



Status Update: Observer Program Safety Review (OSPR)

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“*End to End*” Observer Safety Assessment

- National Observer Program Advisory Team (NOPAT) – Receive, assess, and process OSPR findings and recommendations
- Some recommendations will technical expertise
- Establish overarching *Observer Safety Standards* to improve and maintain high levels of observer safety
- Standards to serve as templates to assure a consistent approach to *observer safety in all fisheries, at all phases, by all means*
- Improved safety culture for observers creates a positive impact for all fisheries stakeholders including commercial fishing vessels and crews

Observer Operational Phases



Findings and Recommendations

Finding	Recommendation	FMA Status
<p>NOAA Fisheries National and Regional Observer Programs lack a systematic process for following up on significant incidents and casualties involving observers.</p> <p>The review team found that other observers were not aware of the fact that three of their colleagues lost their lives on the job in the course of a single year.</p> <p>The review team believes more could have been done by NOAA and other agencies to pursue more comprehensive and transparent closure of these tragic incidents.</p>	<p>NOAA Fisheries should develop and maintain a robust, timely, and transparent process for incident reporting and After Action Reporting.</p> <p>NOAA Fisheries should provide all necessary resources to identify root causes and take action to prevent or mitigate a recurrence and so lessons learned can be applied to future safety training and policy development.</p>	<p>Complete: Incidents investigated to the fullest; improved communications with National Observer Program.</p>

Findings and Recommendations

Finding	Recommendation	FMA Status
<p data-bbox="117 401 842 527">There is a lack of feedback on “observer assault, harassment, or interference violations” from OLE to observers and program staff</p> <p data-bbox="117 582 842 794">For ROPs that track safety incidents, MARPOL violations, enforcement concerns and other at sea concerns such as bed bugs, the definitions, reporting thresholds and tracking procedures for these incidents are inconsistent.</p>	<p data-bbox="884 401 1354 571">OLE should develop consistent feedback protocol to the ROPs and observers regarding the status of reported violations.</p> <p data-bbox="884 625 1232 794">NOAA Fisheries should develop a consistent methodology for incident reporting.</p> <p data-bbox="884 849 1286 1018">ROPs should provide information regarding safety-related incidents at least annually to the NOP.</p>	<p data-bbox="1394 401 1837 614">Complete: FMA has a consistent reporting method for marine incidents, commensurate with OLE and USCG definitions.</p> <p data-bbox="1394 669 1866 926">A summary of incidents to OLE is included in the program's Annual Report and is routinely reported to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and its associated committees.</p>

Findings and Recommendations

Finding	Recommendation	FMA Status
<p>Some observer procurement contracts do not contain adequate provisions to exclude individuals with chronic performance issues.</p>	<p>Contracts/task orders should be written so that Program Managers have input on when an individual is no longer allowed to work in a program as an observer due to work performance issues.</p>	<p>Complete: FMA has standards for observer performance and has programs in place to improve performance, as well as a process to decertify chronic poor performers.</p>

Findings and Recommendations

Finding	Recommendation	FMA Status
<p>The policy language for physical and medical eligibility requirements lacks specificity and is inconsistently applied by ROPs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) A licensed physician must certify not more than 12 months prior to the end of the observer training that the observer candidate is physically capable of serving as an observer;2) Documentation must be provided to the program prior to the observer candidate's completion of training	<p>Clarify the frequency of physical eligibility requirements.</p> <p>Require medical exams to be conducted in person.</p> <p>Provide copies of medical exams to the program.</p>	<p>Complete: FMA has a yearly requirement for physical and it must be conducted in person; observer providers make examiner aware of the physical requirements</p>

**WHAT IS A
NORTH PACIFIC
GROUND FISH
AND HALIBUT
OBSERVER?**



Life as an Observer

Working as an observer is adventurous and rewarding. Observers have the opportunity to experience life at sea and the beautiful scenery of coastal Alaska. The work is physically and mentally demanding. Rough seas are common, bouts of seasickness can be uncomfortable, and the environment can be cold and wet. Limited onboard space makes living and working conditions relatively cramped. Most trips last from one day to a couple of weeks, although some vessels go to sea for several weeks. Many vessels fish 24 hours a day, resulting in erratic and unpredictable work periods and irregular sleeping schedules. Daily activities may include heavy lifting (up to 80 lbs), climbing ladders, and working on rolling, slippery decks. There may be minimal access to phones, computers and mail. In the event of an emergency, advanced medical assistance may not be readily available. Observers can take pride in the knowledge that their work is essential to effective fisheries management in the North Pacific.

