

DATE: September 4, 2020

TO: [Lessee email address]

SUBJECT: Florida Sea Grant Clam Buyback Program, Applications open noon 09/12/20

As a Gulf coast shellfish aquaculture leaseholder identified by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), and meeting the additional criteria set by Florida Sea Grant (i.e., you are only producing hard clams and meet the effective cultivation requirements for 2019), you are eligible to participate in a cooperative research project that will buy some of your live market-sized aquacultured clams for a restoration project. NOAA National Sea Grant has provided funding to purchase up to 450,000 clams. The number of clams you are eligible to harvest depends on the number of growers participating in the project. For example, if 100 growers participate, each would receive \$540 for 4,500 clams. See below for further details.

Clams will need to be delivered during one of the following harvest weeks to a participating certified shellfish wholesaler in Cedar Key. See below on how to indicate your availability to participate on these dates (note: additional harvest weeks may be identified in the event of hurricanes or tropical storms):

- Week 1: September 30 or October 1, 2020
- Week 2: October 7 or 8, 2020
- Week 3: October 14 or 15, 2020
- Week 4: October 21 or 22, 2020

Key provisions of the program include:

- Clams must be live and at least 7/8" in diameter. No pastas will be purchased.
- All clams must be delivered on only **one** of the dates identified above in Cedar Key.
- Your delivery date, if selected, will be assigned on September 22nd. If you miss this appointment, you will not be allowed to reschedule.
- All clams must be tumbled (cleaned) by the grower at the wholesaler's processing plant.
- Eligibility is based on the leaseholder's name (not number of leases) identified on a list of active certified hard clam aquaculturists received from FDACS' Division of Aquaculture on August 28, 2020.
- A leaseholder (not a proxy) must be present to deliver and tumble their clams.
- To maximize the impact of the program, each individual/entity can only participate once.
- You will be paid by the Cedar Key Aquaculture Association (CKAA) by check issued by mail two weeks after the delivery date.

This unique program is designed to both provide a little financial relief to growers due to COVID-19 and test the success of using larger and more genetically diverse clams to improve water quality in an impaired region with an established and monitored no-take zone. As the purchased clams will be used in the Indian River Lagoon, it also maximizes the reach of impact of this program in Florida. If the research is successful, more hard clams from Florida's west coast could be included in future restoration projects and thus provide another market outlet for growers.

The online application for this opportunity, opens on Saturday, September 12th at noon.

Click [HERE](#) to apply and provide the following information:

1. Leaseholder name and contact information
2. Lease number for purchased clams
3. Available delivery dates

The site will be open until noon on Tuesday, September 15th, 2020. If you are interested, apply ASAP since if more than 100 growers apply, we will need to select the first eligible leaseholders that apply, and ensure deliveries on each date. Selected participants will be notified by email by September 22nd with the assigned delivery details (harvest date and time, wholesaler location, and number of clams to deliver). A list with this information will also be posted on the project website:

<http://FLSeaGrant.org/clams> .

To help facilitate communications regarding this program, we ask that you use the following dedicated email: clams@ifas.ufl.edu, or contact Sandi Reveille at 352-392-5870.

The following people are available to answer any questions you may have:

- Leslie Sturmer, UF/IFAS Florida Sea Grant Aquaculture Extension Agent, Levy County, Clam procurement lead (Email: Lnst@ufl.edu ; phone: 352-493-8340)
- Rose Cantwell, CKA, clam procurement partner (Email: Cantwellrr@bellsouth.net ; phone: 352-215-6341)
- Angela Collins, UF/IFAS Florida Sea Grant Extension Agent, Manatee County (Email: Abcollins@ufl.edu ; phone: (941) 722-4524 ext. 1826)

Thank you for considering participating in this novel program, which we hope will provide a little relief as a result of COVID-19 and serve to test the potential of using live clams for habitat restoration. Please feel free to contact any of us at any time.

Sincerely,

Sherry L. Larkin

Director, Florida Sea Grant College Program
University of Florida/IFAS

