

Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

Reflects comments by the Observer Advisory Committee in May 2016

	Priority	Name	Description	Status/Due Date/Target Date
Program-level	1	Annual Report/ Annual Deployment Plan	Every year, an Annual Report of the preceding fishing year and an Annual Deployment Plan for the upcoming fishing year are prepared.	Draft 2017 ADP is a major analytical project between June and September 2016. The draft is due for Oct. 2016 Council meeting and final for Dec. 2016.
	2	Electronic monitoring integration analysis	Analysis initiated to integrate EM as part of the Observer Program.	Council reviewed the problem statement and alternatives for integrating EM into the Observer Program in Feb 2016. Initial review is tentatively scheduled for October 2016. Next EM Workgroup meeting is July 2016.
	3	Electronic monitoring research	Fieldwork, research, and planning for developing electronic monitoring technologies. Pre-implementation program is underway for 2016, and in planning for 2017.	EM Workgroup working on proposal for 2017 pre-implementation for longline and pot vessels > 40 ft, and scoping for vessels < 40 ft.
	4	Analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods	Ongoing analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods, including evaluating design-based and ratio estimators; incorporating variance from at-sea sampling through to the trip-level; and then assessing post-strata definitions.	Update on development of estimation methods for variance and initial results will be presented in June 2016; evaluation of alternative estimators and post-strata will begin summer/fall in 2016.
	5	Halibut DMRs	Evaluation of appropriate methods to determine halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs) given current observer monitoring and data.	Initial discussion paper underway for September Plan Team meeting and October Council discussion.
	6	Report on onboard observer sampling	Report on observer sampling results, eg proportion of total hauls that are sampled, by vessel size and gear.	This issue will be addressed by the Observer Program as an AFSC tech memo.
Individual Projects	<i>Projects in NMFS Development or Review (Council has taken action or major work at current stage is NMFS's responsibility)</i>			
	7	Halibut PSC – decksorting	Exempted fishing permit (EFP) projects are being used to develop the components of a regulated program to allow deck sorting of halibut on trawl catcher/processors in the Bering Sea to reduce halibut mortality rates. Once the experimental work is complete, the Council has indicated that it will likely initiate analysis to implement deck sorting in regulation.	A final report to the Council on fishing under the 2015 EFP was presented in February 2016. The EFP application for 2016 is under review with a tentative schedule for fishing to begin in May 2016. The 2016 EFP includes vessels in both Amendment 80 cooperatives, as well as CDQ operations and some vessels fishing in the trawl limited access sector.
	8	Observer coverage for BSAI trawl catcher vessels	Allow trawl CVs in partial coverage to annually choose to be in full coverage for all BSAI groundfish fishing in the upcoming year. Deadline for notification to NMFS is October 15.	NMFS is preparing the proposed rule for this action. Target implementation January 2017.
	9	tLandings	Rulemaking to require tender vessel operators to complete electronic landing reports using tLandings	NMFS is preparing the proposed rule for this requirement. Target implementation January 2017.

Priority	Name	Description	Status/Due Date/Target Date
Projects in Council Review (Council or NMFS have tasked staff and scheduled review at a future Council or OAC meeting)			
10	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.	Discussion paper will be presented at the June 2016 Council meeting.
11	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 was provided in October 2015.	Discussion paper will be presented to the OAC in September 2016 and at the October 2016 Council meeting.
12	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.	Determine next steps after review of tender stratum in the 2017 Observer Program Annual Deployment Plan, which will be presented at the October 2016 Council meeting.
13	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.	Discussion paper will be presented to the Council at a future meeting.
14	Observer disembark location	Analyze the proposal that a partial coverage category observer may be disembarked from a vessel in any community with a processor with a FPP or from a community from which the observer boarded the vessel if that community has regularly scheduled air service.	Discussion paper tasked to Council staff but not yet scheduled for a specific Council meeting. Staff will provide an update on a proposed timeline in October.
15	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.	NMFS National Observer Program (NOP) staff is developing a national workshop on guidance to the Councils and regions about how to address revisions to observer provider insurance requirements.
Proposed projects			
	Chinook sampling EFP	It was noted at the OAC that industry may be proposing an EFP for other ways to look at variance around Chinook salmon sampling.	An EFP may be submitted in fall 2016.
	IFQ in multiple areas	Revise monitoring options for fishing IFQ in multiple regulatory areas on the same trip.	Council considered these actions in February 2014 but did not task staff with further analysis of the issues.
	<i>De minimus</i> IFQ	Exempt/release from observer coverage vessels or trips with small amounts of IFQ.	
	IFQ fee assessment	Use standardized current annual prices for fee assessment for IFQ rather than standardized prices lagged one year.	

Individual Projects