

C-7 Observer coverage on BSAI trawl catcher vessels

Council motion

The Council initiates an analysis with the following purpose and need statement and alternatives.

Purpose and Need Statement:

Since 2013, NMFS has allowed the owners of BSAI trawl catcher vessels in the partial observer coverage category to volunteer on an annual basis for full observer coverage during all times that they participate in BSAI fisheries. Individuals who have made this choice thus far are owners of AFA catcher vessels that participate in the BSAI limited access Pacific cod trawl fishery. They choose full coverage to better manage Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits within their cooperatives. Current regulations do not authorize voluntary selection of full coverage. Vessel owners who choose full coverage must pay both the ex-vessel based partial coverage observer fee and a daily full coverage observer rate. The Council recognizes that this is an additional financial burden to vessel owners who voluntarily choose full coverage. An amendment to the regulations implementing the North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer Program may be warranted. The Council seeks to balance the observer costs for BSAI trawl catcher vessel owners with NMFS's ability to monitor and enforce compliance with observer coverage requirements and the essential functioning of the Observer Program's partial coverage category.

Alternatives:

Under all alternatives, vessels delivering unsorted codends to motherships are not required to have observer coverage (maintains status quo).

Alternative 1. Status quo

Alternative 2. Require 100% observer coverage for AFA trawl CVs for all fishing in the BSAI (i.e., move these vessels into the full coverage category in regulation).

Alternative 3. Allow trawl CVs currently assigned to partial observer coverage to voluntarily choose 100% observer coverage for all fishing in the BSAI.

Option 1. Allow AFA trawl CVs currently assigned to partial observer coverage to voluntarily choose 100% observer coverage for all fishing in the BSAI.

Suboptions apply to Alt 3, or Alt 3, Option 1:

Suboption 1. Vessels must opt-in to full (100%) observer coverage by July 1 of the previous year.

Suboption 2. One-time selection by vessels (applies in all future years).