Preliminary Results of an Observer Retention Survey

Jane DiCosimo
National Observer Program Coordinator

NPFMC Observer Advisory Committee
May 23-24, 2017
Target responses (as of October 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 388

Target: 600

Please indicate if you have observed in a U.S. fishery?
Trend of responses

IFOMC

Eileen Sobeck’s message

Message from regional office
Email from provider company
Survey Structure

1. Demographic information
2. Facts of observing history
3. Satisfaction of the job
4. Harassment and report
5. Plan of career path
6. International observing experience
7. Regional questions
8. One to one interview participation
9. Comments

Total Number
35 – 50 questions
## Gender

What is your gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 348
skipped question 20
What is your age (years)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or more</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 349
skipped question 19

**What is your age (years)?**

- Less than 20
- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 or more
Start and ending time

Start time

Ending time

- Currently active
- 2016
- 2015
- 2014
- 2013
- 2012
- 2011
- 2010
- 2009
- 2008
- 2007
- 2006
- 2005
- 2004
- 2003
- 2002
- 2001
- 2000
- 1999
- 1998
- 1997
- 1996
- 1995
- 1994
- 1993
- 1992
- 1991
- 1990
- Before 1990
How long did you intend to work when you first decided to become an observer?

- A few months
- One year
- Two years
- Between two and five years
- More than five years
- Not decided at that time
Motivation to become observer

Why did you want to become an observer? (Choose all that apply)

- Contact with ocean: 70.0%
- Seasonal work schedule: 20.0%
- Fill on education/employment gap: 10.0%
- Protect environment: 60.0%
- Good pay: 50.0%
- Travel opportunity: 50.0%
- Field work: 90.0%
- Adventure: 70.0%
- Advancement in my field: 60.0%
- Other (please specify below as comment): 10.0%
Educational background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>Most recent</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school or less</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
<td>254</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate’s degree</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level of education when started

Highest level of education you have completed

[Chart showing the distribution of educational levels at start and most recent, with Bachelor’s degree being the most common at both stages.]
Total sea days

How many sea days have you observed in total?

- Less than 10
- 10 - 30
- 31 - 90
- 91 - 270
- 271 - 900
- More than 900
- Not sure (please specify as below)
## Region and program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Pacific</td>
<td>Groundfish and halibut (full coverage)</td>
<td>192</td>
<td></td>
<td>NEFOP observer</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Groundfish and halibut (partial coverage)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>At-sea monitor</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not listed above</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Industry funded scallop</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>NEFOP observer</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At-sea monitor</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Industry funded scallop</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not listed above</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Pelagic longline</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shark bottom longline</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Gillnets</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reef fish</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shrimp trawl</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not listed above</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islands</td>
<td>Hawaii pelagic longline</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td>None of above</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samoa longline fisheries</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not listed above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What type of contract did you have during your most recent observer experience?
How many sea days during a typical month?

- 1 - 5
- 6 - 10
- 11 - 15
- 16 - 20
- 21 - 25
- More than 25

**LEVEL OF SATISFACTION**

- Too many days: 7
- More than expected: 21
- About right: 205
- Less than expected: 44
- Too few days: 17
Satisfaction towards NMFS

How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects?

- **Tools and technical support**
- **Debriefing experience**
- **Outreach and conferences availability**
- **Resolving observer-reported incidents (e.g., harassment, safety, etc.)**
- **Working with NMFS Observer Program staff**

Satisfaction levels:
- Very Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied
- Not applicable
Satisfaction towards provider

How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Not applicable

- Wage
- Health insurance
- Advance notice of upcoming trip
- Advance notice of trip cancellation
- Types of contracts available
- Emergency response
- Technical support
- General support
- Ease of switching employer/provider company
- Resolving observer-reported incidents (e.g., harassment, safety, etc.)
Satisfaction towards captain/crew

How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects?

- Setting up deployment details (phone call, text, email, etc.)
- Cooperation with data collection activities
- Verbal interactions
- Physical interactions
- Safety
- Condition of accommodations (e.g., sleeping area, bathroom)

Legend:
- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Not applicable
Have you experienced harassment during your deployment?

- Yes
- No

Did you report the incident(s) of harassment?

- Reported everytime
- Reported sometime
- Never reported
Handling of reports

Were you kept informed until there was a resolution to your report?

- Yes
- No

How satisfied are you with the handling of your report?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
Avoid reporting

Why didn’t you report the incident?

