

Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

Updated September 15, 2016

Priority	Name	Description	Status / Due Date / Target Date
Program-level Projects			
1	Annual Report/ Annual Deployment Plan	Every year, an Annual Report of the preceding fishing year and an Annual Deployment Plan (ADP) for the upcoming fishing year are prepared.	Draft 2017 ADP is a major analytical project between June and September 2016. The Draft 2017 ADP will be presented at the Oct. 2016 Council meeting and final ADP in Dec. 2016.
2	Electronic monitoring integration analysis	Analysis initiated to integrate EM as part of the Observer Program.	Initial review draft released, Council review in October 2016. Next EM Workgroup meeting is in November 2016.
3	Electronic monitoring research	Fieldwork, research, and planning for developing electronic monitoring technologies. Pre-implementation program is underway for 2016, and in planning for 2017.	EM Workgroup has developed a draft 2017 pre-implementation plan for longline and pot vessels > 40 ft, and scoping for vessels < 40 ft. The draft plan will be presented to the Council in Oct.
4	Analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods	Ongoing analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods, including evaluating design-based and ratio estimators; incorporating variance from at-sea sampling through to the trip-level; and then assessing post-strata definitions.	Update on development of estimation methods for variance and initial results was presented in June 2016 and NNMS is continuing work to incorporate programming into CAS and evaluate alternative estimators and post-strata.
5	Halibut DMRs	Evaluation of appropriate methods to determine halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs) given current observer monitoring and data.	Discussion paper prepared for September 2016 Plan Team meeting and October 2016 Council discussion.
6	Report on onboard observer sampling	Report on observer sampling results, e.g., proportion of total hauls that are sampled, by vessel size and gear. This item was requested by the Council in June 2016 during review of the Annual Report.	This report will be addressed by the Observer Program as an AFSC tech memo and NMFS anticipates it being available in June 2017.
Projects in NMFS Development or Review (Council has taken action or major work at current stage is NMFS's responsibility)			
7	Halibut PSC – decksorting	Exempted fishing permit (EFP) projects are being used to develop the components of a regulated program to allow deck sorting of halibut on trawl catcher/processors in the Bering Sea to reduce halibut mortality rates. Once the experimental work is complete, the Council has indicated that it will likely initiate analysis to implement deck sorting in regulation.	Fishing under the 2016 EFP application began in May 2016 and will continue through April 2017. NMFS continues to work with the fleet and EFP permit holder on implementation issues as they arise. A new application is expected in 2017 that would extend EFP fishing through the end of 2017.

Priority	Name	Description	Status / Due Date / Target Date
Projects in Council Review (Council or NMFS have tasked staff and scheduled review at a future Council or OAC meeting)			
8	GOA trawl bycatch	Implementation planning and analysis for catch monitoring and observer coverage requirements for transferable halibut and salmon PSC allocations, including for vessels delivering to tenders.	Discussion paper was presented at the June 2016 Council meeting. Further analytical work will be completed as requested by the Council.
9	Lead level 2 (LL2) observers	In June 2014, the Council tasked a discussion paper to look at regulatory and non-regulatory options to reduce the potential for shortages of fixed gear LL2 observers. Additional Council direction was provided in October 2015 and June 2016.	Discussion paper distributed to the OAC for review in September 2016 and to the Council for the October 2016 meeting.
10	Observer coverage on vessels delivering to tenders	Consider alternatives to improve the ability to randomly deploy observers on catcher vessels delivering to tenders. This may involve rescinding the allowance for catcher vessels to make multiple deliveries to a tender on a single trip for purposes of observer coverage or revising regulations to allow observers to be deployed from tender vessels.	Determine next steps after review of tender stratum in the 2017 ADP, which will be presented to the OAC in September 2016 and at the October 2016 Council meeting.
11	Observer disembark location	Analyze the proposal that a partial coverage category observer may be disembarked from a vessel in any community with a processor with a FPP or from a community from which the observer boarded the vessel if that community has regularly scheduled air service.	Discussion paper tasked but not yet scheduled for a specific Council meeting. Work on this project will occur when higher priority projects are completed.
12	Observer provider insurance requirements	In May 2015 NMFS determined that some observer provider insurance requirements in § 679.52(b)(11)(vi) are inapplicable and should be removed or revised.	NMFS National Observer Program (NOP) staff are planning a workshop to develop national guidance about how to address revisions to observer provider insurance requirements. NOP staff will update the Council at the October 2016 meeting.
13	ATLAS – Observer data entry and transmission	Discussion paper about observer data entry (ATLAS) and transmission requirements identified several changes to regulations that could resolve overlapping requirements fill gaps to align requirements with existing practices.	Discussion paper presented to the OAC in May 2016. No critical issues were identified, so this project is on hold until higher priority projects are completed or additional information necessitates a change in priority.
Proposed projects			
	Chinook sampling EFP	It was noted at the OAC that industry may be proposing an EFP for other ways to look at variance around Chinook salmon sampling.	An EFP application may be submitted in fall 2016 or spring 2017.
	IFQ in multiple areas	Revise monitoring options for fishing IFQ in multiple regulatory areas on the same trip.	Council considered these actions in February 2014 but did not task staff with further analysis of the issues.
	<i>De minimus</i> IFQ	Exempt/release from observer coverage vessels or trips with small amounts of IFQ.	
	IFQ fee assessment	Use standardized current annual prices for fee assessment for IFQ rather than standardized prices lagged one year.	