

FINAL Council Motion

Agenda Item C-1: Observer Program Annual Report & OAC Report

June 9, 2017

- 1) The Council recommends that the draft 2018 Annual Deployment Plan include the following:
 - Maintain status quo for:
 - Dockside monitoring of observed pollock trips (see comments below for longer term solutions for tender offloads).
 - The trip-selection method to assign observers to vessels in partial coverage and continue to deploy observers in the trip selection pools defined by gear (pot, hook-and-line, and trawl).
 - Programming in ODDS that prevents a 40 – 57.5' fixed gear vessel from being selected for a third consecutive observer trip.
 - Allowing vessels to log up to three trips in advance in ODDS.
 - Continuing to place vessels less than 40 ft in the no selection pool.
 - Evaluate:
 - Whether to continue the tender strata definition in 2018.
 - Comparing the following alternative deployment designs: 1) 15% coverage rates across all strata; 2) equal coverage rates that can be afforded with available funding; and 3) optimization allocations based on discards that includes prioritization of PSC limited fisheries in the weighting schemes.
 - A preliminary evaluation of the method to split the fee budget between EM and human deployment.
 - For the EM pool:
 - If funding is insufficient to expand the EM pool up to 165 vessels, prioritize deployment in the EM pool as follows: 1) longline vessels, whose data will be used for inseason management; 2) vessels that are already equipped with EM systems; and 3) vessels 40-57.5 ft LOA where carrying a human observer is problematic due to bunk space or life raft limitations
 - To the extent possible, the Council recommends that NMFS consult with the EM Workgroup and/or the OAC on policy choices made during the transition to an integrated EM program in the 2018 ADP.
 - Reprogram ODDS to allow vessels to change the dates for observed trips, rather than cancelling and inheriting observed trips.
- 2) The Council recommends that NMFS incorporate the following in future annual reports:
 - Evaluate pelagic trawl and non-pelagic trawl trips for evidence of observer effect;
 - Include information on progress toward estimating variance of catch and bycatch;
 - SSC comments, as appropriate.
- 3) The Council is concerned about the increase in Observer Program complaints for OLE priority issues of safety and creating a hostile work environment, and encourages the industry to work with OLE and observer providers to proactively engage in education and outreach effort to reduce the number of complaints.

- 4) The Council appreciates NOAA Acquisition and Grants Office (AGO) efforts to accommodate stakeholder input on the Statement of Work for the next partial coverage observer provider contract, including presentations at the OAC meeting. The Council requests that AGO schedule their upcoming outreach events during the October Council meeting.
- 5) Regarding tasking of observer projects:
 - Low sampling rates: The Council approves the OAC's recommendation to create an OAC subgroup over the summer to scope out potential solutions for addressing low coverage rates.
 - Tendering and dockside monitoring: The Council tasks staff to develop a discussion paper identifying specific data concerns with respect to vessels engaged in tendering, and to work with industry groups to develop both short term and long-term solutions, including potential regulatory changes.
- 6) The Council remains concerned about the combined effects of decreased funding and sequestration and other delays in release of the fees. The Council recommends that NMFS consider provide supplementary funds to help alleviate shortage in funding for observer deployment as well as continue to pursue solutions that remove these funds from sequestration rules and streamline the release of the collected funds.