- Worried about retaliation or damage to my professional reputation: 10.0%
- Resolved situation at sea myself: 70.0%
- Just wanted to put the experience behind me and not relive it: 20.0%
- Didn’t think NMFS would do anything about it: 30.0%
- Upon return, the situation didn’t seem as bad as I had originally thought: 40.0%
- Other (please specify below as comment): 0.0%

Resolved situation at sea myself.
## Importance of observing experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>After working as an observer, how interested are you in continuing to work in a marine related field?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer Options</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think being an observer is helpful for advancing a career in marine related field?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer Options</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you feel fishery communities value the contribution of observers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer Options</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Usage of ER / EM

### What is your attitude towards the use of technology for data collection? (e.g., use of tablets, laptops, electronic scales)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unsupportive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very supportive</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What is your attitude towards the use of electronic monitoring? (e.g., the use of cameras, computer vision)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unsupportive</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very supportive</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
International working experience

**Were you ever deployed in a foreign fishery?**

- Yes: 0.0%
- No: 100.0%

**What are major reasons you didn’t observe in a foreign fishery?**

- Deployment unavailable: 50.0%
- Safety: 30.0%
- Worries about language and communication: 20.0%
- Low pay: 10.0%
- Length of trip: 10.0%
- Far away from home: 20.0%
- Others: 10.0%
- Comments: 10.0%
Indicate whether you prefer working in a foreign or U.S. fishery.

- Interaction with Captain/Crew
- Safety (emergency, vessel equipment etc.)
- Communication
- Length of trip
- Working conditions
- Pay
- Travel to deployment
- Availability of deployment
- Health concerns (bedbug, accommodation etc.)

- Foreign fishery
- U.S. fishery
- No preference
- Not applicable
Regional questions

1. North Pacific
2. Northeast
3. West Coast
How satisfied are you with each type of deployments you participate in?

- General fixed gear Catch-Processor (CP)
- Trawl CP
- General catcher vessel (CV)
- Pot vessel
- Longline CP
- Longline CV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How satisfied are/were you with the variety of deployment opportunities?</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please indicate your interest for pursuing a fixed gear Lead Level 2 deployment endorsement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very uninterested</th>
<th>Uninterested</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Interested</th>
<th>Very interested</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with being a Fixed gear Lead Level 2 observer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prevent observers with 3-week certification from obtaining a fixed gear LL2 endorsement?

- Lead level 2 is not prestigious
- Too much responsibility
- Difficult to fulfill performance requirement
- Deployments are not flexible
- Too much work
- Few opportunities to fulfill fixed gear requirement
- Safety
- Low salary
- I am unsure
- Others

LL2

3-week
How satisfied are you with each type of deployments that you have participated in?

- **Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP)**
  - Very dissatisfied: 10
  - Dissatisfied: 20
  - Neutral: 30
  - Satisfied: 40
  - Very satisfied: 50
  - Not applicable: 60

- **At-Sea Monitoring Program**
  - Very dissatisfied: 10
  - Dissatisfied: 20
  - Neutral: 30
  - Satisfied: 40
  - Very satisfied: 50
  - Not applicable: 60

- **Industry-Funded Scallop Program**
  - Very dissatisfied: 10
  - Dissatisfied: 20
  - Neutral: 30
  - Satisfied: 40
  - Very satisfied: 50
  - Not applicable: 60
How satisfied are you with each type of deployments you participate in?

![Bar chart showing satisfaction levels for Catch-share Program and Non catch-share Program.

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Not applicable

Catch-share Program
Non catch-share Program
Final questions

Please use the space below to share any additional comments or suggestions you have for the NMFS National Observer Program. As a reminder, the survey is anonymous.

| Response Count | 149 |

Are you interested in participating in a follow-up interview?

- Yes
- No
To retain observer, treat them and pay them as professionals. **Observers should be Federal Government employees under NOAA.** Observers need a daily sea-day pay (not hourly pay) that takes into account the highly dangerous nature of their jobs (working within the most dangerous industry in the USA). **I am making $20,000 less per year now than I was doing a similar observing job almost 20 years ago.** That is because the contractors are maximizing their profits while minimizing the wages and benefits of their observer employees.

I love my job as a NEFOP observer however the provider is incompetent at best. They misrepresent the number of days available and amount that can be expected as income. **The provider constantly cheats observers out of earned income and bonuses.** Their coordinators and assistant coordinators are lazy and have zero management or communication skills that unnecessarily create a hostile environment between observers and captains.

I may come back for another deployment. **But it's not a permanent position for me. It's too hard to have a regular life while in Alaska** and I feel like after the second deployment I wouldn't have any new experiences or learning opportunities for advancement of my career and where I stood in terms of getting an actual life outside of work.
Working with my provider was difficult during my year contract. Requests for different types of deployments were not supported and I was given fewer days that what my employer had estimated when I signed on for my year. I applied for other work and was told my flight costs would be deducted from my pay despite finishing debriefing and being sent back once I was no longer needed for another vessel. I had also not quit the position. Email/text communications are sometimes ignored.

I do enjoy the job very much, but I would have liked to have more vertical movement and networking experience available.

The boats in the Hawaii Observer program are dangerous and really just hellish conditions. No toilets, no fresh water, sometimes we ran out of food and water, when there are injuries you just have to accept that you are going to lose your finger b/c the Vietnamese captains are not going to take you back to land.

When I first started Observing in 2011, we had a sea day rate. When pay changed to an hourly rate I saw my yearly salary significantly decrease. I've never worked so hard and sacrificed so much of my life for such meager pay. When the pay rate changed, that's when I began to look for other employment opportunities.
Thank you!