

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

FINAL Motion: C5 Shortage of Fixed Gear Lead Level 2 Observers

October 7, 2016

The Council directs staff to move forward for initial review the discussion paper addressing the shortage of fixed gear Lead Level 2 (LL2) observers (agenda item C-5). Alternatives for review should include a no action alternative and Options 1 and 4 as described in the discussion paper and in the October 2015 Council motion on this issue. Alternatives should also include Option 6 developed by the Observer Program, with the sub-option added by the Observer Advisory Committee (OAC).

Alternatives (Option from discussion paper noted in parentheses):

- Alternative 1: No action
- Alternative 2 (Option 1): Allow deployment of a non-fixed gear LL2 observer on FLC vessels if the only alternative is that the vessel must stand down:
 - Deploy any non-LL2 observer
 - Deploy a trawl LL2 observer
- Alternative 3 (Option 4): Institute an at-sea training component to the Federal observer training program, whereby the agency would pay for fixed gear LL2 certification.
- Alternative 4 (Option 6): Allow freezer longline (FLL) vessels with flow scales to choose between a single LL2 observer or two level 2 observers
 - Sub-option: Allow FLL vessels with flow scales to choose between a single LL2 observer, or a level 2 and level 1 observer.

Lastly, the Council supports further exploration by the Observer Program of non-regulatory actions described in Section 5.7 of the discussion paper to increase the preparedness of new fixed gear LL2 observers deployed on freezer longline vessels.

Purpose and Need:

Under monitoring and enforcement regulations in place since October 2012, owners of freezer longline vessels named on License Limitation Program (LLP) licenses endorsed to catch and process Pacific cod in the (BSAI) are required to select between two monitoring options: carry two observers so that all catch can be sampled, or use a motion-compensated flow scale to weigh Pacific cod before it is processed and carry one observer. Under both monitoring options, at least one of the observers must be endorsed as a lead level 2 observer for vessels using fixed-gear.

All freezer longline vessels except one have chosen the flow scales with a single LL2 observer option. This, combined with current observer deployment model that places most fixed-gear catcher vessels in the partial observer coverage category, means that there are few fixed-gear vessels in the full observer coverage category which do not require a LL2 observer. Therefore, observers employed by the full coverage observer providers have few opportunities to gain the necessary experience to obtain the LL2 endorsement for vessels using fixed-gear. NMFS, observer providers, and industry undertook a series of non-regulatory actions designed to build and retain a pool of available LL2 endorsed observers. This included industry voluntarily deploying second observers on some freezer longline vessels, at a cost to the Industry, in order to allow them the experience to earn the LL2 endorsement.

The Council is concerned about the potential for a shortage of LL2 observers for deployment on freezer longline vessels and the resulting costs that could be incurred. This action is intended to address the need to maintain a high standard of observer data quality, and the need to minimize the potential for shortages of LL2 observers and additional costs to industry.