

Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

	Priority	Name	Description	Due Date/Target Date
	1	Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA)	Court ordered EA to address the risk to data quality that may result from decreased observer coverage and the point at which the observer coverage rate becomes too low to generate reliable, high quality data.	A draft Supplemental EA will be released for public review on May 8, 2015. The OAC will review on May 29, and the Council will review at its June 2015 meeting.
	2	Annual Report	Descriptive information and analysis of effectiveness of observer deployment in 2014 (including vessels delivering to tenders) and continued development of performance metrics.	The 2014 annual report will be released by May 22, 2015. The OAC will review on May 29, and the Council will review at its June 2015 meeting.
	3	Annual Deployment Plan	Deployment strategy for observers in 2016.	Work on the draft ADP will be done primarily during the summer of 2015.
	4	Electronic monitoring research	Fieldwork, research, and planning for developing electronic monitoring technologies.	SSC review of EM cooperative research study design in Feb 2015; fieldwork in 2014-2015; results presented to Council in Oct 2015. Pre-implementation planned for 2016. Significant ongoing work to support the Council's EM working group and national EM planning and reporting requirements.
	5	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 develop variance algorithms in 2015 and conduct evaluation of post-strata in 2016.
Individual Projects	6	Halibut PSC – decksorting	The Alaska Seafood Cooperative (AKSC) has submitted an exempted fishing permit application for 2015 that, if granted, would allow AKSC to evaluate how often vessels use alternate halibut handling methods designed to reduce halibut mortality, when the alternate methods are available as an option. A different EFP application may be submitted later in 2015 for additional research starting in 2016.	NMFS published the notice of receipt of the EFP application on January 22, 2015. Comment period ends on Feb. 11, 2015. The Council will review the application at its February 2015 meeting. Target is for fishing under the EFP to start in March 2015.
	7	CDQ small boat Pacific cod fishery	Revise requirements for observer coverage, permitting, catch monitoring, and catch accounting in small boat CDQ fisheries.	Final draft EA/RIR was released to the public on January 16, 2015. Council final action scheduled for February 2015. Rulemaking and implementation tasks will be a priority for the remainder of 2015.

	Priority	Name	Description	Due Date/Target Date
Individual Projects	8	Small catcher/processors	Evaluate and potentially expand allowances for small catcher/processors to choose partial observer coverage.	Initial review draft EA/RIR will be released for review in mid-March 2015. The Council will review the analysis at its April 2015 meeting.
	9	Monitoring issues related to salmon bycatch in the BS pollock fishery	Update analysis of several issues related to handling, sorting, retention, and counting of salmon in the BS pollock fishery and proposed expansion of Atlas requirements to catcher vessels less than 125' LOA.	NMFS staff are preparing economic analysis of regulatory amendments proposed in section 2.6 of the EA for Council final action in April 2015.
	10	Observer coverage for BSAI trawl catcher vessels	Allow trawl catcher vessels in the BSAI Pacific cod fishery to choose to be in full coverage.	Unknown – given other priorities, no staff currently available to work on this project.
	11	Observer coverage on vessels delivering to tenders	Revise allowance for catcher vessels to make multiple deliveries to a tender on a single “trip” for purposes of observer coverage; revise regulations to allow observers to be deployed from tender vessels.	Evaluate priority again after review of the 2014 Annual Report.
	12	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.	In November 2014, the Freezer Longline Coalition met with observer providers and NMFS to try to resolve non-regulatory issues with the supply of fixed gear LL2 qualified observers. Given other priorities, no staff currently are available to work on the regulatory solutions discussion paper.
	13	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.	Staff have suspended work on this analysis pending further Council direction.
		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.

Revised 1/28/15