

**ADVISORY PANEL**  
**Motions and Rationale**  
**June 3-4, 7-9, 2021 - Anchorage, AK**

**C1 Observer Report**

The AP wishes to express our appreciation to the agency staff, observers, observer providers, fishermen, and processors who worked diligently to ensure the at-sea monitoring needs of fishery managers and stock assessment scientists were met under exceedingly difficult COVID circumstances. We appreciate the information contained in the 2020 Annual Report and make the following recommendations with respect to the 2022 DRAFT Annual Deployment Plan (ADP).

1. The AP supports the NMFS recommendations for the 2022 Draft ADP on the observer selection pool, the fixed gear EM selection pool, the trawl EFP, ODDs program, and evaluation of port sampling vs. trip sampling. In addition to the NMFS recommendations, the AP requests the 2022 ADP evaluate:
  - The PCFMAC and FMAC’s recommendations to use the 14 key ports identified in 2021 in the trip-based vs. port-based deployment design, and to focus the evaluation on potential cost efficiencies associated with the port-based deployment approach;
  - The FMAC recommendation to evaluate putting all “optimized” partial coverage observer days above the baseline in the trawl stratum;
  - An option <sup>1</sup>to ensure a for a potential minimum of 300 observer sea days are available for “optimization” by moving additional vessels into zero selection or reducing the fixed gear hurdle as needed to achieve this result; and
  - The FMAC recommendation to add consideration of a vessel’s ability to share EM systems in select ports to the tiered criteria NMFS currently uses to prioritize candidate EM vessels for the EM pool if funding is insufficient.
2. The AP supports the comprehensive evaluation of cost efficiencies in the partial coverage category and supports the FMAC recommendations that the analysis needs to be completed in time to inform the next Federal contracting period, and the need for early and ongoing communication with the PCFMAC and industry when developing the analysis. The AP further recommends evaluation of the cost efficiencies in the partial coverage category that would be realized from a consecutive three trip selection.
3. The AP supports the EM NFWF projects identified in the PCFMAC report, and recommends the Council consider sending letters of support for these projects to NFWF as appropriate.

*Amendment<sup>1</sup> passed 17-0*

*Main Motion as amended passed 17-0*

Rationale in Support of Amendment<sup>1</sup>:

- *Ensuring that a minimum of 300 observer sea days are available for optimization could erode the 15% baseline coverage hurdle for the fixed gear sector. It is more appropriate for the ADP to simply evaluate the potential for and effects of this option given that the Council has previously stated its desire to optimize observer days in excess of the recommended baseline sector coverage levels.*

Rationale in Support of Main Motion as Amended:

- *This motion is intended to generally reflect the recommendations made by NMFS, the PCFMAC, and FMAC. The three strata based on gear, criteria for the EM selection pool, and release of small vessels if consecutively selected are a continuation of the previous Council policy.*
- *The Trawl EFP provides improved coverage on a PSC limited fishery, which is consistent with Council's cost efficiency and PSC coverage priorities.*
- *There is a need for a comprehensive look at the EM integration and cost efficiencies identified by the Council. The analysis needs to be completed in time to inform the next observer contract RFP with respect to the 2000 day minimum, the 15% hurdle, and the number of shoreside observer days that will be needed. The workplan should be re-prioritized to meet this need so that adequate staff resources can be dedicated to completing the task within the timeline. Frequent collaboration with the PCFMAC and Council on analytical approach is also needed to avoid delays.*
- *There is interest in seeing the potential cost impacts of limiting observer travel and reducing observer down days via a port-based approach. A port-based approach should not use the same COVID-19 assumptions that were required for 2021 (e.g., requirements of a 14-day quarantine before deployment and keeping observers primarily to one port). There may be difficulty in separating COVID costs from existing data to arrive at port-based costs estimates, but this information will be useful as long as the analytical assumptions are well documented.*
- *Public comment was received on the need to increase observer coverage on NPT trawl fisheries with halibut PSC limits prior to freezing the ADP for 2 years. Evaluation for 300 optimized observer days is anticipated to result in a trawl (PSC limited fisheries) coverage rate of approximately 25-30%. Changes to zero selection or a reduced fixed gear hurdle may provide an availability of a minimum number of "optimized" observer sea days, which may be necessary due to uncertainty in observer funding during the 2-year freeze.*
- *In 2021, three vessels opted into the EM pool but were denied by NMFS because there was no new funding for equipment. It is good to continue letting interested boats into the EM pool during the 2-year freeze if possible.*
- *Council prioritization of, and support for, EM development projects has been helpful in securing funding for these projects.*