

**June 7, 2013**  
**Observer Program**  
**Council motion**

The Council makes the following recommendations and requests in development of the 2014 Annual Deployment Plan:

1. The 2014 ADP should continue to reflect a priority for monitoring vessels managed under PSC limits in the trip selection pool. The Council recognizes that this necessarily modifies an equal probability sampling design such that higher observer coverage rates are provided in the trip selection pool, and lower rates in the vessel selection pool, consistent with the 2013 ADP.
2. Maintain the policy that observers should not displace crew members or IFQ holders, nor should vessel modifications be required to accommodate an observer.
3. Request NMFS provide information that would help inform a decision as to whether to create a new criterion for receiving a conditional release from observer coverage in 2014 based on a de minimus amount of halibut or sablefish IFQ in an IFQ holder's account.
4. Request NMFS assess whether the 2014 ADP can address the observer effect associated with tender deliveries (disproportionately high numbers of deliveries to tenders when vessels unobserved, or longer trips when unobserved and delivering to tenders), or whether a regulatory change is necessary.
5. Include available information that shows, within the vessel selection pool in 2013: 1) the average number of trips taken within each 2 month deployment period; and 2) the average length of trips within the 2 month period.
6. Include information as to the tradeoffs and considerations that should be taken into account in evaluating whether the 2 month deployment period for those in the vessel selection pool should remain, or be reduced (e.g., one month). Include consideration of a provision that if a vessel is selected for a coverage period and chooses not to fish during that period, the vessel is automatically selected for the next coverage period

The Council also requests NMFS provide additional information for review in October, separate from the ADP:

1. Provide more detailed information on program costs, recommendations for ways to modify deployment to achieve cost savings, and fishery data resulting from the 2013 deployment.
2. Revisions to the heat maps and other descriptive or graphical approaches that provide the ability for the Council and public to better understand coverage changes by fisheries from 2012 to 2013 with the most recent information available to NMFS. One example: include a comparison (in the partial coverage category) of trawl coverage in 2012 vs 2013 and fixed gear coverage in 2012 vs 2013.
3. Assess current observer coverage to provide an evaluation of the reliability of indices of Chinook salmon genetic stock identification information for GOA pollock trawl and rockfish trawl fisheries.

The Council makes the following recommendations for the annual performance review (June 2014):

1. Include information on the volume of catch observed in both vessel and trip selection pools.
2. Include information on achieved coverage rates by gear type.(trawl vs fixed gear)
3. Include information on trip length by observed and unobserved vessels in both the trip and vessel selection pools. Within the vessel selection pool, break out the IFQ fleet.
4. A review of the trip selected and vessel selected pools in consideration of whether vessels should have an option to choose either one, or whether the deployment plan should place every vessel in the partial coverage category in the trip selection pool. (Dec. 2012 request)
5. An evaluation of the difference between observer coverage in the vessel and trip selection pools (a review of the sampling method). (Dec. 2012 request).
6. An evaluation of ways to insert cost effective measures into the deployment plan. (Dec. 2012 request).
7. An evaluation of detailed programmatic costs. (Dec. 2012 request).

The Council makes the following recommendations on the EM strategic plan:

1. The Council adopts the EM strategic plan as a guidance document for incorporating EM into the Observer Program.
2. The Council recommends use of a catch estimation approach to develop EM for the halibut and sablefish fisheries.

The Council adds the following tasks to the EM Workgroup:

1. The Workgroup should identify performance standards, operational procedures, and sampling and deployment plans appropriate for IFQ vessels and also look at implementation vehicles and potential phase-in approaches.
2. The Workgroup should use the following sections of the strategic plan to focus its efforts: page 14 (Goal II, Objective 1, Strategy C) and page 16 (Goal III, Objective 1, Strategy A).
3. The Workgroup should focus on developing a catch estimation based program for the IFQ fisheries rather than a logbook audit approach.
4. The Workgroup should consider additional strategies other than release from observer coverage requirements to increase industry participation in pilot projects for 2014.

Regulatory Amendments

The Council tasks staff to develop a single discussion paper that identifies the main issues associated with the three proposed regulatory amendments forwarded by the OAC, in order for the Council to consider initiating an amendment package or packages for revisions to the Observer Program at a future date. The three proposals are described briefly as follows:

- Evaluate moving the BSAI pacific cod trawl CV fleet into the full coverage category for the purpose of cooperative management or crediting the fleet for the cost of observer coverage that would be provided through trip selection process.
- For vessels that previously operated as CVs and CPs within a year, consider options to allow an annual election; revisions to the control date for making the election; and production tonnage criteria.
- Change the method of observer fee collection for the IFQ fleet to use standardized current year ex-vessel prices.