



## **C2 Observer Fee Analysis**

October 2019 Council meeting

### **Action Memo**

- Council Staff: Diana Evans
- Other Presenters: Alicia Miller (NMFS-AKR), Jennifer Ferdinand (AFSC), Geoff Mayhew (PSMFC/AFSC), Cathy Tide (NMFS-AKR)
- Action Required:
1. Review public review draft of observer fee analysis
  2. Review Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee report on the fee analysis
  3. Identify a preferred alternative and final recommendations

### **BACKGROUND**

The Council is considering final action on an analysis that evaluates raising the partial coverage observer fee. The observer fee supports deployment of observers and electronic monitoring in the BSAI and GOA groundfish and halibut fisheries that are subject to partial coverage monitoring. Alternatives considered in the analysis include raising the fee from the current 1.25% up to a maximum of 2%, and applying the increase either across the board to all partial coverage fishery participants, or differentially to participants by gear type.

The Council initiated this analysis in 2017 in response to its concern about being able to achieve desired levels of at-sea coverage, information provided by NMFS that Federal funding would not be forthcoming to support at-sea observer coverage in the future, and concern about the lag time inherent between a Council decision and when additional funds would be available to effect a change in monitoring. If the Council takes final action at this meeting, implementing a change to the fee level would not result in a change to fee collection rates until 2021 at the earliest, which means that additional revenue would not be available to fund at-sea coverage until midway in 2022. It should be noted that while the scope of this analysis is focused narrowly on the amount of the observer fee, the Council is also pursuing parallel initiatives with the Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (FMAC) to evaluate additional ways to improve cost efficiency for the program.