

Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

Updated February 1, 2018

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. EM pre-implementation will be evaluated in the 2017 Annual Report and EM has been integrated into the 2018 ADP.	NMFS presented the final 2018 ADP to the Council in December 2017. Preparation of the 2017 Annual report is a major analytical project between February and May 2018.
2	Logistics for electronic monitoring implementation	Work on this project involves many aspects of EM implementation including reprogramming ODDS; programming the Catch Accounting System to ensure that EM data can be used in catch estimation; reviewing and approving Vessel Monitoring Plans, etc.	This is a major project for NMFS in early 2018. VMP approvals are underway.
3	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 will be presented in June 2018 and NMFS is continuing work to incorporate programming into CAS and evaluate alternative estimators and post-strata.
4	Report on onboard observer sampling	Report on observer sampling results, e.g., proportion of total hauls that are sampled, by vessel size and gear. This item was requested by the Council in June 2016 during review of the Annual Report.	This report was presented to the OAC in May 2017, and an AFSC tech memo is expected.
5	Average weight of halibut wastage	Impact analysis of differences in average weights on the final wastage (discard) estimates of halibut in the IFQ fishery. Currently, CAS estimates halibut discard based on mean weight from the unsorted (retained and discarded) catch. Since halibut <32" are required to be discarded, CAS may be overestimating discarded halibut.	In 2016 NMFS modified data collection methods for halibut viability so that it is part of randomized biological sampling. This should facilitate evaluation of average weights and enable NMFS to refine estimation methods. Staff have not yet been assigned to this project.
6	Halibut DMRs	Evaluation of appropriate methods to determine halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs) given current observer monitoring and data.	Ongoing analysis by interagency working group. DMRs for 2018-2019 were presented to the Plan Teams and at the October Council meeting.
7	ODDS programming changes	ODDS programming is a major project each year to implement the final ADP and changes identified in the annual report. Two additional changes have been requested: 1) Improve data quality by changing how selected trips are inherited so that when an observed trip is canceled, the next trip scheduled is selected rather than the next trip logged. 2) Allow a vessel that uses both fixed gear and trawl gear to opt into the EM selection pool.	Major changes to ODDS programming must be complete by the start of each calendar year. NMFS will consider the additional changes for 2019. Implementation would require programming changes to both ODDS and CAS. No staff have been assigned to work on this project yet.

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Projects in NMFS Development or Review (Council has taken action or major work at current stage is NMFS's responsibility)			
8	Lead Level 2 (LL2) observers	In October 2016, the Council initiated a regulatory analysis of alternatives to reduce the potential for shortages of fixed gear LL2 observers. The Council took final action in June 2017.	NMFS published a proposed rule on December 27. Comment period closed January 26, 2018. NMFS is developing the final rule.
9	Halibut PSC deck sorting EFP	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. In 2018 and 2019, catcher/processors may fish in the GOA under the EFP.	NMFS has received an EFP application for 2018/2019; Council reviewed in October and NMFS issued the permit. EFP fishing began in January 2018.
10	Evaluation of alternative sampling methods for salmon	A collaborative study between industry and NMFS to evaluate alternative sampling methods for salmon bycatch in the GOA rockfish fishery. In 2018, dockside sampling methods will be tested.	SK funding was received in Summer 2017. NMFS staff began initial scoping work in preparation for field work in the 2018 fishing season.
11	Halibut PSC deck sorting regulatory analysis	NMFS has begun work on an analysis to allow trawl catcher/processors to sort halibut on deck to reduce halibut mortality rates in non-pollock fisheries.	An update on this Analysis is planned for the Council in June 2018.
Projects in Council Review (Council or NMFS have tasked staff and scheduled review at a future Council or OAC meeting)			
12	Raise the observer fee analysis	In October 2017, the Council initiated an analysis to consider raising the observer fee. The analysis is a response to low sampling rates in partial coverage.	An update on and outline of this analysis will be provided to the Council in February 2018.
13	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 hosted a workshop in Nov 2016.	The NOP published a tech memo in November 2017. Staff will evaluate specific regulatory and analytical tasks after the tech memo is published.
14	Change tender trip definition, consider deploying observers from tenders	In October 2017, the Council initiated an analysis to look at changing the definition of a tender trip to start a new trip with each delivery to a tender or to limit the number of deliveries that can be made before a vessel must log back into ODDS. The analysis should also evaluate options to deploy observers at sea from tenders.	Initial scoping of a similar action was undertaken in 2015-2016, before the analysis was tabled. No staff have been assigned to work on this project yet.
15	Changes to EM and zero selection to address low selection rates	In 2017 the Council endorsed the OAC Subgroup's recommendation to evaluate how changes to the zero selection pool and strategic use of EM may improve program efficiency.	Demographic data were prepared in 2017, but no staff have been assigned to further work on this project yet.

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<i>Projects in Council Review continued</i>			
16	Observer disembark location	Analyze a change to the requirement that a partial coverage category observer be disembarked only in a community with a processor with a FPP.	Initial scoping has begun, including Council-approved change to alternatives in June 2017, but no staff have been assigned to further work on this project.
17	<40' vessels in EM Pool	In December 2016, at the recommendation of the EM Workgroup, the Council requested a discussion paper about incorporating vessels <40' LOA in the EM selection pool.	Preliminary demographic data were prepared for this evaluation in 2017. The Council will review EM priorities in February 2018.
18	Full retention on AFA Pollock CVs with EM compliance	AFA catcher vessels have applied for funding and are interested in an EFP to evaluate EM for compliance and reduce or replace at-sea observers in the BSAI pollock fishery.	A few vessels are taking cameras to test feasibility during 2018. An EFP might be needed for further testing. The Council will review EM priorities in February 2018.
19	Full retention on WGOA pollock trawl CVs with EM compliance	In October 2017, the Council expressed long-term support for a project to develop a full retention requirement, using EM for compliance, in the Western GOA pollock fisheries, to facilitate dockside monitoring of Chinook salmon especially from vessels delivering to tenders.	The Council will review EM priorities in February 2018.

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