right now, this is especially concerning for Florida, given coral die-off and worsening algal blooms like the red tide. While supporters of industrial aquaculture claim that this runoff would benefit ecosystems or dissipate in open waters, those added nutrients and chemicals will harm the environment. Dilution is not the solution to pollution – it all goes somewhere!

Industrial ocean fish farms use industrial compounds, including copper, to prevent corrosion and fouling. They often use agricultural drugs, such as antibiotics, on the farmed fish. Finally, the farms freely discharge excess feed and fish waste, which can include nitrogen and phosphorous. All these pollutants flow into the ocean from the net pens, causing poor water quality and can harm the seabed, as well as marine life.

Harm to Sarasota's residents and businesses:

The Gulf of Mexico is an interconnected ecosystem where any changes can have a ripple effect for the entire region. Florida's coastal industries – especially tourism and fishing – have already faced serious challenges from hurricanes and oil spills. Coastal communities find themselves con-

stantly struggling to recover from various economic and environmental harm related to these events. Disasters like these continue to stress the productivity and health of the Gulf of Mexico and the people who work and live there. Offshore aquaculture would only add further stress to the region's ecosystem and economy.

These underwater factory farms are also **increasing corporate control of seafood production**, privatizing and creating unnecessary **competition for marine waters**, and imposing **hazardous conditions for workers**. The U.S. should learn from the negative experiences in other countries like Denmark and Canada, both of which are now moving away from this disastrous industry.

Threats of harm to native wildlife:

Farmed fish spills – such as Cooke Aquaculture's release of hundreds of thousands of non-native Atlantic salmon along Washington state's coastline – can spread disease, risk inter-breeding and genetic degradation, and compete with native, wild fish for limited resources and habitat.

Verella Epsilon proposes to raise the same amount of Al-maco Jack as was commercially caught in Florida last year. An escape of the facility's stock could devastate the Gulf's wild population.

Industrial ocean fish farms also attract wild fish, marine mammals, and seabirds, which then get entangled in nets, harassed by acoustic deterrents, and hunted. In March 2017, an endangered monk seal died in the nets of a floating operation in Hawaii.

Industrial ocean fish farms are also leading to the **overfishing of forage species** by relying on fish oil and fish meal to feed their farmed fish populations, and are increasingly using unhealthy additives in fish feed, such as **genetically modified soybeans**.

The time is now to prevent these underwater factory farms!

Visit foe.org/NoFishFarms to tell EPA to keep Verella Epsilon off Sarasota's coast!



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