

## Observer Advisory Committee – Meeting Report May 23-24, 2017

Traynor Room, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle, WA  
9 am – 5 pm Tuesday; 8:30 am – 4 pm Wednesday

**Committee:** Bill Tweit (chair), Bob Alverson, Jerry Bongen, Beth Concepcion, Dan Falvey, Kathy Hansen, Stacy Hansen, Brett Iwataki, Nicole Kimball (phone), Michael Lake, Chad See, Luke Szymanski, Brent Paine, Diana Evans (staff)

**Agency staff<sup>1</sup>:** AKR - Jennifer Mondragon, Alicia Miller, Jane Sullivan (Alaska Sea Grant fellow)  
FMA - Chris Rilling, Craig Faunce, Jennifer Cahalan (PSMFC), Gwynne Schnaittacher, Lisa Thompson, Farron Wallace, Mona Ash, Elizabeth Chilton  
NPFMC – Sam Cunningham (phone)  
ADFG - Trent Hartill  
NOAA OLE - Nathan Lagerwey  
NOAA GC - Tom Meyer, Alisha Falberg (teleconference)  
NOP – Jane DiCosimo  
NOAA AGO – Joe Greene, Kate Steff, Crystina Jubie, Noah Nielsen

**Other attendees included:** Abigail Turner (NPPFA), Troy Quinlan (TechSea), Ed Hansen (SEAFA), Austin Estabrooks (APA), Ernie Weiss (AEB), Theresa Peterson (Council member, phone), Jeff Stephan (UFMA, phone), Jon Warrenchuk (Oceana, phone), Molly Zaleski (Oceana, phone), Buck Laukitis (phone)

---

Bill Tweit opened the meeting with introductions and an overview of the agenda.

### Agenda

1. Introductions, review and approve agenda
2. Discuss Observer Program Review Documents  
*(a) 2016 Observer Annual Report; (b) Tech memo on onboard observer sampling*
3. Discuss observer analyses  
*(a) Review observer analytical task status; (b) Briefing on observer survey and observer safety report*
4. Discuss 2019 partial coverage observer contract process
5. Discuss options for increasing partial coverage selection rates
6. Scheduling & other issues

### Review of 2016 Observer Annual Report

Chris Rilling, Craig Faunce, Jane Sullivan, Jennifer Mondragon, and Nathan Lagerwey presented the various sections of the 2016 Annual Report. There was no public comment on the Annual Report. **The OAC appreciates all the hard work by staff involved in the preparation of the Annual Report**, and acknowledges that it is of extraordinary value to be able to evaluate the program in this detail, every year.

**The OAC is concerned about the increase in Observer Program complaints received in 2016, compared to 2015, for OLE priority issues of safety and creating a hostile work environment**, as described in Chapter 5 of the Annual Report. The Committee discussed options for addressing the situations that lead to such complaints, and the benefits of further education and outreach with industry and the observer community about how to be better prepared for situations that may arise. **The OAC recommends that the Council encourage continued outreach by OLE and observer providers.**

**The OAC remains concerned about the combined effects of sequestration and other delays in release of the fees collected from fishermen, described in Chapter 2, on observer coverage levels.** These delays complicate accounting, and make it difficult for Observer Program staff to make optimal use

---

<sup>1</sup> NPFMC – North Pacific Fishery Management Council; FMA – NMFS Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC); AKR – NMFS Alaska Region; NOP – NMFS National Observer Program; NOAA GC – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration General Counsel; OLE – NOAA Office of Law Enforcement; ADFG – Alaska Department of Fish and Game; AGO – NOAA Acquisition and Grants Office.

of the funds; the Committee believes the Council should continue to pursue solutions that remove these funds from sequestration rules and streamline the release of the collected funds.

**Recommendations for 2018 Annual Deployment Plan (ADP)**

Chapter 3 reviews deployment performance in 2016, and Chapter 7 provides NMFS recommendations for the 2018 ADP on the basis of that review. The Annual Report evaluates whether observer coverage is representative of fishing effort (in both space and time) and examines the potential for an “observer effect” to see if observed trips are different from unobserved trips. The report found that there is evidence of bias in the partial coverage category of the Observer Program in both the trawl and hook and line fisheries in 2016 (see page 9 of the Annual Report). **The OAC recommends that efforts to eliminate the observer effect should continue as a high priority**, with the advantage that under the restructured program, the Council and NMFS have tools available to evaluate and reduce bias. At this stage, the discussion needs to be about how to prioritize, given funding resources and limited staff time. OAC comments are as follows.

