

C-2 Observer 2024 Annual Deployment Plan
Council Motion
October 6, 2023

2024 ADP

The Council supports the following for the 2024 draft Observer Annual Deployment Plan (ADP) for partial coverage fisheries. Observer coverage rates resulting from the selected design and the final budget are expected in the final ADP in December 2023. Fisheries with 100% and 200% coverage requirements in regulation are not covered under the ADP. For the 2024 ADP:

- Use combined fixed gear-FMP stratification scheme:
 - Gear: Hook-and-line/pot gear (combined); trawl gear
 - Monitoring method: Observer; fixed gear electronic monitoring (EM); pelagic trawl gear EM
 - FMP: BSAI; GOA
- Use proximity allocation scheme with the exception of the pelagic trawl EM EFP.
- 100% EM on pelagic trawl vessels participating in the EFP, plus 33% observer shoreside sampling rate for partial coverage EM EFP trips.
- Remove fixed-gear vessels which have not fished nor used their EM systems for 3 or more years from the EM stratum. Place such vessels under 50 feet into the zero-selection pool and larger vessels into the observer-selection pool.

The Council requests NMFS re-evaluate the cost estimates for both fixed gear and trawl EM, which directly affect the cost efficiencies analysis and the resulting coverage rates.

If the final ADP combines fixed gear types for selection, the Council recommends NMFS make clear to fishermen, NMFS staff, and OLE that there is no prohibition on vessels fishing both FMP areas in one trip, despite needing to choose a predominant area when logging trips into ODDS.

The Council supports additional fixed gear EM vessels added to the EM pool in 2024 (up to 200 total vessels) provided they opt-in prior to November 1, 2023, funding is available, and they meet the criteria in the ADP.

Future work (2025 ADP)

For the 2025 ADP, the Council recommends exploration of a revised hurdle and an analysis of how to effectively deploy days in addition to that hurdle, per the PCFMAC recommendation. The intent is to base the hurdle on the appropriate time and proximity scale to meet biological data collection needs, and then deploy additional monitoring, using at-sea observers, shoreside observers, and/or EM, to be placed where they are most cost effective for catch accounting purposes and for targeting specific types of information deemed necessary to meet legal mandates or assessment purposes. This will require further evaluation of the needed time/space scale for biological samples.

The Council requests NMFS re-evaluate the cost estimates for both fixed gear and trawl EM without including the cost of initially purchasing the EM hardware for both fixed and trawl gear, clearly separating ongoing costs from start-up costs.

Pilot project proposal

The Council encourages submittal of an industry cooperative research grant proposal and encourages NMFS to provide data to support the project: 1) the ports of departure and return for the partial coverage fleet (e.g., how many vessels/trips/catch are associated with smaller remote ports, aggregated as necessary to protect confidentiality); and 2) data on the amount of prior notice vessels are providing when registering trips in ODDS (e.g., is it the 72 hour minimum or are many vessels providing more notice). This project envisions a group of partial coverage fixed gear vessels continue to be selected for coverage through ODDS but procure observers through a private contract with an observer provider (remove the Federal contract component).

2024 NFWF proposals

The Council will provide written support for the proposals on p. 6 of the September 2023 PCFMAC report submitted for funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for the 2024 Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Grant Program. Funding for continuation of the pelagic trawl EM EFP is the highest priority, until NMFS completes regulations for the program (anticipated 2025).