

NMFS Observer Programs

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by Victoria Cornish, NMFS Office of Science and Technology

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) deploys fisheries observers to collect catch data from US commercial fishing and processing vessels. Nearly 20 different fisheries and more than 42,000 fishing days are monitored by observer programs annually. NMFS has been using observers to collect fisheries data from 1972 to the present. Observers have monitored fishing activities on all US coasts, collecting data for a range of conservation and management issues.

Fishery observers monitor and record catch data commercial fishing activity from US vessels and processing facilities. The data are used to supplement research and aid in the management of US living marine resources. The observers may collect data on species composition of the catch, weights of fish caught, disposition of landed species and protected species interactions. The data collected by observers are often the best means to get current data on the status of many fisheries. Without observers and observer programs, there would not be sufficient data in many fisheries for effective management.

The National Marine Fisheries Service coordinates observer program management through the NMFS Office of Science and Technology **National Observer Program**. The National Observer Program seeks to support observer programs and increase their usefulness to the overall goals of NMFS. Improvements in data collection, observer training and safety, and the integration of observer data with research and other fishery-dependent data are among the



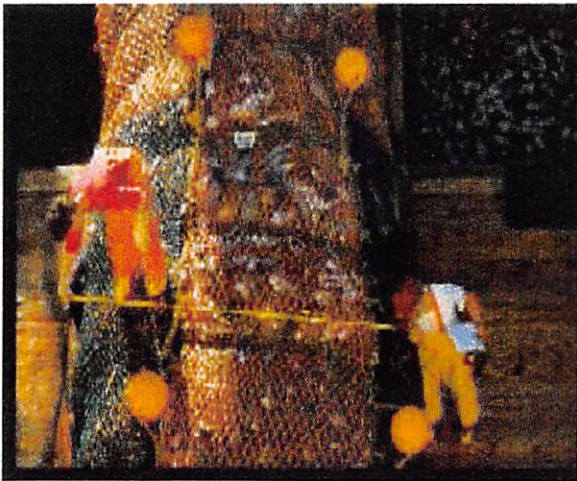
important issues that the National Observer Program works with on a national level.

The FY04 Budget Request

The NMFS has developed two FY04 budget initiatives that address observer programs, Observer Modernization and Expansion, and Bycatch Reduction.

The objective of these initiatives are to expand and modernize fisheries observer programs to collect high quality, standardized fisheries, protected species, environmental, and socio-economic data from commercial and recreational fishing vessels. These data will be used to better assess impacts of fishing activities and fishery management regulations on living marine resources - finfish, shellfish, marine invertebrates, marine mammals, sea turtles, and seabirds - and fishing communities.

NMFS is requesting a total of \$10,000K and 20 FTEs to meet this objective: \$9,700K for approximately 6,000 observer sea days



Groundfish observers collect information essential for the management of sustainable fisheries in the North Pacific. Photo courtesy: Alaska Fisheries Science Center.

spread out over several fisheries, and \$300K for data management improvements, GC/EN support, outreach, and incorporation of national policies and standards for the administration of observer programs.

The following is an example of some of the highest current priorities for increased observer coverage:

Alaska

- Alaska gillnet and purse seine fisheries (bycatch of marine mammals)
- Alaska halibut longline fishery (bycatch of seabirds)

Atlantic

- Mid-Atlantic and New England gillnet fisheries (bycatch of marine mammals)
- Mid-Atlantic seine, pound net, stop net and pot fisheries (bycatch of marine mammals and sea turtles)
- Atlantic recreational charterboat and headboat fisheries (fishery characterization and bycatch of non-target and undersize finfish)
- Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico reef and bottom longline and bandit rig fisheries (bycatch of non-target and undersize finfish)