**Dockside Monitoring and Tendering**

The Annual Report recommends status quo for 2018, to maintain dockside monitoring only on pollock deliveries shoreside. The report, however, highlights that there is bias associated with pollock vessels delivering to tenders (e.g., page 105). **The OAC recommends that further analysis is needed to determine whether the 2018 ADP should be changed to address the tender bias issue**, in addition to supporting the longer-term evaluation that NMFS proposes. For the 2018 ADP, the OAC a) recommends that NMFS define the data concern more clearly with respect to pollock tender deliveries in the western GOA; b) encourages NMFS to communicate directly with the western GOA fleet about their activity; and c) requests that NMFS provide as much 2017 data as possible to evaluate whether including a separate tender stratum for each gear type in 2018 is effective. It was also noted in the OAC discussion that reprogramming ODDS to address trip cancellation dates (see below) may help to address the issue.

**For the longer-term evaluation of monitoring salmon bycatch on vessels delivering to tenders, the OAC recommends exploring approaches in addition to those listed by NMFS in the Annual Report**, for example limiting the number of deliveries to a tender before the vessel must log a new trip in ODDS, or requiring a vessel to log a new trip in ODDS if the vessel delivers to a tender that is close to port. Because of the cost of requiring 100% observer coverage, the data concern and alternative approaches within partial coverage should be fully vetted first. It was noted that there is not a western GOA fleet representative on the OAC, and the fleet should be consulted for this evaluation.

**Trip Selection**

The OAC was interested in NMFS’ recommendation for a hurdle analysis, with the intention of first allocating observer days with an equal selection rate across all of partial coverage of either 15%, or whatever can be afforded, ideally in order to achieve an amount that would result in a minimum of 3 observed trips in each stratum and NMFS area, and then using optimization to allocate any additional observer days that may be available among the strata based on Council priorities such as discards or PSC-limited fisheries. **The OAC recommended considering different hurdle thresholds by gear type, especially for pot gear**. There was acknowledgment that this is effectively optimization rather than equal allocation, but also a recognition that that a selection rate that would remove the possibility of data gaps could be different for each gear type (but could also be time-intensive to discover, analytically). **The OAC remains troubled about costs and inadequate funding levels for the partial coverage program, and resulting selection rates** (see discussion later in the agenda), even though the partial coverage observer contract rates in Alaska are competitive in comparison to other programs around the country (see page 32 of the Annual Report).

<b>ODDS</b>	<p><b>The OAC agrees with the NMFS recommendation to continue the status quo ODDS policies</b> to allow vessels to log up to three trips at a time, and to provide automatic release from coverage for the third observed trip for vessels 40-57.5 feet in length. <b>The OAC also supports reprogramming ODDS to allow changing the dates of an observed trip</b>, rather than allowing the observed trip to be cancelled and then simply inheriting an observed trip next time one is logged, and is interested to see analysis on the impact of trip cancellations.</p>
<b>EM Selection Pool and No Selection Pool</b>	<p>The OAC supports integrating the EM selection pool into the 2018 ADP process, although the discussion noted that the EM Workgroup also proffered a recommendation for EM in 2018 as an outcome of the March 2017 Workgroup meeting. The OAC noted that as EM transitions into implementation, there will be issues arising that will likely require policy decisions. <b>The OAC recommends either the EM Workgroup or the OAC should have the opportunity to weigh in on policy choices during the transition to an integrated EM program</b>, although recognizing that this may not always be possible given tight timeframes. The OAC agrees with the agency recommendation that if any additional funding is available to expand the pool of EM vessels in 2018, priority should first be given to longline vessels, whose data will be used for inseason management. The OAC agrees that vessels under 40 ft should be in the no-selection pool, as in past years.</p>

### **Recommendations for 2017 Annual Report**

The Committee discussed the question of how to draw conclusions from the information presented in the Annual Report, and whether it should be the role of the authors to provide more evaluation, or whether it is the role of the OAC and the Council to interpret what is presented. In particular, with respect to some of the bias identified in the Report, the OAC wrestled with identifying and prioritizing a problem, versus a source of bias that may have little impact on management. It was clarified that the agency recommendations for 2018 represent NMFS' interpretation of the most pressing concerns. The OAC identified two specific issues that would help in future Annual Reports. First, the OAC notes that there has consistently been a difference between observed trip rates on pelagic versus non-pelagic trawl trips (see Table 4-1). **The OAC encourages the agency and the Observer Science Committee to evaluate this difference, and consider separately analyzing pelagic trawl and non-pelagic trawl trips for evidence of the observer effect in Chapter 3** (e.g., through the six permutation tests that are currently run for the trawl stratum). The agency may also want to consider the pros and cons of separate deployment strata for those gear types.

