

Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

	Priority	Name	Description	Status/Due Date/Target Date	
Individual Projects	1	Annual Deployment Plan	Deployment strategy for observers in 2016.	Final ADP released for the December Council meeting.	
	2	Electronic monitoring research	Fieldwork, research, and planning for developing electronic monitoring technologies. Pre-implementation program approved for 2016. Analysis initiated to integrate EM as part of the Observer Program.	Staff is working with the EM Workgroup on the EM analysis. Council review of draft alternatives is tentatively scheduled for February 2016, with initial review in October 2016.	
	3	Analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods	Ongoing analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods including of evaluation of design-based and ratio estimators; incorporate variance from at-sea sampling through to the trip-level; and then assess post-strata definitions.	Target is to provide catch and variance estimates in June 2016 and conduct evaluation of post-strata starting in 2016.	
	<i>Projects in NMFS Development or Review (Council has taken action or major work at current stage is NMFS's responsibility)</i>				
	4	Halibut PSC – decksorting	The Alaska Seafood Cooperative (AKSC) submitted an exempted fishing permit application for 2016 that would inform a regulated program to allow deck sorting of halibut to reduce halibut mortality rates. This EFP would build on information learned during deck sorting EFPs in 2012 and 2015. A 2016 EFP would likely include all AKSC vessels and possibly other non-pelagic trawl vessels.	Fishing under the 2015 EFP began in May 2015 and is ongoing. A final report to the Council on fishing under the 2015 EFP is scheduled for February 2016, coincident with the presentation of the application for a 2016 EFP application to the Council. NMFS staff is currently working with AKSC on revisions to the 2016 EFP application and study design.	
	5	BSAI Amd 109 – CDQ small catcher vessel fishery	Revise requirements for observer coverage, permitting, catch monitoring, and catch accounting for catcher vessels ≤46'.	Council final action in Feb 2015. FMP amendment/proposed rule under development by NMFS. Minimal input needed by analysts until response to comments on proposed rule.	
	6	BSAI Amd 110 – BS salmon PSC	As part of a larger action, revise requirements for handling, sorting, retention, and counting of salmon in the BS pollock fishery and expansion of requirements for computer and ATLAS software to catcher vessels less than 125' LOA while participating in BS pollock fishery.	Council final action in April 2015. FMP amendment/proposed rule under development by NMFS. Minimal input needed by analysts until response to comments on proposed rule.	
7	GOA Amd 102 - Partial coverage for small catcher/processors	Revise allowances for small catcher/processors to choose to be in the partial observer coverage category.	Council final action in June 2015. FMP amendment/proposed rule under development by NMFS. Minimal input needed by analysts until response to comments on proposed rule.		

Projects in Council Review (Council has tasked staff and scheduled review at a future Council 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.	Management and monitoring issues are described in section 2.6 of October 2014 discussion paper. Analysts will refine this section as alternatives are developed by Council. Assess analytical needs again after Dec 2015 mtg.
9	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 and to revise regulations to allow observers to be deployed from tender vessels.	Analysis tasked to Council staff, with significant input needed from NMFS Observer Program and AKR staff. Staff recommending Council review of revised purpose and need and alternatives in February 2016.
10	Lead level 2 (LL2) observers	In June 2014, the Council tasked a discussion paper to look at regulatory and non-regulatory solutions to LL2 observer qualification requirements. Additional Council direction on non-regulatory solutions was provided in October 2014.	No specific staff currently tasked to analysis of regulatory amendments. This project will require input by the same group of staff needed to complete the analysis of observer coverage on vessels delivering to tenders.
11	ATLAS – Observer data entry and transmission	Discussion paper about current status of observer data entry (ATLAS) and transmission requirements across all fisheries with recommendations for improvements where appropriate.	Target presentation to OAC in May 2016. Ongoing project of limited scope that can be completed without reducing staff availability for higher priority projects.
Proposed projects			
	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.	At its October 2015 meeting, the National Observer Program (NOP) Advisory Team recommended that the NOP (NMFS HQ) publish an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking public input about whether NMFS should establish national minimum standards for observer provider insurance coverage and, if so, what those standards should be.
	IFQ in multiple areas	Revise monitoring options for fishing IFQ in multiple regulatory areas on the same trip.	Council considered in February 2014 but did not task staff with further analysis of the issue.
	<i>De minimus</i> IFQ	Exempt/release from observer coverage vessels or trips with small amounts of IFQ.	Council considered in February 2014 but did not task staff with further analysis of the issue.
	IFQ fee assessment	Use standardized annual prices for fee assessment for IFQ.	Council considered in February 2014 but did not task staff with further analysis of the issue.