

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Council, AP and SSC Members
FROM: Jim H. Branson
Executive Director
DATE: June 19, 1986
SUBJECT: Domestic Observer Program

ACTION REQUIRED

Information only.

BACKGROUND

A. Status of State Programs

During the session just completed, the Alaska Legislature passed and the Governor signed into law SCSCSHB 355 which empowers the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to implement onboard observer programs authorized by the Board of Fisheries. The Board has adopted regulations requiring observers on vessels operating non-pelagic trawls in certain portions of the Westward Area and on vessels catching and processing king and Tanner crab. All observer-associated costs are to be borne by the vessel owner or operator. The Board's regulations are currently under review by the State Attorney General's Office. Approval or disapproval is expected by mid-July.

B. Status of NMFS-Alaska Region Funding Request

There has been no final word on NMFS-Alaska Region's request for \$250,000 to fund a pilot domestic observer program off Alaska. It may be assumed that this funding will not be approved given the current budgetary atmosphere in NOAA.

The Alaska Congressional delegation has been supportive of the Region's request. Attachment A is a copy of a letter from Senator Murkowski that includes a letter from NOAA Administrator Tony Calio responding to the Senator's February 18 letter in support of an observer program.

C. Report from Domestic Observer Committee

The Council's Domestic Observer Committee may meet before the Council convenes. If so, a committee report will be presented to the Council.

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI
ALASKA

ATTACHMENT A

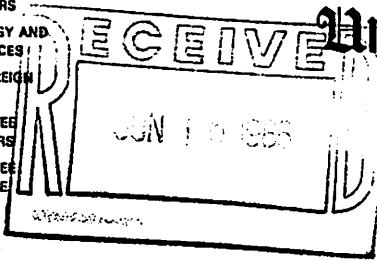
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 1986	ACTION	ROUTE TO	INITIAL
		Exec. Dir.	3
		Deputy Dir.	✓
		Admin. Off.	
	Cc: Ds. Wkgrp	Exec. Sec.	RL
		Staff Asst. 1	
		Staff Asst. 2	
		Staff Asst. 3	
		Economist	
		Sec./Bkkr.	
		Sec./Typist	

Mr. Jim H. Branson
Executive Director
North Pacific Fishery Management
P.O. Box 103136
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Dear Jim:

This is a follow-up to my letter of February 18, concerning your proposal for a domestic observer program. I am very interested in the possibility of establishing a domestic observer program to maintain the same quality of data collection that was developed as a result of our foreign fishing observer program.

I contacted officials at NOAA on your behalf to request their comments on the proposal. I have received a response from Mr. Anthony Calio, Administrator of NOAA, which I have enclosed for your reference. I hope this information is helpful.

Please contact me if I can be of any assistance to you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Frank H. Murkowski
United States Senator

Enclosure



THE ADMINISTRATOR

Honorable Frank H. Murkowski
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator *Frank* Murkowski:

Thank you for your letter to William G. Gordon regarding the proposed pilot observer program for United States fishing vessels fishing groundfish off Alaska. For the past 10 years, the United States has routinely placed observers aboard foreign fishing vessels to monitor compliance and to collect scientific and management data relative to foreign fisheries. Off Alaska, the observer program for foreign vessels has an even longer history, predating the implementation of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act) by several years.

The foreign vessel observer program has been highly successful and has made significant contributions to our fishery management and compliance efforts. The success of the foreign vessel observer program has been due in part to the fact that it is specifically mandated by the law (Section 201 (i) of the Magnuson Act), is funded by fees assessed foreign vessel owners, and has had the support of everyone in the domestic fishing industry. Further, the matter of obtaining the funding liability insurance to cover injury or death to an observer was not the difficult issue it is with respect to a domestic observer program.

As United States fishing vessels increasingly replace foreign fishing vessels in the U.S.-managed fisheries, we will require more reliable data on U.S. catches to properly manage the fisheries and enforce fishery laws and regulations. Placing observers on U.S. vessels to aid in these efforts is an option that we will explore. I will keep you informed of our progress.

Sincerely,

Tom
Anthony J. Calio

