



NOAA
FISHERIES

North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer Program 2015 Annual Report



Presented by
Fishery Monitoring and Analysis Division,
Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle

Annual Report Overview

- This is the third Annual Report for the North Pacific Observer Program that takes a retrospective look at the previous year and an outlook for the coming year that will inform the 2017 Annual Deployment Plan presented to the Council in October.
- This report provides information, analyses, and recommendations on the methods used for deploying and funding partial coverage observers in the North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer Program.
- The report includes information on Fees and Budget, Deployment Performance Review, Descriptive Information, Compliance and Enforcement, and Outreach for the Observer Program in 2015.

Overview

- In 2015, 478 individual observers were trained, briefed, and equipped for deployment to vessels and processing facilities operating in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries.
- Observers collected data on board 496 fixed gear and trawl vessels and at 7 processing facilities for a total of 46,640 observer days¹.
- Of the 478 observers, 192 were new observers The FMA Division conducted 10 three-week training classes in 2015 for a total of 7.5mos.
- With few exceptions AIS Inc. was able to successfully deploy 95 observers from 32 ports for 5,318 days at sea with a minimal number of trips released due to unavailability of an observer (6).

1. Exceeded last year's total by 2,500. Nationally approximately 972 observers deploy on ~82,000 sea days annually.

Overview (continued)

- There were 658 debriefings in Seattle completed by 21 FMA staff and 96 debriefings in Anchorage completed by four FMA staff. Debriefing wait times were significantly reduced from 12 to 5 days due to new partial coverage inseason advising and debriefing procedures.
- The Observer Declare and Deploy System (ODDS) performed as expected with no service interruptions and 7,046 trips logged by vessels 40-57.5 feet. The ODDS team received a DOC Bronze Award².
- NMFS held 15 outreach events in 2015 in Seattle, Sitka, Kodiak, and Homer to maintain a dialogue with industry members and inform them about changes to the program, vessel responsibilities, EM, observer sampling, and the objectives of quality collection of data and management.

2. Recipients - Paul Packer, Julie Blair, Glenn Campbell, Farron Wallace, Craig Faunce, and Heather Weikart

Fees and Budget

- The budget for observer deployment in 2015 in the partial coverage category was \$5,758,268. The budget was made up of \$3,058,036 in fees (from 2014 landings) and \$2,700,232 in NMFS funds.
- \$1,247,044 in observer fees were carried over from 2015 to 2016.
- The breakdown in contribution to the 2015 observer fee liability by species was: 35% halibut, 23% sablefish, 21% Pacific cod, 19% pollock, and 2% all other groundfish species.
- Fee billing statements for all landings that occurred in 2015 were mailed to 100 processors in January, 2016, for a total of \$3,775,956. These funds will be used to fund the observer contract from June 2016 through June 2017.

Fees and Budget

	2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Fees	Federal	Fees	Federal	Fees	Federal	Fees	Federal
Funds at the start of the calendar year	\$0		\$0		\$1,206,846		\$1,247,044	
Funds deposited during the calendar year	\$0		\$4,251,452		\$3,458,715		\$3,775,956	
Funds paid out during the calendar year	\$0	\$2,115,166	\$3,044,606	\$1,892,808	\$3,058,036	\$2,700,232	\$5,023,000	
Observer Days at the start of the calendar year	0	4,535	0	2,915	2,679	239	2,708	203
Observer Days purchased during the calendar year	0	1,913	2,596	1,772	2,976	2,354	4,937	
Observer Days used during the calendar year	0	3,533	125	4,448	2,928	2,390		

Cost for Partial Coverage

- In 2015, NMFS spent \$5,758,268 to procure 5,318 observer days for an average cost per observer day of \$1,083 per day.
- This rate is on par with partial coverage government contracted observer costs in other regions³. There are several factors that effect costs in partial coverage:
 - Federal contracts are subject to Federal Acquisition Regulations, Fair Labor Standards Act, Service Contract Act, and Department of Labor wage rate determinations which establish minimum wages and other benefits;
 - Partial coverage observers deploy out of many small, remote ports thus increasing costs
 - Average trip duration is 3-5 days vs 60-90 days in full coverage
 - Travel costs are reimbursed according to Government Travel Regulations

3. NE - \$1,227; SE - \$1,184; Gulf of Mexico - \$1,300.

Compliance and Enforcement

- In 2015 there were 1,029 complaints filed by observers⁴. AKD Fisheries Enforcement Agents and Officers dedicated 4,854 hours to directly support the Observer Program including outreach, education, and compliance assistance activities.
- AKD continues to work closely with the Observer Program and partial coverage observer provider to address high priority compliance issues that affect observer safety, sampling, and the observer's work environment.

4. In 2014 there were 1,194 complaints.

Recommendations

- NMFS recommends maintaining the current dockside monitoring sampling for pollock deliveries.
- NMFS continues to recommend that vessels less than 40ft be in the no selection pool for observer coverage. However, NMFS also recommends that vessels less than 40ft be considered for testing of electronic monitoring since NMFS has no data from this segment of the fleet.
- NMFS recommends continuing to allow hook-and-line and pot vessels <57.5 ft LOA where taking an observer is problematic an opportunity to ‘opt-in’ to the EM selection pool to participate in the EM cooperative research under the 2017 EM pre-implementation plan that is being developed by the EM workgroup. NMFS also recommends that vessels participating in the EM selection pool be required to log trips in ODDS.

Recommendations

- NMFS recommends maintaining 3 sampling strata defined by gear (pot, hook-and-line, and trawl) for the 2017 ADP and continuing to evaluate the optimal allocation to determine deployment rates in each stratum. Within budget constraints, NMFS recommends that sampling rates be high enough in each stratum to reasonably expect three observed trips in each NMFS Area.
- NMFS recommends continuing to allow vessels to log three trips in ODDS. NMFS also recommends continuing to automatically release vessels 40-57.5 feet in length from observer coverage if the two previous trips were observed trips

Recommendations

- NMFS recommends evaluating two additional strata for 2017:
 - 1) Separate strata for vessels delivering to tenders. Based on analyses in this report and that from 2014, NMFS continues to see differences in the characteristics of tendering and non-tendering vessels. Establishing a separate stratum (or strata) for vessels delivering to tenders would enable NMFS to adjust sampling rates to provide the necessary data to manage fisheries.
 - 2) Separate strata for partial coverage catcher-processors. Given the potential expansion in the number of catcher-processors in partial coverage in 2016, establishing a separate stratum (or strata) for partial coverage vessels would enable NMFS to adjust sampling rates.

Acknowledgments

Chapter 3 was written and reviewed by the 2016 Observer Science Committee:

- Craig Faunce, AFSC
- Jennifer Cahalan, AFSC/PSMFC
- Jason Gasper, AKRO
- Steve Barbeaux, AFSC
- Sandra Lowe, AFSC
- Ray Webster, International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC)

All other sections of the document were prepared by:

- Sally Bibb, AKRO
- Jennifer Cahalan, PSMFC/AFSC
- Craig Faunce, AFSC
- Ben Fissel, AFSC
- Jason Gasper, AKRO
- Nathan Lagerwey, NOAA OLE
- Brian Mason, AFSC
- Gretchen Harrington,
- Glenn Merrill, AKRO
- Alicia Miller, AKRO
- Jennifer Mondragon, AKRO
- Chris Rilling, AFSC
- Gwynne Schnaittacher, AFSC
- Jaclyn Smith, NOAA OLE
- Cathy Tide, AKRO
- Heather Weikart, AFSC
- Josh Keaton, AKRO

For more information:

<http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/observers/default.htm>



NOAA FISHERIES