

# Florida will be location for former Kingfish exec Sorby's red drum RAS

*Pine Island Redfish, started by former Kingfish Maine exec Megan Sorby, joins a growing list of land-based aquaculture projects in the state*

By [Liza Mayer](#) | Oct. 11, 2023 13:10 BST

The US state of Florida, already home to the country's largest land-based Atlantic salmon farm, the largest land-based shrimp producer, and a thriving recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) pompano facility, has now added Pine Island Redfish to its growing list of land-based aquaculture projects.

Pine Island Redfish, led by [former Kingfish Maine operations manager Megan Sorby](#), has secured a fully permitted site on Pine Island in southwest Florida, where it will raise red drum, a species native to the region.

The company acquired a nearly 150-acre property in Pine Island after receiving approval from local, state, and federal agencies. Sorby selected the site due to its previous farming activities and location, which allowed for establishing operations that meet the goals of the blue economy, such as water efficiency and climate resilience.



 Red drum. Photo: Wikipedia

Florida's agricultural focus and its support of the aquaculture industry were other critical factors in selecting the state as the location for the project, Sorby told *Undercurrent News* on Tuesday (Oct. 10).

She said there is a significant focus on the potential of RAS from the community's perspective. The state has robust aquaculture projects, with a strong dialogue supporting social awareness in this area. Furthermore, critical markets and chefs are interested in sustainable seafood initiatives, which helps spread the message. Sorby said she is impressed with these support mechanisms.



 Megan Sorby

"The biggest concern we hear from the community is their commitment to maintaining Pine Island as a farming and fishing community. Our goal was to find a site that aligns with their desire to preserve the agricultural and undeveloped feel of the island," said Sorby.

Pine Island Redfish is currently in the design phase of construction and is in the process of raising capital for the project. The focus is now on the organizational aspects, including design, and biological work, including acclimating the broodstock.

Sorby stated that the new company enjoys backing from diverse investors who have contributed to the initial seed funding. A Series A funding round is on the horizon, though Sorby chose not to disclose the specific target or budget for the overall project at this

time.

According to the US Department of Agriculture's latest census, Florida ranked 12th for total food fish sales in 2018. With approximately a thousand certified aquaculture farms, the state offers diverse fish and marine animal species for human consumption, including tilapia, catfish, sturgeon, striped bass, cobia, and pom.

Among the notable aquaculture ventures in the state is Atlantic Sapphire, a

Norwegian-backed land-based Atlantic salmon producer in Homestead, Florida,

with a long-term goal of reaching an annual production of 220,000 metric tons.

 Source: Pine Island Redfish

American Mariculture is another prominent figure in the state's aquaculture industry, which operates the largest US shrimp farm. The farm is just 3 miles from the planned location for Sorby's farm.

"He has done a great service to aquaculture and the industry as a whole," said Sorby, referring to Robin Pearl, CEO and founder of American Mariculture. "We are excited to see those people thriving and doing well in this community."

The company expects to target regional markets initially, with potential outlets in larger cities in the future. Pine Island Redfish aims to establish a fully integrated operation, from broodstock to grow-out and will explore partnerships with seafood processors in the area.

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