Findings and Recommendations

Finding	Recommendation	FMA Status
<p>The requirements for provider Emergency Action Plans are non-existent or vague, and their implementation varies widely between providers.</p>	<p>Each ROP and its current observer providers should develop and maintain coordinated EAPs</p> <p>If a tragic incident such as the loss of an observer or staff member occurs, the EAP should include making appropriate counseling available to observers, staff and observer providers.</p>	<p>In Progress: FMA “phone tree” has proven successful; open to improvement recommendations</p>

Findings and Recommendations

Finding	Recommendation	FMA Status
<p>Although regulations are clear, a lookout (wheel watch) is not always followed by commercial fishing vessels.</p>	<p>NOAA Fisheries should develop a national policy to address this issue, including outreach material included with fishing permits, and possible steps to take in cases of non-compliance with the relevant USCG regulations.</p>	<p>Complete and Ongoing: FMA, AKR, USCG, and OLE routinely communicate with observers and the fleet regarding the requirement to maintain wheel watches</p>

Findings and Recommendations

Finding	Recommendation	FMA Status
<p>Several ROPs and international observer programs do not have a routine check in procedure for observers in place. Some programs use pre-programmed codes with InReach communicators for observers to report their status, or facilitate emergency extraction.</p>	<p>NOAA Fisheries should develop a policy requiring that at a minimum, the observer provider or NOAA Fisheries establish a weekly check in procedure with observers deployed at sea.</p>	<p>Ongoing: FMA has daily reporting on 90% of the observed fleet</p> <p>FMA has purchased 5 InReach devices to test in the partial coverage fleet</p>

Findings and Recommendations

Finding	Recommendation	FMA Status
<p>The USCG can sometimes support observer training by sending personnel with equipment such as a helicopter rescue basket, a dewatering pump, and/or their damage control training trailer.</p> <p>These are important added elements of the survival training because a fishing vessel crew may not have had this kind of training.</p>	<p>Training programs should incorporate rescue basket, dewatering pump, hands-on damage control procedures and practical fishing vessel stability training, leveraging existing USCG resources for the purpose as available.</p>	<p>Complete: FMA uses rescue baskets in training and incorporated dewatering pump training in 2019</p> <p>FMA has no plans to include the damage control device in observer training as this has not been recommended by our USCG</p>



**2016 Observer
Attitudes and
Experiences Survey**

Observer Attitude and Experiences (2016)

Survey Intention:

- Why observers chose the profession
- Factors influencing retention or departure

553 respondents

- Current observers
- Former observers still in marine science
- Alternative career paths less likely to be surveyed
- Non-random sample



What we heard ...



How we'll respond ...



Field work was the **#1 motivation for becoming an observer**. **69%** of respondents' **expectations for days spent at sea matched their experiences**.

Ensure recruitment and training materials set appropriate expectations.



75% thought being an observer was **helpful in advancing their careers**. **45%** said the experience **increased their interest in working in marine science careers**.

Continue to communicate career path opportunities, and collaborate with observer employers in support of career transition.



69% of respondents **supported electronic reporting**. **40%** **supported electronic monitoring**.

Effectively communicate intent of technologies and potential impacts on observer deployments.



What we heard ...



How we'll respond ...



About **half** of survey respondents (46%) reported that they were **harassed at least once** in their observer career, and only **one-third** of those **reported harassment** every time it occurred.

Support NOAA-wide efforts to combat harassment, which includes educating the fishing community about **zero tolerance of observer harassment** and resulting penalties.



Only **20%** of respondents **felt valued by the fishing community**.

