

ATLAS Discussion Paper – Project Update

September 16, 2016¹

NMFS staff presented a discussion paper at the May 2016 OAC meeting. Three types of regulatory changes were identified relative to requirements to facilitate observer data entry and transmission; overlapping requirements for large vessels in the partial coverage category, gaps in the requirements for data transmission in the Rockfish program, and hypothetical gaps in data entry and transmission requirements during certain fisheries in the full coverage category. The OAC recommended that NMFS staff develop an expanded discussion paper for the Council to review and that NMFS conduct outreach to the Kodiak processors to address transmission errors in the GOA rockfish fishery.

NMFS staff from the Alaska Regional Office and the Observer Program met with processors and industry representatives in Kodiak, Alaska during the June Council meeting and discussed observer data transmission issues. Solutions discussed included the development of guide to data transmission in Kodiak that includes specific information for observers about data transmission at each processor. Observer Program staff would work with local processors to develop this information. The processor representatives indicated that processors would continue to facilitate data transmission for observers assigned on delivering catcher vessels and that improved outreach and education would resolve any data transmission issues for this fleet as identified in the discussion paper presented in May 2016.

NMFS has identified the need to remove overlapping requirements that exist for vessels greater than 125' LOA when participating in the partial observer coverage category. By regulation a vessel is required to provide a computer installed with the NMFS-supplied software and data transmission capabilities. Observers deployed in the partial coverage category are equipped with the necessary equipment to enter data, making this regulatory vessel requirement unnecessary. This creates a duplicative equipment requirement for large vessels in the partial coverage category. However, NMFS has not identified any vessel that has incurred any additional costs as a result of the duplicative requirement.

The third and last issue identified was the potential for observers assigned to trawl catcher vessels that are voluntarily placed in the full coverage category during BSAI limited access trawl fisheries and CDQ catcher vessels between 46' and 125' LOA to have access to equipment to enter and transmit data electronically. These vessel categories do not currently have requirements to provide equipment and data transmission. At this time, there are no catcher vessels participating in the CDQ fisheries that would fall into this gap, and NMFS does not yet have data to evaluate the impact of this regulatory gap for the BSAI trawl catcher vessels, **NMFS recommends that this project should be moved to the bottom of the analytical priority list. Work would continue on this project when other higher priority projects are completed or if additional information necessitates a change in priority.**

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