

Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

Priority	Name	Description	Status / Due Date / Target Date
Recently Completed Projects			
1	Electronic logbook integration	An industry led project funded by NFWF exploring expanded use of eLogbook software (Deckhand). Long term may change how logbook data is collected by observers.	The programming to implement electronic logbook (eLogbook) data was completed in early 2026. Third party eLogbook vendors can apply to become approved for use in the Alaska Region. Deckhand is now an approved eLogbook option.
Program-level Projects			
2	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.	The Annual Report is presented to the FMAC in May and to the Council in June of each year. The ADP is presented to the Council in October of each year.
3	Multivariate Observer Effects	Develop a better method for testing for observer effects in the catch that accounts for multiple species in aggregate. This new method will address how the entire multispecies catch differs between monitored and unmonitored trips, an important question because data from monitored trips are used to estimate the catch from unmonitored trips.	Appendix A of the 2024 Annual Report first described this exploratory analysis. Appendix B of the 2025 Annual Report (June 2026) includes the first results from actual data. This work will be presented to the Center for Independent Experts review in June 2026 and incorporated into the chapter content of the 2026 Annual Report (June 2027).
4	Stock Assessment Fisheries Information Rubric (SAFIR)	In collaboration with stock assessment authors, provide authors with an annual assessment of fishery data quality and reliability that will aid their completion of the data inputs section of assessment concerns in annual risk tables. In part, in response to SSC recommendations from 2023 and 2024 Annual Reports.	See Appendix A. SAFIR is scheduled to be released for select stocks in Fall 2026.
5	EM Hard Drive Tracking	Develop a robust tool that allows FMA, AKRO, OLE, and EM Service Providers to (a) track EM hard drives in both Full and Partial Coverage and Trawl and fixed-gear; (b) connecting hard drives to ODDS and/or fish tickets data; and (c) track what is being requested by and provided to OLE.	Staff have been assigned and preliminary work has been completed.

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6	ODDS - eLandings crosswalk	Develop a method to compare eLandings fish ticket data to the ODDS to identify when landings are being made without logging an associated trip in ODDS or are logged with incorrect information. In the past, OLE has used this information in near-real time to deter negligent behavior and ensure the ADP is executed as planned. The original system was manual and operated by staff no longer with FMA. The goal would be to build a semi-automated system that meets OLEs needs.	Requested by OLE and FMA staff have been identified for this task. Current work is on hold until mid-summer 2026 due current staffing workloads.
7	Improve Fishing Effort Predictions in the ADP	The ADP requires accurate forecast of fishing effort for the next fishing year to deploy observers and electronic monitoring (EM) at cost-efficient rates and remain within budget constraints. To establish the most robust prediction method for total fishing effort, this work presents a comparative study of past, recent, and alternative forecasting models and evaluates them across different time series lengths. The new methods will expand the range and flexibility of the models used to predict fishing effort in the following year.	This work has been tasked, undertaken, reviewed internally 2x (NMFS), and will be presented to and reviewed by the Center for Independent Experts review in June 2026. Shortly thereafter this work will be published as a NOAA Technical Memorandum, sometime in late 2026 or early 2027.
8	Explore alternative approaches to evaluate monitoring effects	In June 2018, NMFS recommended and the Council supported reassessing the performance standards used to evaluate monitoring effects in the Annual Report and explore alternative approaches.	Appendix A of the 2024 Annual Report first describes an exploratory analysis of multivariate monitoring effects. Appendix B of the 2025 Annual Report includes the first results from actual data. This work will be presented to the Center for Independent Experts review in June 2026 and potentially incorporated into the chapter content of the 2026 Annual Report.
9	Analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods	Analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods, including evaluating design-based and ratio estimators; and incorporating variance from at-sea sampling through to the trip level.	Development of variance estimators has been completed and was included as Appendix C of the 2019 Annual Report, which NMFS published in December 2021. An evaluation of the efficacy of Machine Learning methods to explore different stratification schemes that better utilize available data has been published in Fisheries Research. Further evaluation of CAS methods are on pause until CAS is moved to the cloud and staffing situations stabilize.
Projects in Council Review (Council or NMFS have tasked staff and scheduled review at a future Council or FMAC meeting)			

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10	Zero Coverage Analysis	In October 2025, the Council passed a motion that the agency revise the Zero Selection Pool (< 40' LOA fixed-gear catcher vessels and jig gear) for cost-efficiency purposes to evaluate fixed gear vessels with 1-2 annual trips and/or low annual quota/volume.	Staff have been assigned to this issue, conducted initial explorations, and are in the processes of developing analyses and a final report.
11	Develop a process for removing vessels from electronic monitoring programs which do not meet program objectives	In October 2023, the Council passed a motion supporting the development of a mechanism to remove fixed-gear vessels which have not fished nor used their EM systems for 3 or more years from the EM stratum.	In spring 2026, NMFS FMA and AKRO discussed the framework for these removals with NMFS General Council to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations. In fall 2026, NMFS will include language in the 2027 ADP which will describe the criteria necessary for remaining within the fixed-gear EM program.
12	Partial coverage proposal to contract directly with observer service providers	In October 2024, the Council passed a motion supporting submission of an industry cooperative research grant proposal and encouraged NMFS to provide data to support the project. This project envisions a group of partial coverage fixed gear vessels that continue to be selected for coverage through ODDS but procure observers through a private contract with an observer provider (remove the Federal contract component).	Industry members applied for additional funding to test a new service delivery model. While the initial proposal was not funded, NMFS staff and industry continue to seek funding support for this work, and NMFS will support the requested data to the extent possible while maintaining confidentiality.
13	Use of flow scales in sablefish A share fishery	In October 2023, the Council requested a discussion paper evaluating options for sablefish A share IFQ holders to use flow or hopper scales when participating in the sablefish fishery.	Initial scoping was conducted on this project. NMFS is not pursuing this project at this time due to technical constraints (programming issues with the scales) and reduced interest by industry for this project.
Regulatory Projects in NMFS Development or Review (Council has taken action or major work at current stage is NMFS's responsibility)			
14	Small sablefish release	Regulatory changes that would allow discarding of small sablefish in the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) sablefish fishery has been discussed as a potential tool to mitigate economic impacts to the fishery while also accounting for possible population-level impacts to the sablefish spawning stock during years of very large sablefish recruitment.	The Council took final action on this issue at the April 2025 meeting, recommending that vessels be allowed to discard sablefish less than 22" in length. NMFS is currently working on implementation and regulations associated with this project.
15	Responses to EO	This activity is in response to the Council's October <u>2026</u> motion for housekeeping actions related to monitoring and recordkeeping regulations. These actions are designed to streamline regulations.	NMFS will be presenting a discussion paper at the June 2026 Council meeting related to this item.

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16	Change requirements for Lead Level 2 (LL2)	The Council passed a <u>motion</u> in October 2025 to evaluate changes to LL2 qualification. This was in response to a <u>discussion paper</u> associated with Executive Order 14276, Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness Response.	This action has not yet been scheduled on the Council meeting outlook and NMFS is prioritizing it with other regulatory projects.