



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

605 W. 4th Ave. Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 271-2809
Fax (907) 271-2817

Action Memo

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Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Observer Coverage on BSAI Trawl CVs - Initial Review

ACTION REQUIRED:

Review of analysis and alternatives.

BACKGROUND:

Since 2013, NMFS has had a policy of allowing trawl catcher vessels to voluntarily carry full coverage observers for all of their BSAI activity. That policy is responsive to owners of American Fisheries Act vessels who wanted to provide better accounting of the halibut prohibited species catch that accrues to their AFA cooperative. Under the policy, these volunteer vessels technically remain part of the Observer Program's partial coverage category. In effect, these vessels pay not only a daily rate for a full coverage observer, but also the partial coverage fee liability that is leveled based on a percentage of the value of their ex-vessel revenues.

The present range of alternatives was defined by the Council at its June 2015 meeting. The Council is considering alternatives that would either recategorize all AFA-eligible trawl CVs as "full coverage" when they are fishing in the BSAI, or would allow owners to choose which category their vessel would operate under. If the Council recommends a choice-model, the Council would then choose an option that defines whether an owner must make a one-time decision about future coverage levels, or whether he or she could select the vessel's coverage category on an annual basis.

Ultimately, the Council seeks to balance the objectives of providing relief to CVs that are bearing excess observer costs, avoiding the imposition of additional costs on vessels that do not desire full coverage, preserving the essential functionality of the Observer Program, and minimizing additional management costs for NMFS.