Secondly, the OAC notes that this year's Annual Report provides no further update on the project to develop methods for estimating variance associated with the catch and bycatch estimates using observer data, a working draft of which was presented to the OAC in May 2016. **The OAC recommends that progress on estimating variance be included in future Annual Reports**, and echoed the SSC recommendation from last year (page 56 of the Annual Report) requesting that "continuing work to improve the sampling design and to provide estimates of variance needs to consider the linkage between the sampling design ... and the needs for management...". The discussion focused on how the OAC would use variance to better understand observer data quality. Preliminary results for 2015 showed that the majority of the percent standard errors are relatively small; almost all species, area, and gear estimates had percent standard errors of less than 30 percent. The OAC is interested to know whether that variance would be similarly small when evaluated for the different selection rates in 2016 and 2017, and also whether there are any "red flag" species whose catch estimate has higher uncertainty that the Council should be concerned about. It was also noted that this type of information could feed into an evaluation of

how to integrate EM into the Observer Program, which may be capable of more affordably delivering higher sampling.

## Report on Observer Sampling

Jennifer Cahalan presented her work examining observer sampling results for 2016, which responds directly to an OAC and Council request last year. She intends to publish the study as an AFSC technical memorandum, likely in the fall of 2017. **The OAC greatly appreciated the presentation**, noted that it is helpful to see the context for how observer data is generated, and suggested that her presentation on observer sampling would be informative to the Council and to stakeholders. **The OAC recommends soliciting companion presentations from the appropriate experts on how the data is subsequently used in stock assessment, catch accounting, and inseason management.**

## Observer analyses

The OAC reviewed the ‘Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program’ table that is updated for the Council at each meeting. **The OAC recommended several changes to priorities, and the table has been subsequently revised and updated in the attached document.** In order for EM to be fully implemented in 2018, a high priority for Observer Program and Alaska Region analytical staff is the reprogramming of ODDS and the Catch Accounting System, to receive EM pool registrants and EM data, respectively. The OAC also recommended increasing the priority of the project to look at low selection rates in partial coverage (see discussion later in report), as well as elevating the priority of evaluating the tender bias issue.

The OAC also had the following comments on specific projects:

- **LL2:** Alicia Miller updated the OAC with the development of the LL2 analysis, for which the Council has selected a preliminary preferred alternative. **The OAC noted that once the regulation is changed, it will also be important to develop and offer training classes for trawl LL2 observers in order to maintain the pool of available observers.** The OAC also highlighted that in the past, the LL2 discussion has identified that the workload for a single observer on a freezer longliner is very demanding, which is not addressed in this analysis. Other changes are underway in the Observer Program to address this issue, and the OAC also suggested it may be worth considering how EM as a catch accounting tool could be used to help address some of the workload issue for observers on these vessels.
- **Disembark location:** Diana Evans presented a scoping paper on the observer disembark location analysis, which included a staff recommendation to reword the action alternative to better meet the Council intent. **The OAC endorses the proposed change to the language of the action alternative, which would give NMFS the discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to waive the requirement for a vessel to deliver its observer to a port with a resident processor.**
- **Observer insurance:** Jane DiCosimo briefed the OAC on the results of the national observer insurance workshop from fall 2016. The agency is in the process of deciding whether to develop some combination of national guidance, national requirements, or minimum insurance coverage standards for observers funded through NMFS contracts. **The OAC recommends that the Council ask the agency to remove the two inapplicable insurance requirements, and begin working on replacement requirements once the national program provides input.** The suggestion that the removal and replacement of regulations be separate actions is primarily driven by the concern that bids for the new partial coverage contract should not include a requirement for inapplicable insurance, as a cost savings measure.

