

Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

Priority	Name	Description	Status / Due Date / Target Date
Program-level Projects			
1	Annual Report / Annual Deployment Plan	Every year, an Annual Report of the preceding fishing year and an Annual Deployment Plan (ADP) for the upcoming fishing year are prepared.	An abbreviated 2021 Annual Report was presented to the FMAC in May and to the Council in June 2022. Elements from the 2022 ADP will be rolled forward to 2023, and NMFS will present the final 2023 ADP to the Council in December.
2	Trawl CV EM Development	Engage with the Trawl Electronic Monitoring Committee (EMC) to develop EM for compliance monitoring on pelagic trawl catcher vessels. Research projects include EM for compliance monitoring of full retention in pollock fisheries including tender vessels in the Western Gulf as well as EM to support alternate methods of dockside salmon accounting.	This project was identified by the PCFMAC cost efficiencies subgroup as the first priority. Vessels began fishing under the EFP in January 2020. The Council is scheduled to take final action at their October 2022 meeting on whether this should become a regulated program, with implementation planned for 2024. NMFS continues to hold regular meetings with participants to address emergent issues.
3	Improve integration of fixed gear EM data with observer data	In April 2019, the Council tasked the partial coverage cost efficiencies subgroup to continue to develop ideas related to how to best integrate the different monitoring tools, such as dockside monitoring, EM, and monitoring cooperatives.	This project was identified by the PCFMAC cost efficiencies subgroup as the second priority. <i>This project is being considered as part of the integrated partial coverage analysis.</i>
4	Reevaluate the zero selection stratum	In April 2019, the Council tasked the partial coverage cost efficiencies subgroup to continue to develop ideas related to how to best integrate the different monitoring tools, such as dockside monitoring, EM, and monitoring cooperatives.	This project was identified by the PCFMAC cost efficiencies subgroup as the third priority. <i>This project is being considered as part of the integrated partial coverage analysis.</i>
5	Biological Data Assessment	The AFSC is conducting an assessment of the current way biological information collected by observers is used in stock assessments. The result of this project is to provide the scale and scope of data needs in the current program. The Council has identified evaluation of gaps in biological samples due to implementation of EM as one of their top 2022-2024 research priorities.	Information has been collected from stock assessment authors. Initial analyses related to reducing biological data were presented to the PCFMAC as part of the Draft 2021 ADP. <i>Ongoing development of this element is being considered as part of the integrated partial coverage analysis.</i>

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6	Shoreside Sampling	In May 2019, the FMAC partial coverage subgroup identified information needed to scope the next steps toward an integrated and cost efficient partial coverage monitoring program. Shoreside sampling was identified as one tool to be considered.	<i>This project is being considered as part of the integrated partial coverage analysis.</i>
7	Explore alternative approaches to evaluate observer effects	In June 2018, NMFS recommended and the Council supported reassessing the performance standards used to evaluate observer effects in the Annual Report and explore alternative approaches.	NMFS staff submitted a manuscript on this topic to a journal and are working on revisions in order to address reviewer comments.
8	Identify best practices for estimating species weight when it is unavailable for a monitored haul	Catch estimates for EM and observer data rely on weight measurements from observed hauls. This project would identify the best methods for assigning weights when they are unavailable. Improving weight assignments could occur independently from EM integration, and is therefore left as a separate task.	Staff have begun preliminary work on this project.
9	Agency ODDS Subgroup	In June 2018, NMFS recommended and the Council supported the formation of an Agency Subgroup to document how ODDS operates and identify alternatives for improvement. Changes could include improvements to the linkage between ODDS and eLandings, changes to allow vessels that also fish trawl gear to be placed in the EM selection pool, and the trip cancellation and inherit process.	Starting in 2022, NMFS recommended that all ODDS trips be closed using the existing pull down menu that lists landing reports associated with each vessel. This has yet to be implemented.
10	Analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods	Analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods, including evaluating design-based and ratio estimators; and incorporating variance from at-sea sampling through to the trip level.	Development of variance estimators has been completed and is included as Appendix C of the 2019 Annual Report, which NMFS published in December 2021. This work will also be published as a tech memo. Further work continues to evaluate post-stratification methods in CAS. Currently, Machine Learning methods are being tested to explore different stratification schemes that better utilize available data.
<i>Regulatory Projects in NMFS Development or Review</i> (Council has taken action or major work at current stage is NMFS's responsibility)			
11	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.	NOAA Fisheries published a final rule on September 7, 2022 to clarify the minimum suite of insurance that an authorized observer provider, or provider seeking authorization, must have to mitigate the financial risks of observer coverage for the fishing vessels and shoreside processors that are subject

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			to observer coverage, and for the observer providers operations and their observers in the event of an observer's occupational injury. Implementation 30 days afterwards and verification of compliance 120 days after that.
12	Pot CP Monitoring Changes	In February 2021, NMFS informed the Council of the need to modify observer experience requirements for observers deployed on Pot CP vessels.	NMFS presented a draft analysis on this topic to the Council at their June 2022 meeting. A proposed rule is expected in early 2023.
13	Record keeping regulatory changes	Observer Provider Portal and Small CP request process changes.	NMFS would develop an RIR and regulatory change in consultation with the FMAC and the Council. No staff have been assigned to this project yet.