

Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

	Priority	Name	Description	Status/Due Date/Target Date
	1	Annual Report	2015 Observer Program Annual Report	Presentation to the OAC on May 12-13, 2016, and at the June 2016 Council meeting
	2	Electronic monitoring research	Fieldwork, research, and planning for developing electronic monitoring technologies. Pre-implementation program approved for 2016, in planning for 2017. Analysis initiated to integrate EM as part of the Observer Program.	Council will review draft problem statement and alternatives for integrating EM into the Observer Program in Feb 2016. Initial review is tentatively scheduled for October 2016, along with proposal for 2017 pre-implementation.
	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.	Target is to provide catch and variance estimates in June 2016 and conduct evaluation of post-strata starting in 2016.
	<i>Projects in NMFS Development or Review (Council has taken action or major work at current stage is NMFS's responsibility)</i>			
Individual Projects	4	Halibut PSC – decksorting	The Amendment 80 cooperatives submitted an exempted fishing permit (EFP) application for 2016 that would inform a regulated program to allow deck sorting of halibut to reduce halibut mortality rates. This EFP would build on information learned during deck sorting EFPs in 2012 and 2015. The 2016 EFP includes all Amendment 80 vessels.	A final report to the Council on fishing under the 2015 EFP is scheduled for February 2016, coincident with the presentation of the application for a 2016 EFP application to the Council.
	5	BSAI Amd 109 – CDQ small catcher vessel fishery	Revise requirements for observer coverage, permitting, catch monitoring, and catch accounting for catcher vessels ≤46'.	Council final action in Feb 2015. Notice of Availability (NOA) of FMP amd published 1/21/16. Proposed rule to follow soon. Preparation of final rule and implementation is a high priority for staff from Jan-June 2016. Target for final rule publication is May-June 2016.
	6	BSAI Amd 110 – BS salmon PSC	As part of a larger action, revise requirements for handling, sorting, retention, and counting of salmon in the BS pollock fishery and expansion of requirements for computer and ATLAS software to catcher vessels less than 125' LOA while participating in BS pollock fishery.	Council final action in April 2015. NOA of FMP amd published 1/8/16. Proposed rule to follow soon. Preparation of final rule and implementation is a high priority for staff from Mar-July 2016.
	7	BSAI Amd 112 and GOA Amd 102 - Partial coverage for small catcher/processors	Revise allowances for small catcher/processors to choose to be in the partial observer coverage category.	Council final action in June 2015. NOA published 12/17/15, proposed rule published 12/29/15. Preparation of final rule and implementation is a high priority for staff from Jan-June 2016. Target for final rule publication is April 2016.

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Projects in Council Review (Council or NMFS have tasked staff and scheduled review at a future Council or OAC meeting)			
8	Observer coverage for BSAI trawl catcher vessels	Analysis of alternatives for placing all AFA trawl catcher vessels in full coverage for BSAI fisheries (Alt. 2) or allowing BSAI trawl catcher vessels currently in partial coverage to voluntarily select to be in full coverage (Alt. 3).	Council final action scheduled for February 2016. If approved, the regulatory amendment would be a high priority for NMFS from Feb through completion of the project.
9	GOA trawl bycatch	Implementation planning and analysis for catch monitoring and observer coverage requirements for transferable halibut and salmon PSC allocations, including for vessels delivering to tenders.	Management and monitoring issues are described in section 2.6 of the October 2014 discussion paper. Analysts will expand this analysis for a June 2016 discussion paper.
10	Observer coverage on vessels delivering to tenders	Consider alternatives to improve the ability to randomly deploy observers on catcher vessels delivering to tenders. This may involve rescinding the allowance for catcher vessels to make multiple deliveries to a tender on a single trip for purposes of observer coverage and to revise regulations to allow observers to be deployed from tender vessels.	Council will review purpose and need, proposed alternatives, and NMFS recommendations in February 2016. NMFS recommends requiring landings, possibly as a separate regulatory action.
11	Lead level 2 (LL2) observers	In June 2014, the Council tasked a discussion paper to look at regulatory and non-regulatory solutions to LL2 observer qualification requirements. Additional Council direction provided in October 2015.	No specific staff currently tasked to analysis of regulatory amendments due to other higher priority analyses.
12	ATLAS – Observer data entry and transmission	Discussion paper about current status of observer data entry (ATLAS) and transmission requirements across all fisheries with recommendations for improvements where appropriate.	Target presentation to OAC in May 2016. Ongoing project of limited scope that can be completed without reducing staff availability for higher priority projects.
Proposed projects			
	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.	At its October 2015 meeting, the National Observer Program (NOP) Advisory Team recommended that the NOP (NMFS HQ) publish an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) seeking public input about whether NMFS should establish national minimum standards for observer provider insurance coverage and, if so, what those standards should be. Preparation of a draft ANPR is underway.
	IFQ in multiple areas	Revise monitoring options for fishing IFQ in multiple regulatory areas on the same trip.	Council considered these actions February 2014 but did not task staff with further analysis of the issues.
	<i>De minimus</i> IFQ	Exempt/release from observer coverage vessels or trips with small amounts of IFQ.	
	IFQ fee assessment	Use standardized annual prices for fee assessment for IFQ.	