

**Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program**  
*Updated May 25, 2017, after discussion at the OAC meeting*

Priority	Name	Description	Status / Due Date / Target Date
<b>Program-level Projects</b>			
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 was included in the 2016 Annual Report and beginning in 2018 the EM program will be integrated into the ADP.	The 2016 Annual Report was discussed at the OAC meeting in May 2017 and at will be presented to the Council in June 2017. Preparation of the ADP is a major analytical project between June and Sept 2017. In addition, the Council has requested a preliminary evaluation of the method to split the fee between human and EM deployment.
2	Logistics for electronic monitoring implementation	Work in this project involves many aspects of EM implementation including reprogramming of the Observer Declare and Deploy System (ODDS) to allow vessels in the EM selection pool to opt in to the EM pool, and to log and be selected for their trips; programming the Catch Accounting System to ensure that EM data can be used in catch estimation; developing the Vessel Monitoring Plan template and approval process, etc	This is a major project for NMFS for the remainder of 2017.
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 and initial results was presented in June 2016 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.	The Observer Program is putting together an AFSC tech memo; presentation scheduled for the OAC meeting in May 2017, and tech memo will be published in the fall 2017.
5	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 will be presented to the Plan Teams and the Council in the fall.
6	Electronic monitoring research and development	Fieldwork, research, and planning for developing new electronic monitoring (EM) technologies, and extending EM to new fleets.	2017 pre-implementation plan, including research on new technologies, is underway.
<b>Projects in NMFS Development or Review (Council has taken action or major work at current stage is NMFS's responsibility)</b>			
7	Electronic monitoring integration FMP amendment and regulations	Council final action in Dec 2016 on analysis to integrate EM into the Observer Program. Preferred alternative includes an option to use EM to address monitoring requirements for fishing IFQ in multiple regulatory areas during a trip.	The EM proposed rule published March 23, with the intent for EM implementation by 2018. NMFS is addressing public comments and preparing the final rule.
8	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.	Fishing under the EFP is underway, and will continue through the end of 2017. NMFS anticipates a new EFP for 2018; there is some discussion about whether it will include the vessels in the GOA. Council review of the EFP is scheduled for October.

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9	Evaluation of alternative sampling methods for salmon	Industry is seeking funding to conduct a collaborative study with NMFS to evaluate alternative sampling methods for salmon bycatch in the GOA rockfish fishery.	Proposal for SK funding was submitted in Dec 2016 and, if approved, fieldwork will take place in 2018. Prior to SK funding, initial reconnaissance work will begin in June 2017. The project will require considerable NMFS involvement.
<b>Projects in Council Review</b> (Council or NMFS have tasked staff and scheduled review at a future Council or OAC meeting)			
10	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 reviewed the initial review draft analysis in April 2017, and identified a preliminary preferred alternative. Final action is scheduled for June 2017.
11	Low sampling rates	In October 2017, the Council requested that NMFS begin to consider approaches to address low coverage rates, including 1) finding efficiencies within the existing sampling design, and 2) evaluating the observer fee structure. In May 2017, the OAC recommended further work to scope out potential mitigative actions that can be achieved through the ADP, through changes to the observer contract, or through regulatory change.	Pending the Council's approval, an OAC subgroup will meet over the summer to scope out solutions, and will report back to the OAC in September 2017.
12	Observer coverage on vessels delivering to tenders	In February 2016, the Council put on hold an analysis of rescinding the provision for catcher vessels to make multiple deliveries to a tender on a single trip for purposes of observer coverage or allowing observers to be deployed from tender vessels in favor of NMFS' recommendation to deploy observers by tender strata in 2017. The 2016 Annual Report identified bias associated with GOA pollock vessels delivering to tenders in the Western GOA.	In May 2017, the OAC recommended the Council consider how to define the data concern with respect to tender bias, and evaluate options for monitoring salmon bycatch to address those specific data issues.
13	Halibut deck sorting – regulatory analysis	In April 2017, NMFS informed the Council that the EFP work is approaching the stage where an analysis can be initiated to implement deck sorting in regulation.	NMFS staff have started initial work on this project. Much of the analysis and implementation will draw on the ongoing work of the EFP.
14	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. The NMFS National Observer Program (NOP) is deciding what type of national guidance to issue for setting new insurance requirements.	NOP staff provided an update to the OAC in May 2017. No staff have been assigned to work on this project yet.
15	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.	Staff is recommending a change to the alternatives to give NMFS discretion about where an observer may be disembarked, if not in a community with a processor. The OAC approved this change in May 2017. Staff have not been assigned to this issue.
16	<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.	No staff have been assigned to work on this project yet.