



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number:Cons 14-018

Agenda Date10/6/2014

Agenda Number:C1

John Henderschedt, Acting Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Observer Annual Deployment Plan; Observer Advisory Committee Report

ESTIMATED TIME:

4 hours

ACTION REQUIRED:

- (a) Review Draft Observer ADP
- (b) OAC Report

BACKGROUND:

At this meeting, the Council will review the draft 2015 Annual Deployment Plan (ADP), and provide recommendations to NMFS for the final 2015 ADP. During the Council's performance review of the restructured observer program in June 2014, the Council highlighted some specific recommendations and requests for the development of the 2015 ADP. The Council supported the recommendation to move participants in the vessel selection pool into the trip selection pool, and requested NMFS maintain a higher observer coverage for all trawl vessels and fixed gear vessels over 57.5' LOA in the revised trip selection pool, in order to expand coverage on PSC-limited fisheries. To accommodate these requests, the 2015 ADP has been designed with two trip-selection strata. Selection probabilities for the small vessel trip-selection stratum will be 12%, and for the large vessel trip-selection stratum will be 24%.

In June 2014, the Council also requested that NMFS provide additional analysis of the 2013 vessel selection pool data with respect to vessel length, to determine whether a minimum length other than 40' LOA would better define the selection frame, with a view to removing provisions for conditional release. NMFS has provided this information in Appendix C to the ADP. In the draft 2015 ADP as written, NMFS proposes that conditional releases in 2015 only be granted for vessels in the small vessel trip-selection stratum that do not have sufficient liferaft capacity to accommodate an observer.

The OAC met on September 18-19, 2014, to review the draft ADP. The report of their meeting is included in the materials for this agenda item. The OAC supports the selection pools and proposed selection rates for the 2015 ADP, and also the conditional release for insufficient liferaft capacity. The OAC discussed at length the proposal not to grant conditional releases in the small vessel trip selection pool because of insufficient bunk space to accommodate an observer, but did not reach consensus. The report captures the OAC discussion, and recommendations for additional information to help the Council's consideration at this meeting. The Joint Groundfish Plan Teams also reviewed the 2015 ADP, and their minutes are available under agenda item C4.

The OAC also reviewed the status of regulatory amendments and other analytical projects affecting the Observer Program. A table describing all such analytical projects in a priority list is included in the materials for this agenda item. The OAC did not recommend any specific changes in prioritization, although the report highlights discussion about some of the specific proposals. For example, the OAC had a long discussion about

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the development of solutions for improving the availability of fixed gear lead level 2 observers, referencing the recent letter exchange between the Freezer Longline Coalition and the agency (letters are posted online). The OAC was not able to identify a non-regulatory solution to resolve the problem over the long term, and supports the development of a discussion paper for regulatory options.