

Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

Priority	Name	Description	Status / Due Date / Target Date
Program-level Projects			
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.	The 2020 Annual Report will be presented to the FMAC in May and to the Council in June 2021. NMFS will prepare a draft 2022 ADP for Council review in October, 2021. NMFS recommends that elements from the 2022 ADP are rolled forward to 2023.
2	Trawl CV EM Development	Engage with the Trawl Electronic Monitoring Committee (EMC) to develop EM for compliance monitoring on pelagic trawl catcher vessels. Research projects include EM for compliance monitoring of full retention in pollock fisheries including tender vessels in the Western Gulf as well as EM to support alternate methods of dockside salmon accounting.	This project was identified by the PCFMAC cost efficiencies subgroup as the first priority. Vessels began fishing under the EFP in January, 2020, and NMFS holds regular meetings with participants to address emergent issues. Vessel participation increased from 41 catcher vessels in 2020 to 70 catcher vessels in 2021.
3	Improve integration of fixed gear EM data with observer data	In April 2019, the Council tasked the partial coverage cost efficiencies subgroup to continue to develop ideas related to how to best integrate the different monitoring tools, such as dockside monitoring, EM, and monitoring cooperatives.	This project was identified by the PCFMAC cost efficiencies subgroup as the second priority. <i>This project will be considered as part of the integrated partial coverage analysis.</i>
4	Reevaluate the zero selection stratum	In April 2019, the Council tasked the partial coverage cost efficiencies subgroup to continue to develop ideas related to how to best integrate the different monitoring tools, such as dockside monitoring, EM, and monitoring cooperatives.	This project was identified by the PCFMAC cost efficiencies subgroup as the third priority. <i>This project will be considered as part of the integrated partial coverage analysis.</i>
5	Biological Data Assessment	The AFSC is conducting an assessment of the current way biological information collected by observers is used in stock assessments. The result of this project is to provide the scale and scope of data needs in the current program. The Council has identified evaluation of gaps in biological samples due to implementation of EM as one of their top 2022-2024 research priorities.	Information has been collected from stock assessment authors. Initial analyses related to reducing biological data were presented to the PCFMAC as part of the Draft 2021 ADP. <i>Ongoing development of this element will be incorporated into the integrated partial coverage analysis.</i>
6	Shoreside Sampling	In May 2019, the FMAC partial coverage subgroup identified information needed to scope the next steps toward an integrated and cost efficient partial coverage monitoring program. Shoreside sampling was identified as one tool to be considered.	Council staff were tasked to this project in June 2019. <i>This project will be considered as part of the integrated partial coverage analysis.</i>

Accessibility of this Document: Every effort has been made to make this document accessible to individuals of all abilities and compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The complexity of this document may make access difficult for some. If you encounter information that you cannot access or use, please email us at Alaska.webmaster@noaa.gov or call us at 907-586-7228 so that we may assist you.

Priority	Name	Description	Status / Due Date / Target Date
7	Explore alternative approaches to evaluate observer effects	In June 2018, NMFS recommended and the Council supported reassessing the performance standards used to evaluate observer effects in the Annual Report and explore alternative approaches.	NMFS staff have prepared a draft manuscript on this topic.
8	Identify best practices for estimating species weight when it is unavailable for a monitored haul	Catch estimates for EM and observer data rely on weight measurements from observed hauls. This project would identify the best methods for assigning weights when they are unavailable. Improving weight assignments could occur independently from EM integration, and is therefore left as a separate task.	Staff have begun preliminary work on this project.
9	Agency ODDS Subgroup	In June 2018, NMFS recommended and the Council supported the formation of an Agency Subgroup to document how ODDS operates and identify alternatives for improvement. Changes could include improvements to the linkage between ODDS and eLandings, changes to allow vessels that also fish trawl gear to be placed in the EM selection pool, and the trip cancellation and inherit process.	In 2022, NMFS recommends that all ODDS trips be closed using the existing pull down menu that lists landing reports associated with each vessel.
Program-level Projects – near complete			
10	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 is included as an Appendix in the 2019 Annual Report, which NMFS will publish in June 2021. This work will also be published as a tech memo in 2021.
11	Average weight of halibut wastage	Impact analysis of differences in average weights on the final wastage (discard) estimates of halibut in the IFQ fishery. Currently, the Catch Accounting System (CAS) estimates halibut discard based on mean weight from the unsorted (retained and discarded) catch. Since halibut <32" are required to be discarded, CAS may be overestimating discarded halibut.	A method to correct the estimates of discarded halibut is in peer review and is expected to be published as an AFSC tech memo in 2021. A correction to discarded halibut size estimates has been implemented in CAS for 2021 and will be provided in the 2021 Annual Report. Revised estimates for previous years are currently being updated in CAS.
12	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.	This report was presented to the FMAC in May 2017, and an AFSC tech memo is in peer review and is expected to be published in 2021.

Priority	Name	Description	Status / Due Date / Target Date
Regulatory Projects in NMFS Development or Review (Council has taken action or major work at current stage is NMFS's responsibility)			
13	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. NMFS National Observer Program (NOP) staff hosted a workshop in November 2016. The NOP published a tech memo in November 2017 and a request for information in the Federal Register on July 16, 2018 with comments invited through September 14, 2018 regarding possible insurance packages and cost that could address observers, observer providers, and the fishing industry concerns in the event of an occupational injury.	The FMAC received an update on the status of this project in May 2019. NMFS HQ staff continue to gather additional information to prepare a Regulatory package to modify observer provider insurance requirements. The project was stalled for a time, but has been picked back up in 2021.
14	Pot CP Monitoring Changes	In February 2021, NMFS informed the Council of the need to modify observer experience requirements for observers deployed on Pot CP vessels.	NMFS would develop an RIR and regulatory change in consultation with the Council. No staff have been assigned to this project yet.
15	Record keeping regulatory changes	Observer Provider Portal and Small CP request process changes.	NMFS would develop an RIR and regulatory change in consultation with the FMAC and the Council. No staff have been assigned to this project yet.
Regulatory Projects in Council Review (Council or NMFS have tasked staff and scheduled review at a future Council or FMAC meeting)			
16	BSAI Pcod Trawl CV Program	The Council is reviewing a new catch share program in the BSAI for trawl Pacific cod catcher vessels. As a part of this program, the Council included monitoring elements, including 100% observer coverage.	The Council will review an Initial Review Draft in June, 2021. The draft includes information on the monitoring elements and impacts of those elements.
17	Sablefish Discards	Since April 2018, a regulatory change 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 completed initial review of this item in February 2021 and passed a motion postponing action until the IFQ committee could meet and provide recommendations to the Council regarding the priority of this issue relative to other IFQ-related issues.