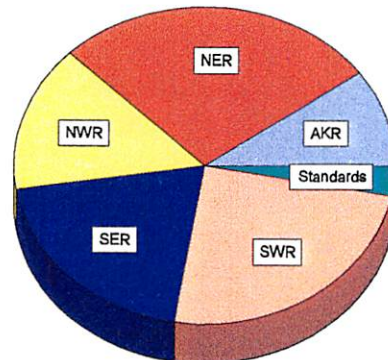
- Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico shark bottom longline fishery (bycatch of non-target finfish, sea turtles, and seabirds)
- New England groundfish trawl fishery (bycatch of non-target finfish)
- Southeast shrimp otter trawl fishery (bycatch of non-target finfish and sea turtles)
- East Coast longline fisheries (bycatch of non-target finfish, sea turtles, marine mammals, and seabirds)
- Mid-Atlantic and New England scallop dredge fisheries (bycatch of sea turtles)

Pacific

- California gillnet fisheries (bycatch of marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds)
- Pelagic longline fisheries off California, American Samoa, and Guam (bycatch of sea turtles and seabirds)
- Hawaii bottomfish fishery (bycatch of marine mammals)
- West Coast groundfish fishery (bycatch of non-target finfish)
- Pacific albacore troll fisheries (bycatch of non-target finfish and possibly sea turtles and seabirds)

FY04 Proposed Observer Funds

\$10M Total, Broken Out by Region



For more information about NMFS Observer Programs and the National Observer Program, go to: <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/nop>.



For more information about the Third International Fisheries Observer Conference, go to: <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/observerconference2002/>.

NMFS Observer Programs Funded in FY 2002

| NMFS Site/ Contact | Fishery(ies) | Fleet size | Authority to place observers | Season of operation | Funding source(s) and Amount funded in 2002 | Program duration | Services and source(s) | % coverage/ # of observers |
|-----------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|------------------------|---|---------------------|---|--|
| AFSC/ Dan Ito | North Pacific and Bering Sea Groundfish, Trawl and Fixed Gear | 350 vessels/ 20 shore plants | MSFCMA (50CFR679.50) | year-round | Industry approx. \$13M NMFS \$3.2M | 1973 to present | Admin: NMFS Training: Uof AK and NMFS Observers: Independent Contractors | 100% vessels >125 ft; 30% vessels 60- 124 ft; plants 30 or 100%; approx. 350-400 observers |
| AKR/ Amy Van Atten | Marine Mammal Observer Program - Kodiak Setnet in FY02 | 188 set net permits | MMPA Cat. II (50CFR229) | Jun-Sep | NMFS \$400K | 1999 to present | Admin: NMFS Training: U of AK Observers: Contractor | target 1%; approx. 20 observers |
| NWFSC/Liz Clarke | West Coast Groundfish Trawl and Longline | Limited entry: 260 trawl, 196 longline, 30 trap vessels; approx. 1700 open access vessels | MSFCMA (50CFR660) | year-round | NMFS \$4.075M | 2001 to present | Admin: NMFS and PSMFC Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor (to PSMFC) | 5-10% of limited entry vessels; approx. 30 observers |
| NWFSC/ Liz Clarke | Offshore Pacific Whiting | 16 processing vessels | voluntary, regs in clearance | May-Jun | Industry \$100K, NMFS (base) | 1975 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Independent Contractors | 100%; approx. 5 observers |
| SWR/Don Petersen | California/Oregon Drift Gillnet | 100 vessels with permits (80 active) | MMPA Cat. I (50CFR229) | May-Jan | NMFS \$500K | 1990 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | 15-20%; approx. 15 observers |
| SWR/Don Petersen | California Pelagic Longline | approx. 40 vessels | voluntary | Sept-Apr | NMFS \$60K | 2001 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | <5%; approx. 2 observers |
| SWR/John Kelly | Hawaii Pelagic Longline | 164 vessels with permits (112 active) | MSFCMA (50CFR660) | year-round | NMFS \$3M | 1994 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | 20%; approx. 30 observers |

