



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File #: Cons 16-016, **Version:** 1

Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Observer Lead Level 2 - Discussion paper

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ACTION REQUIRED:

Review discussion paper and take action as necessary.

BACKGROUND:

In June 2014, the Council tasked staff to prepare a discussion paper to evaluate regulatory and non-regulatory solutions to alleviate industry concern about the high potential for a shortage of fixed-gear lead level 2 (LL2) observers for freezer longline vessels in the BSAI, as a lack of availability of a LL2 observer could delay or prevent a vessel operator from fishing. In November 2014, NMFS, observer providers, and industry met to identify non-regulatory actions that could be taken to improve the opportunities for observers to gain the experience necessary to receive the LL2 endorsement, and to retain qualified LL2 observers. Some measures were successfully implemented over the course of 2015, including vessels voluntarily taking a second observer to provide the experience needed for that second observer to qualify for a fixed gear LL2 endorsement (and bearing the cost of that second observer).

Nonetheless, after further discussion in October 2015, the Council reiterated the need to evaluate regulatory measures and additional non-regulatory measures that might provide more long-term solutions to the problems identified by the industry.

This discussion paper provides the following information:

- History and background of the fixed gear LL2 shortage issue.
- Information about LL2 observer availability.
- The Observer Program's evaluation of the experience requirements necessary to successfully deploy as a single LL2 observer on a freezer longline vessel.
- Preliminary assessment of the options identified by the Council in October 2015 to evaluate their feasibility in resolving the potential shortage of LL2 observers.
- Framework for the Council to consider possible next steps for this issue.

The OAC reviewed this discussion paper at their meeting in September 2016, and provided a recommendation to eliminate two of the options from further study. The OAC report is **attached under the C4 agenda item**.