Jane DiCosimo also briefed the OAC on the results of the national observer retention survey and progress with the national observer safety program review. **The OAC appreciated both presentations**, and will be interested to see the technical memoranda when they are released in the fall. Jane noted that the survey information will be useful both in better understanding how to retain qualified observers, but also to know how often the investment in observer training reaps benefits even when an observer is no longer observing, particularly for the government through observers turning to fishery management careers. The observer safety program review is currently underway, and once it is complete, the agency will prepare an action plan on safety in fall 2017. **The OAC expressed interest in being involved in how the action plan translates to North Pacific issues.**

## **Discuss 2019 Partial Coverage Observer Contract Renewal**

Joe Greene (Branch Chief for the Western Acquisitions Group), Kate Steff (team lead for the current partial coverage contract), and Chrystina Jubie and Noah Nielsen (contracting officers), all from the NOAA Acquisition and Grants Office (AGO), gave a presentation on the timeline for awarding the next partial coverage observer provider contract, and opportunities for stakeholders to provide input on the Statement of Work for the Request for Proposals. The proposed timeline is as follows:

- Summer 2017: AGO will work with the Observer Program to define the contract requirement and prepare a Draft Statement of Work. The draft will be published on FedBizOpps.gov, along with an announcement for Industry Week. AGO is targeting the late July / early August timeframe.
- Fall 2017: After the close of the Federal fiscal year, AGO will host an Industry Week, and will travel to various Alaska locations to meet with and be available to interested stakeholders (“office hours”). Exact locations and timing yet to be determined. AGO will accept all comments.
- Spring 2018: AGO will consider public input and finalize the Statement of Work
- Summer 2018: Request for Proposals officially published
- October 2018: Proposals due
- March 2019: Contract will be awarded
- Mid-June 2019: Contract will begin

With respect to Industry Week, the OAC provided feedback to the AGO that attending the October Council meeting in Anchorage would be important, and received confirmation from Joe Greene that this should be possible. The OAC also requested an opportunity to provide input either during the OAC meeting in September, or for individuals to meet with the AGO during “office hours” either immediately before or after the OAC meeting. While it is not possible for AGO staff to travel in September, Joe indicated this could be accommodated.

OAC members had many specific questions about the design of the contract. Many of the decisions about what type of contract to award will not be finalized until AGO has a clear idea of what is required. These include how to integrate the observer and EM aspects of the contract, whether the contract can be awarded to multiple providers, and how to prioritize proposal evaluation criteria (e.g., technical merit, past performance, cost, qualified personnel). It is likely that the contract will be awarded as a one-year base period (for mid-2019 to mid-2020), with 4 year-long option periods. OAC members asked questions about whether the government is locked into the contract for 5 years, or whether it can cancel the option periods for a reason other than bad performance, and were informed that AGO can also choose not to renew if the costs are no longer fair and reasonable, for example because new technology is available. A question also clarified that it would be difficult to extend the current contract beyond a maximum of six months, should the Council want to delay the reissuance of the contract while it considers other changes to partial coverage that may impact the design of the contract.

The OAC also highlighted their interest in cost efficiency, and ways to incentivize the provider to further reduce costs (especially for travel). Depending on the type of contract, the AGO may have tools that could be written into the contract, which would need to link to specific goals identified in the Statement of Work. Cost efficiency is also accounted for in the selection of a provider based on proposals. Kate Steff cautioned the Committee that prioritizing cost above all else could result in a race to the bottom that would affect data quality, but the OAC clarified that as there are several companies already working in Alaska that meet high technical standards, the intention would be to prioritize cost once that technical hurdle is met. There were questions about how to mimic the full coverage environment, and whether a contract could accommodate a hybrid fee/pay-as-you-go coverage model, perhaps where a fisherman gets a voucher reimbursing a fixed amount for observer coverage, which he can then use to shop in the provider marketplace to meet his observer needs. The AGO responded that in that case, the funding would likely need to be in the form of a grant rather than a contract. The OAC also suggested that a contract proposal could build in similar efficiency to full coverage by proposing subcontracting arrangements with other providers to minimize expensive travel (e.g., subcontract available observers from other companies). The OAC raised the question about how to incentivize fishermen to adjust their fishing patterns to improve cost efficiency, but it was realized that this behavior is not affected by the contract.

With respect to the EM portion of the contract, there was discussion about how the contract would address the potential need for vendors to service another company's EM equipment (if it has already been purchased by the program), whether the contract can specify procedures for field-testing new equipment, and that the base cost unit for EM might be different than human observers (e.g., a per vessel cost structure rather than per sea day). There was also a question for the agency about whether data review will be part of the contract, which has not yet been decided.

