

An aerial photograph of a coastal town and harbor. The town is built on a green hillside overlooking a large body of water. A bridge spans across the water, connecting the town to a forested island. The harbor is filled with numerous boats and ships. The background shows more forested hills and a clear blue sky.

Draft SSC Report

June 2018

C1 Observer Program Annual Report

C1 Observer Program Annual Report

- The Annual Report provides comprehensive information on implementation of the observer program in 2017, including detailed information on coverage, budget for the partial coverage category, fishery information summaries, compliance and enforcement, summaries of EM video review, etc.
- The SSC appreciates the dedication and hard work of observer program staff to provide this information
- The SSC finds the report to be well written and to provide a rigorous evaluation of how well the program is conforming to the current deployment plan



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- The SSC focused primarily on the performance of the partially observed coverage category
- Reported metrics indicate an effective use of fees and a largely effective deployment and performance for 2017
- Stratification by gear and presence/absence of tendering for the partially observed trip selection strata is straightforward to interpret and allows ready identification of strata for which catch and bycatch metrics affect management, versus those for which effort and catch are too low to have much impact
- The EM selection pool continues to evolve and expand

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- The Observe Declare and Deploy System (ODDS) largely works as intended for trip planning and logging of trips
- Plans to link ODDS with eLandings are progressing slowly
- While the program continues to improve, the SSC notes the following issues with respect to the partially observed category
- Statistically significant differences exist between observed and unobserved trips for several metrics, including catch weight and trip duration
- There continues to be problems with sampling of tendered trips, though for some gear types very few tendered trips occur

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- Funding for observer coverage in 2018 was adequate to meet the minimum sampling rate of 15% across all strata. Adequate funding is critical to the ongoing success of this program for in-season management, stock assessment, and setting of specifications.
- Inheritance of trip selection after a trip is cancelled leads to temporally biased sampling of some strata, with many observed trips coming late in the season. The SSC agrees with NMFS that a sub-group should identify ways to obtain broader, more representative observer coverage throughout the season.

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- The SSC largely agrees with recommendations made by the Observer Science Committee (OSC) and NMFS for the 2019 deployment year. Additionally, the SSC offers the following.
- Analysts should compare the magnitude of bias between observed and unobserved trips with the overall magnitude and precision of discard or PSC that is being monitored for compliance by management.
- Given potential future funding constraints, the SSC looks forward to Council review of the current fee structure of the observer program.

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- The SSC encourages consideration of the under 40' no coverage fleet for 2019 as this represents a large segment of the targeted halibut trips; some vessels have significant landings. Deployment options should be brought forward for discussion during the ADP review in October.
- Compliance and enforcement issues remain a problem that contributes to bias, and may be substantially underreported for a variety of social and safety reasons. The SSC encourages the training of crew on the value of the observer program and how crew can contribute to the success of the program by interacting appropriately with observers.

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- The SSC remains concerned that performance metrics from EM pre-implementation have not been fully evaluated prior to full implementation of EM in the observer program. We look forward to seeing a full evaluation of this program as soon as is practical, as well as an evaluation of the tradeoffs between use of EM and the existing partially observed coverage category.
- The SSC continues to encourage additional progress toward resolving the calculation of mean weight of halibut discarded by the IFQ halibut fleet.

