

Status of analytical projects related to the Observer Program

	Priority	Name	Description	Status/Due Date/Target Date
Program Level Analytical Projects	1	Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Court ordered SEA to address the risk to data quality that may result from decreased observer coverage and the point at which the observer coverage rate becomes too low to generate reliable, high quality data.	Draft SEA released for public review on May 18, 2015. OAC review on May 29 and Council review at June 2015 meeting.
	2	Annual Deployment Plan	Deployment strategy for observers in 2016.	Major analytical project between June and September 2015. Draft ADP due for Oct. 2015 Council meeting and final for Dec. 2015.
	3	Electronic monitoring research	Fieldwork, research, and planning for developing electronic monitoring technologies.	Fieldwork underway in 2015. Pre-implementation planned for 2016; NMFS sent letter on 5/18/15 seeking volunteers for 2016; EMWG will meet in July and Sept. to prepare for 2016; results of fieldwork and plan for pre-implementation will be presented to Council in Oct 2015.
	4	Analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods	Ongoing analysis of catch and bycatch estimation methods including of evaluation of design-based and ratio estimators; incorporate variance from at-sea sampling through to the trip-level; and then assess post-strata definitions.	Target is to develop variance algorithms in 2015 and conduct evaluation of post-strata in 2016.
Individual Projects	5	Halibut PSC – decksorting	The Alaska Seafood Cooperative (AKSC) submitted an exempted fishing permit application for 2015 that, if granted, would allow AKSC to evaluate how often vessels use alternate halibut handling methods designed to reduce halibut mortality, when the alternate methods are available as an option. A different EFP application may be submitted later in 2015 for additional research starting in 2016.	NMFS published the notice of receipt of the EFP application on 1/22/15. Comment period ended on 2/11/15. Council reviewed in Feb. 2015. Fishing under the EFP began in May 2015.
	6	Partial coverage for small catcher/processors	Evaluate and potentially expand allowances for small catcher/processors to choose partial observer coverage.	Council final action in June 2015. NMFS staff work will continue through rulemaking and implementation.
	7	Observer coverage for BSAI trawl catcher vessels	Allow trawl catcher vessels in the BSAI Pacific cod fishery to choose to be in full coverage.	Tasked to Council staff. Council will discuss draft problem statement and alternatives at June 2015 meeting. Initial review tentatively scheduled for Oct. 2015.

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Individual Projects	8	100% coverage for trawl catcher vessels in the GOA	Council's Feb 2015 motion requests that discussion paper outline the effect on Observer Program fee revenues, potential cost impact for AFA and non-AFA trawl vessels as a percent of ex-vessel revenue and daily observer costs, identify observer providers currently supplying observers to full coverage, and assess any observer availability issues.	Tasked to Council staff. Discussion paper scheduled for presentation at October 2015 Council meeting. Specific tasks needing NMFS input need to be identified.
	9	Observer coverage on vessels delivering to tenders	Revise allowance for catcher vessels to make multiple deliveries to a tender on a single "trip" for purposes of observer coverage; revise regulations to allow observers to be deployed from tender vessels.	Evaluate priority again after review of the 2014 Annual Report and Council discussion about analytical priorities.
	10	Lead level 2 (LL2) observers	In June 2014, the Council tasked a discussion paper to look at regulatory and non-regulatory solutions to LL2 observer qualification requirements. Additional Council direction on non-regulatory solutions was provided in October 2014.	NMFS met recently with all three observer providers. None reported problems with the current approach to LL2 observer certification. See NMFS's 2/4/15 letter describing non-regulatory changes to allow observers to achieve LL2 status more quickly and AOI 3/12/15 response. No staff tasked to discussion paper unless further direction from Council.
	11	GOA trawl bycatch	Implementation planning and analysis for catch monitoring and observer coverage requirements for transferable halibut and salmon PSC allocations, including for vessels delivering to tenders.	Staff have suspended work on this analysis pending further Council direction.
		IFQ in multiple areas	Revise monitoring options for fishing IFQ in multiple regulatory areas on the same trip.	Council considered in February 2014 but did not task staff with further analysis of the issue.
		<i>De minimus</i> IFQ	Exempt/release from observer coverage vessels or trips with small amounts of IFQ.	Council considered in February 2014 but did not task staff with further analysis of the issue.
		IFQ fee assessment	Use standardized annual prices for fee assessment for IFQ.	Council considered in February 2014 but did not task staff with further analysis of the issue.