

Observer Program Annual Report – Council motion

June 5, 2014

The Council requests NMFS and AFSC develop the draft 2015 ADP for Council review with the following considerations.

1. The Council supports NMFS recommendations to move participants in the vessel selection pool into the trip selection pool.

The Council requests NMFS and AFSC analyze the 2013 vessel selection pool data, as well as likely changes in the burdens associated with carrying an observer on vessels in the trip selection pool, to determine whether a vessel length other than 40' better defines the new trip selection sample frame in the 2015 ADP, in order to remove provisions for conditional release. The Council requests this information in order to make recommendations to NMFS and AFSC as part of the draft 2015 ADP review. The Council is concerned with potential bias introduced in the partial coverage category through conditional releases.

2. The Council requests NMFS maintain a higher observer coverage rates for all trawl vessels and fixed gear vessels over 57.5' in the revised trip selection pool in order to expand coverage on PSC limited fisheries, consistent with past Council recommendations.

3. The Council requests NMFS take the following SSC and OAC recommendations into consideration in the development of the draft 2015 ADP and the 2014 Annual Report, as well as ongoing agency evaluations and improvements to the program.

- Provide additional information on observer rates and coverage by gear type, in addition to numbers of trips and deployment.
- Examine potential associations of PSC with trip attributes on observed vessels.
- Continue the evaluation of PSC and bycatch estimation from observed vessels to the entire fishery.
- In the annual report, include a section outlining changes made to the program that have been made in the current year's ADP.
- Begin to address the question of how and when the program transitions to optimization of observer days according to particular fishery data and management needs.
- Recommend the agency work with fishermen and processors in the development of a trip identifier.
- Provide more detailed program cost information in order to assess inefficiencies in the program, especially in contrast to observer day costs in the full coverage category. In addition, evaluate ways to achieve cost efficiencies in the partial observer contract.
- Include <40' vessels in electronic monitoring testing to the extent possible.

4. The Council appreciates the development of performance metrics and encourages NMFS to continue to develop tools to evaluate data quality and deployment performance.

5. The Council continues to support supplementary Federal funding for the Observer Program in order to provide bridge funding between calendar years and cover collected fees that have been set aside due to sequestration rules.