### **Discuss Options for Increasing Partial Coverage Selection Rates**

The Chair, Bill Tweit, gave a summary of the Council's April 2017 motion, requesting the OAC to consider options for increasing partial coverage selection rates. **The OAC recommends that an OAC ad-hoc subgroup be convened over the summer, to scope out short and long-term options to address low selection rates in partial coverage, and provide comments back to the OAC in September.** The subgroup would consider whether there are short-term options that can be addressed through changes to the ADP or the Catch Accounting System; what, if any, options require changes to the partial coverage contract that should be conveyed to the AGO as part of the Statement of Work; and longer-term solutions that may involve regulatory change. Bill Tweit, Dan Falvey, Nicole Kimball, Bob Alverson, Abigail Turner (pending appointment to the OAC), and Julie Bonney (in absentia) all volunteered to be on the subgroup, along with Council and agency staff. The OAC noted the lack of representation from the western GOA and suggests that input from the western GOA would be important. Members requested that the OAC be kept informed of the subgroup's progress. Chris Rilling noted that FMA staff availability would be a challenge due to recent cutbacks in Federal funding and hiring, as well as the range of other analytical tasks that must be completed.

The OAC brainstormed a number of different options, and a written document with ideas was also submitted by Dan Falvey, which together would be the starting point for subgroup discussions. The staff workload and resources involved in analyzing the different options should explicitly be taken into account in the scoping exercise. There was also a suggestion that identifying target selection rates (by gear type) would help to frame solutions for the current unacceptably low sampling rates. Another perspective is to consider how the cost per sea day is reduced as the total number of sea days in the contract increases, and whether key thresholds of total sea days in the contract are a useful target.

<b>Contract</b> <i>(need to provide input by Oct 2017)</i>	<b>ADP</b> <i>(limited time to affect 2018 ADP, but can change in future ADPs)</i>	<b>Regulations</b> <i>(longer term, requires Council analysis and then rulemaking)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build incentives to reduce travel costs into the statement of work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hurdle analysis: identify minimum selection rate goals by gear type; restrict the gap analysis to core areas of fishing effort (in the GOA) rather than aiming for a minimum of 3 observed trips in all areas</li> <li>• Use the zero selection pool to remove high cost vessels or trips from observed days, or create a system for rotating them into coverage every 2-4 years</li> <li>• Changes to sampling design, for example to minimize observer down time in port, or change dockside monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the observer fee from 1.25% to up to 2%; consider sector-specific changes</li> <li>• Hybrid fee/pay-as-you-go option – use ODDS for random selection of trips and combine the funding system of fees with pay as you go funds (e.g., through a voucher, or vessels paying observer providers directly)</li> <li>• Monitoring cooperatives – incentivize groups of harvesters to work cooperatively to minimize down time and travel costs, while providing the cooperative with some type of incentive (e.g. a lower fee percentage, or pay-as-you-go)</li> <li>• Increase shorebased sampling by using EM for compliance and full retention of all/some species</li> </ul>

## Scheduling and Other Issues

The OAC set their next meeting date for two days during the period September 18-20, 2017, in Seattle, likely the Tuesday and Wednesday (September 19-20), to review the 2017 Annual Deployment Plan, develop input on the partial coverage contract renewal, and if endorsed by the Council, hear recommendations from the OAC low sampling rate subgroup. It is proposed that the EM Workgroup should meet on September 18, 2017.

The OAC also discussed the path for transitioning EM issues into the OAC, and disbanding the EM Workgroup. On the one hand, while EM is still working through implementation issues, the Workgroup is effective at addressing hands-on issues. As the program transitions to a period when a single funding source must be allocated between observers and EM, however, it will be important to have that conversation in a single forum. Given that there are already full and partial coverage caucuses on the OAC, it was suggested that a restructured Committee could organize around tasks, for example reviewing the Annual Report and ADP. If so, there may still be a role for the EM Workgroup to deal specifically with implementation. The Chair will discuss ideas with the Council chairman over the summer.

Chris Rilling noted that the next International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference will take place in Vigo, Spain, on June 11-15, 2018. Information can be found at [www.ifomcvigo.com](http://www.ifomcvigo.com).

**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.

Priority	Name	Description	Status / Due Date / Target Date
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.