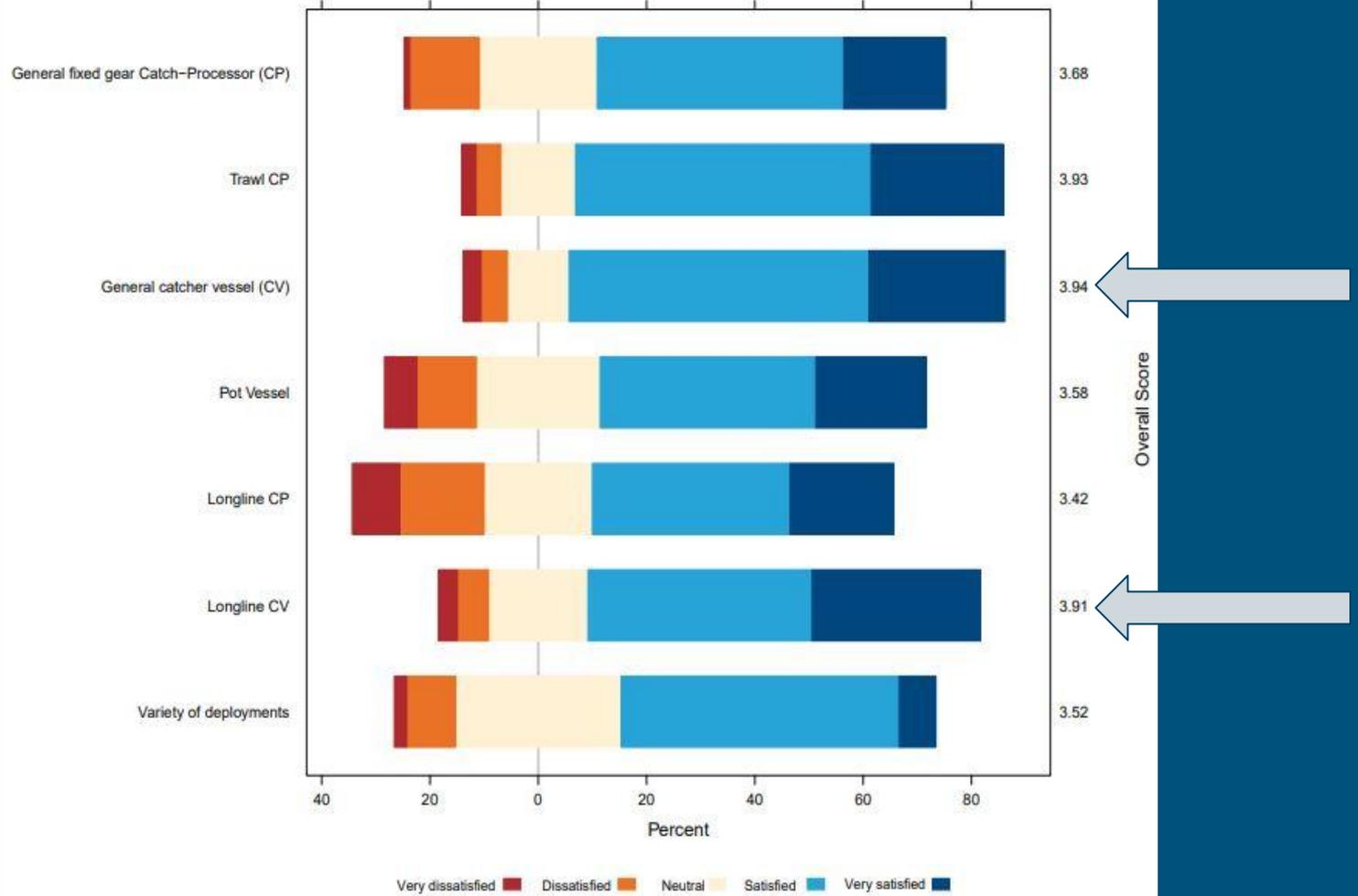
Better educate the fleet, Councils, and other stakeholders about **observer contributions to sustainable fisheries**.



Respondents expressed **low satisfaction** with opportunities to **learn more about science and management**.

Create opportunities for observers to attend fisheries conferences, track regional management council actions, and **engage with NOAA Fisheries staff**.

Figure 3.6.1. Satisfaction levels for different deployment types, Alaska Region.



Alaska Only: Lead-Level II Certification

Experienced observers not interested in becoming LL2 certified:

- Low salary (insufficient compensation for extra work)
- Too much work
- Hard to fill fixed-gear requirement (LL2 Training now an alternative)

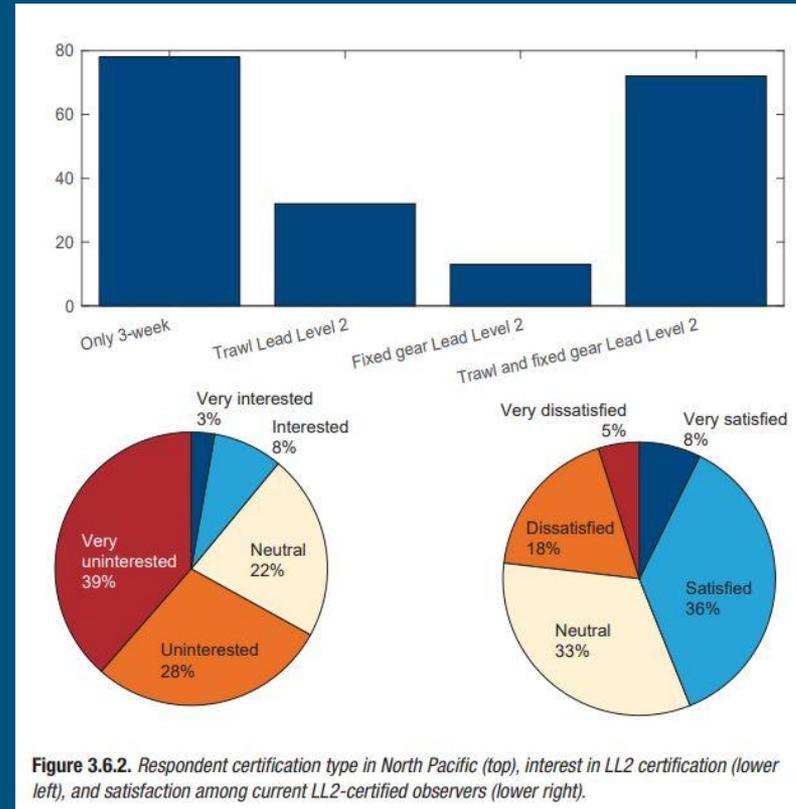


Figure 3.6.2. Respondent certification type in North Pacific (top), interest in LL2 certification (lower left), and satisfaction among current LL2-certified observers (lower right).

Discussion & Questions