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|------------------------|--|--|--|------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| NEFSC/ David Potter | New England Sink Gillnet | 341 vessels | MMPA Cat. I (50CFR229), MSFCMA (50CFR648) | year-round | NMFS \$750K | 1990 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | 2-4%; approx. 15-20 observers trained to observe all NE and MA fisheries |
| NEFSC/ David Potter | Mid-Atlantic Coastal Gillnet (includes monkfish, dogfish, and several state fisheries) | >655 vessels | MMPA Cat. II (50CFR229) | year-round | NMFS \$660K | 1994 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | 2-4%; see NE sink gillnet for # of observers |
| NEFSC/ David Potter | New England Groundfish Trawl | 968 permits | MSFCMA (50CFR648) | year-round | NMFS \$650K; ACCSP \$300K | 2002 is first year of dedicated funding | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | TBD |
| NEFSC/ David Potter | Small Mesh Trawl (Summer Flounder) | 719 permits | MSFCMA (50CFR648) | year-round | NMFS \$320K | 2001 was first year of dedicated funding | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | TBD |
| NEFSC/Dave Potter | Atlantic Large Mesh Trawl (Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish) | 620 vessels (2138 permits) | MMPA Cat. I (50CFR229.7), MSFCMA (50CFR648) | year-round | NMFS \$555M | 1998 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | <5%; see NE sink gillnet for # of observers |
| NEFSC/ David Potter | Atlantic Sea Scallop Dredge - Closed Areas Exempted Fishery | 250 vessels with permits, 185 active | MSFCMA (50CFR648) | year-round | Industry approx. \$150K NMFS \$75K | 1999 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | 25%; approx. 10 -15 observers |
| NEFSC/ David Potter | Atlantic Sea Scallop Dredge - Open Areas | 250 vessels with permits, 185 active | MSFCMA (50CFR648) | year-round | NMFS (base) | 1994 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | <1%; see NE sink gillnet for # of observers |
| NEFSC/Dave Potter | NC Roe Mullet Stop Net | 13 vessels/ persons | MMPA Cat. II (50CFR229) | year-round | NMFS \$10K | 2001 was first year | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | <1%; see NE sink gillnet for # of observers |

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|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|---|---|
| NEFSC/Dave Potter | VA Whelk Pot | unknown | MMPA Cat. II (50CFR229) | year-round | NMFS \$50K | 2002 is first year | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractor | TBD |
| SEFSC/ Elizabeth Scott- Denton | Southeastern Shrimp Otter Trawl | 7,000 USCG documented vessels, unknown no. of state vessels | voluntary | year-round (highest effort May - Dec) | NMFS \$1.3M | 1991 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS, Observers: Contractors | <1%; approx. 10 observers |
| SEFSC/ Elizabeth Scott- Denton | Southeast Flynet | unknown | voluntary | year-round | NMFS \$100K in 2001 | 2001 was first year | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractors | TBD |
| SEFSC/ Elizabeth Scott- Denton | Southeast Rock Shrimp Trawl | 411 vessels | voluntary | year-round | NMFS \$112K | 2001 was first year | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractors | TBD |
| SEFSC/ Elizabeth Scott- Denton | Calico Scallop Trawl | 25 vessels, 1 at- sea processing vessel | voluntary | seasonal | NMFS \$112K | 2001 was first year | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractors | TBD |
| SEFSC/ John Carlson | Southeast Atlantic Shark Drift Gillnet/Strike Net | 8-12 vessels with permits | MMPA Cat. II (50CFR229), MSFCMA (50CFR635) | year-round | NMFS \$300K | 1998 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractors | Nov-Mar 100%, Apr-Nov 53%; approx. 6 observers |
| SEFSC/ Dennis Lee | Atlantic Pelagic Longline | 150-200 active vessels | MSFCMA (50CFR635), MMPA Cat. I (50CFR229), ATCA | 2 seasons - Jan-Jun, Jul- Dec | NMFS \$1.65M | 1992 to present | Admin & Training: NMFS Observers: Contractors | 5-8% target; approx. 10 observers |
| SF/ Margo Schulze- Haugen | Directed Large Coastal Shark Bottom Longline | 279 directed shark permits | MSFCMA (50CFR635) | 2 seasons - Jan-Jun, Jul- Dec | NMFS \$150K | 1994 to present | Admin, Training & Observers: Univ. of FL | <5%; approx. 5 observers |