

Council Motion
Agenda Item D2 -- Observer Fee Analysis
February 11, 2018

The Council adopts the following purpose and need statement and alternatives for analysis:

Purpose and need

The North Pacific Observer Program (Observer Program) is widely recognized as successful and essential for the management of the North Pacific groundfish and halibut fisheries. The funding and annual planning and review process for monitoring vessels and processors in the partial coverage category are designed to implement a scientifically reliable sampling plan to collect data necessary to manage the commercial groundfish and halibut fisheries. This system distributes the cost of observer coverage across participants in the partial coverage category, and provides annual flexibility to evaluate the performance of and improve the sampling plan, in consultation with the Council. Through this process, monitoring selection rates are adjusted annually according to the available budget. In addition, the monitoring selection rates may be adjusted in response to fishery management objectives, as funding allows.

The annual process of establishing observer coverage and EM selection rates in the partial coverage category using the Observer Program Annual Report and Draft Annual Deployment Plan is a well-designed, flexible, and legally defensible process. This annual process produces a statistically reliable sampling plan for the collection of scientifically robust data at any level of observer coverage, and can allow for annual consideration of policy-driven monitoring objectives identified through the Council process.

To continue to improve the program, maintain and enhance the Council's ability to meet policy objectives through monitoring, and fund deployment of electronic monitoring systems, additional funding for monitoring in the partial coverage category may be necessary.

Alternatives

Alternative 1: Status quo. Observer fee of 1.25% applies equally to all landings in the partial coverage category.

Alternative 2: Increase the observer fee up to 2% (analyze a range), to apply equally to all landings in the partial coverage category.

Alternative 3: Maintain the 1.25% observer fee applying equally to all landings in the partial coverage category, and additionally, raise the fee up to 2% (analyze a range) by gear sector (longline, pot, jig, trawl).

The Council supports the analytical approach as presented in the Analysis update. The analysis should also include a discussion of the relative impact of the alternatives with respect to Council policy objectives for monitoring beyond base thresholds.