

## Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

Updated September 13, 2018

Priority	Name	Description	Status / Due Date / Target Date
<b>Program-level Projects</b>			
1	Annual Report/ Annual Deployment Plan	Every year, an Annual Report of the preceding fishing year and an Annual Deployment Plan (ADP) for the upcoming fishing year are prepared.	The FMAC and the Council will review the Draft 2019 ADP in September and October respectively.
2	Analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods	Ongoing analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods, including evaluating design-based and ratio estimators; incorporating variance from at-sea sampling through to the trip-level; and then assessing post-strata definitions.	NMFS is continuing work to incorporate programming into CAS and evaluate alternative estimators and post-strata. Estimates for the partial coverage strata are expected to be incorporated into the AKRO production database in early 2019.
3	Report on onboard observer sampling	Report on observer sampling results, e.g., proportion of total hauls that are sampled, by vessel size and gear. This item was requested by the Council in June 2016 during review of the Annual Report.	This report was presented to the FMAC in May 2017, and an AFSC tech memo is expected in early 2019.
4	Average weight of halibut wastage	Impact analysis of differences in average weights on the final wastage (discard) estimates of halibut in the IFQ fishery. Currently, CAS estimates halibut discard based on mean weight from the unsorted (retained and discarded) catch. Since halibut <32" are required to be discarded, CAS may be overestimating discarded halibut.	In 2016 NMFS modified data collection methods for halibut viability so that it is part of randomized biological sampling. This should facilitate evaluation of average weights and enable NMFS to refine estimation methods. Staff have not yet been assigned to this project.
5	Halibut DMRs	Evaluation of appropriate methods to determine halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs) given observer monitoring sampling design and available data; undertaken by the NPFMC's DMR Workgroup.	Updated DMR estimation methods were adopted, after Council review, at the October 2016 Council meeting and used to specify 2017 DMRs. The same estimation methods have been used specify 2018-19 DMRs. The DMR workgroup is ongoing and future changes will be made as needed.
6	Agency ODDS Subgroup	In June 2018, NMFS recommended and the Council supported the formation of an Agency Subgroup to document how ODDS operates and identify alternatives for improvement. Changes could include improvements to the linkage between ODDS and eLandings, changes to allow vessels that also fish trawl gear to be placed in the EM selection pool, and the trip cancellation and inherit process.	Changes to ODDS programming must be complete by the start of each calendar year. NMFS must consider staff availability when deciding which additional changes will be implemented each year. No staff have been assigned to work on this project.

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<b>Projects in NMFS Development or Review</b> (Council has taken action or major work at current stage is NMFS's responsibility)			
7	Halibut PSC deck sorting EFP	Exempted fishing permit (EFP) projects are being used to develop the components of a regulated program to allow deck sorting of halibut on trawl catcher/processors in the Bering Sea to reduce halibut mortality rates. In 2018 and 2019, catcher/processors may fish in the GOA under the EFP.	NMFS has issued the permit for 2018/2019, and EFP fishing began in January 2018. Five vessels have fished in the GOA under the EFP during July and August 2018.
8	Evaluation of alternative sampling methods for salmon	A collaborative study between industry and NMFS to evaluate alternative sampling methods for salmon bycatch in the GOA rockfish fishery is ongoing. In 2018, dockside sampling methods will be tested. SK funding was received in Summer 2017.	NMFS staff collaborated with awardees to help ensure successful field work in the 2018 fishing season. The Trawl EM Committee met in August and will include this project in its Cooperative Research Plan to be reviewed by the Council in December 2018.
9	Halibut PSC deck sorting regulatory analysis	Regulatory Impact Review analysis to allow trawl catcher/processors to sort halibut on deck to reduce halibut mortality rates in non-pollock fisheries.	NMFS provided an update on this Analysis to the Council and the Enforcement Committee in June 2018. NMFS is developing a proposed rule.
<b>Projects in Council Review</b> (Council or NMFS have tasked staff and scheduled review at a future Council or FMAC meeting)			
10	Observer fee analysis	In October 2017, the Council initiated an analysis to consider raising the observer fee. The analysis is a response to low sampling rates in partial coverage.	Analysis is underway, using purpose and need and alternatives approved by Council in Feb 2018. Staff discussed draft monitoring objectives and the analytical approach with the FMAC in May 2018 and the FMAC Subgroup on Sept 5, 2018.
11	Observer provider insurance requirements	In May 2015, NMFS determined that some observer provider insurance requirements in § 679.52(b)(11)(vi) are inapplicable and should be removed or revised. NMFS National Observer Program (NOP) staff hosted a workshop in Nov 2016. The NOP published a tech memo in November 2017.	NMFS HQ is published a request for information in the Federal Register on July 16, 2018 and comments are due to Dennis Hansford by September 14, 2018. Information gathered will be used to prepare an analysis for a proposed rulemaking to modify observer provider insurance requirements.
12	Full retention on AFA Pollock CVs with EM compliance	AFA catcher vessels have applied for funding and are interested in an EFP to evaluate EM for compliance and reduce or replace at-sea observers in the BSAI pollock fishery.	A few vessels are taking cameras to test feasibility during 2018. An EFP might be needed for further testing. The Trawl EM Committee met in August and will include this project in its Cooperative Research Plan to be reviewed by the Council in December 2018.
13	Full retention on WGOA pollock trawl CVs with EM compliance	In October 2017, the Council expressed long-term support for a project to develop a full retention requirement, using EM for compliance, in the Western GOA pollock fisheries, to facilitate dockside monitoring of Chinook salmon especially from vessels delivering to tenders.	The Trawl EM Committee met in August and will include this project in its Cooperative Research Plan to be reviewed by the Council in December 2018.

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<b><i>Projects in Council Review continued</i></b>			
14	Change tender trip definition, consider deploying observers from tenders	In October 2017, the Council initiated an analysis to look at changing the definition of a tender trip to start a new trip with each delivery to a tender or to limit the number of deliveries that can be made before a vessel must log back into ODDS. The analysis should also evaluate options to deploy observers at sea from tenders.	Initial scoping of a similar action was undertaken in 2015-2016, before the analysis was tabled.  No staff have been assigned to work on this project.
15	Changes to EM and zero selection pools to address low selection rates	In 2017 the Council endorsed the FMAC Subgroup's recommendation to evaluate how changes to the zero selection pool and strategic use of EM may improve program efficiency.	Demographic data were prepared in 2017, but no staff have been assigned to further work on this project..
16	Observer disembark location	Analyze a change to the requirement that a partial coverage category observer be disembarked only in a community with a processor with a FPP.	Initial scoping has begun, including Council-approved change to alternatives in June 2017, but no staff have been assigned to further work on this project.
17	<40' vessels in EM Pool	In December 2016, at the recommendation of the EM Workgroup, the Council requested a discussion paper about incorporating vessels <40' LOA in the EM selection pool.	Preliminary demographic data were prepared for this evaluation in 2017. In February 2018, the Council prioritized EM development on trawl vessels ahead of this project.

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