

NOTICE OF OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET ACTION

Date 10/31/2006

Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
FOR CERTIFYING OFFICIAL: Barry West
FOR CLEARANCE OFFICER: Diana Hynek

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, OMB has taken action on your request received 08/02/2006

ACTION REQUESTED: New collection (Request for a new OMB Control Number)
TYPE OF REVIEW REQUESTED: Regular
ICR REFERENCE NUMBER: 200607-0648-010
TITLE: North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program Vessel/Plant Operator Comment Form
LIST OF INFORMATION COLLECTIONS: See next page

OMB ACTION: Approved without change
OMB CONTROL NUMBER: 0648-0550

The agency is required to display the OMB Control Number and inform respondents of its legal significance in accordance with 5 CFR 1320.5(b).

EXPIRATION DATE: 10/31/2009

DISCONTINUE DATE:

BURDEN:	RESPONSES	HOURS	COSTS
Previous	0	0	0
New	1,200	500	0
Difference			
Change due to New Statute	0	0	0
Change due to Agency Discretion	1,200	500	0
Change due to Agency Adjustment	0	0	0
Change Due to Potential Violation of the PRA	0	0	0

TERMS OF CLEARANCE:

OMB Authorizing Official:

John F. Morrall III
Acting Deputy Administrator,
Office Of Information And Regulatory Affairs

List of ICs

IC Title	Form No.	Form Name	CFR Citation
NPGOP Vessel/Plant Operator Comment Form	NA	NPGOP Vessel/Plant Comment Form	
NPGOP Non-Response Follow-Up Form	NA	NPGOP Non-Response Follow-up Form	

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT SUBMISSION

Please read the instructions before completing this form. For additional forms or assistance in completing this form, contact your agency's Paperwork Clearance Officer. Send two copies of this form, the collection instrument to be reviewed, the supporting statement, and any additional documentation to: Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Docket Library, Room 10102, 725 17th Street NW, Washington, DC 20503.

<p>1. Agency/Subagency originating request</p>	<p>2. OMB control number b. <input type="checkbox"/> None a. _____ - _____</p>
<p>3. Type of information collection (<i>check one</i>)</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/> New Collection</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> Revision of a currently approved collection</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/> Extension of a currently approved collection</p> <p>d. <input type="checkbox"/> Reinstatement, without change, of a previously approved collection for which approval has expired</p> <p>e. <input type="checkbox"/> Reinstatement, with change, of a previously approved collection for which approval has expired</p> <p>f. <input type="checkbox"/> Existing collection in use without an OMB control number</p> <p>For b-f, note Item A2 of Supporting Statement instructions</p>	<p>4. Type of review requested (<i>check one</i>)</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/> Regular submission</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency - Approval requested by _____ / _____ / _____</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/> Delegated</p>
	<p>5. Small entities Will this information collection have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
	<p>6. Requested expiration date</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/> Three years from approval date b. <input type="checkbox"/> Other Specify: _____ / _____</p>
<p>7. Title</p>	
<p>8. Agency form number(s) (<i>if applicable</i>)</p>	
<p>9. Keywords</p>	
<p>10. Abstract</p>	
<p>11. Affected public (<i>Mark primary with "P" and all others that apply with "x"</i>)</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/> Individuals or households d. <input type="checkbox"/> Farms</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> Business or other for-profit e. <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Government</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/> Not-for-profit institutions f. <input type="checkbox"/> State, Local or Tribal Government</p>	<p>12. Obligation to respond (<i>check one</i>)</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> Required to obtain or retain benefits</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory</p>
<p>13. Annual recordkeeping and reporting burden</p> <p>a. Number of respondents _____</p> <p>b. Total annual responses _____</p> <p> 1. Percentage of these responses collected electronically _____%</p> <p>c. Total annual hours requested _____</p> <p>d. Current OMB inventory _____</p> <p>e. Difference _____</p> <p>f. Explanation of difference</p> <p> 1. Program change _____</p> <p> 2. Adjustment _____</p>	<p>14. Annual reporting and recordkeeping cost burden (<i>in thousands of dollars</i>)</p> <p>a. Total annualized capital/startup costs _____</p> <p>b. Total annual costs (O&M) _____</p> <p>c. Total annualized cost requested _____</p> <p>d. Current OMB inventory _____</p> <p>e. Difference _____</p> <p>f. Explanation of difference</p> <p> 1. Program change _____</p> <p> 2. Adjustment _____</p>
<p>15. Purpose of information collection (<i>Mark primary with "P" and all others that apply with "X"</i>)</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/> Application for benefits e. <input type="checkbox"/> Program planning or management</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> Program evaluation f. <input type="checkbox"/> Research</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/> General purpose statistics g. <input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory or compliance</p> <p>d. <input type="checkbox"/> Audit</p>	<p>16. Frequency of recordkeeping or reporting (<i>check all that apply</i>)</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/> Recordkeeping b. <input type="checkbox"/> Third party disclosure</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/> Reporting</p> <p> 1. <input type="checkbox"/> On occasion 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly</p> <p> 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-annually 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Annually</p> <p> 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Biennially 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____</p>
<p>17. Statistical methods</p> <p>Does this information collection employ statistical methods</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>18. Agency Contact (person who can best answer questions regarding the content of this submission)</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Phone: _____</p>

19. Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

On behalf of this Federal Agency, I certify that the collection of information encompassed by this request complies with 5 CFR 1320.9

NOTE: The text of 5 CFR 1320.9, and the related provisions of 5 CFR 1320.8(b)(3), appear at the end of the instructions. *The certification is to be made with reference to those regulatory provisions as set forth in the instructions.*

The following is a summary of the topics, regarding the proposed collection of information, that the certification covers:

- (a) It is necessary for the proper performance of agency functions;
- (b) It avoids unnecessary duplication;
- (c) It reduces burden on small entities;
- (d) It used plain, coherent, and unambiguous terminology that is understandable to respondents;
- (e) Its implementation will be consistent and compatible with current reporting and recordkeeping practices;
- (f) It indicates the retention period for recordkeeping requirements;
- (g) It informs respondents of the information called for under 5 CFR 1320.8(b)(3):
 - (i) Why the information is being collected;
 - (ii) Use of information;
 - (iii) Burden estimate;
 - (iv) Nature of response (voluntary, required for a benefit, mandatory);
 - (v) Nature and extent of confidentiality; and
 - (vi) Need to display currently valid OMB control number;
- (h) It was developed by an office that has planned and allocated resources for the efficient and effective management and use of the information to be collected (see note in Item 19 of instructions);
- (i) It uses effective and efficient statistical survey methodology; and
- (j) It makes appropriate use of information technology.

If you are unable to certify compliance with any of the provisions, identify the item below and explain the reason in Item 18 of the Supporting Statement.

Signature of Senior Official or designee

Date

Agency Certification (signature of Assistant Administrator, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Line Office Chief Information Officer, head of MB staff for L.O.s, or of the Director of a Program or StaffOffice)

Signature

Date

Signature of NOAA Clearance Officer

Signature

Date

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
NORTH PACIFIC GROUND FISH OBSERVER PROGRAM
VESSEL/PLANT OPERATOR COMMENT FORM
OMB CONTROL NO.: 0648-xxxx**

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

The Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis (FMA) Division at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC) manage the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP). Five service provider companies provide observer services. Vessels/plants contract for observers directly through these service provider companies. The NPGOP establishes training procedures, which are performed in part by NPGOP staff and in part by staff from the University of Alaska Anchorage's Observer Training Center. Upon successful completion of this training, each observer receives a certificate that enables him or her to serve as an observer on fishing vessels/plants operating in the north Pacific. NPGOP observers will observe aboard commercial fishing vessels/plants involved in Federal fisheries, as required by Fisheries Management Plans and court mandates and through legislation such as the [Magnuson Stevens Act \(Section 403\)](#) and the [Marine Mammal Protection Act \(16 U.S.C.1387\)](#).

Approximately 400 observers spend 36,000 days at sea (or at plants) annually. Additional information about the program is provided at:

<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/observers/default.htm>

The Comment Form will help NPGOP assess observer performance, ensure higher data quality, and provide the vessel/plant operators with a direct line of communication to the program management. Improved communication and outreach is a priority for the NPGOP. It is important to get the fishermen's opinions about the program and have a method for them to report their concerns regarding, and evaluations of, the program.

2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.

Every observer will leave a copy of this Comment Form on the vessel (or at the plant) at the completion of each trip, unless the vessel/plant operator already has one and does not wish to have another. Extra copies will be made available at the plants and at our field stations. The Comment Form will also be made available electronically on our FMA website at:

<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/observers/default.htm>

Hard copies of the Comment Form will also be made available at Fisheries Management Council Meetings and other outreach events along with active solicitation regarding their return. The Comment Forms may also be distributed by the various fishing organizations to their members. Each Comment Form will be accompanied by a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope.

The Form's heading information includes the vessel operator's name, the vessel name, the date submitted, the observer name, the company name of the observer provider, and the dates the observer was onboard. There are two sections: I) questions referring to the observer, II) questions referring to the NPGOP. The first section contains 10 yes/no questions relating to how the specific observer carried out his/her duties. Each question box contains a blank area to record comments if desired. The second section contains 5 yes/no questions relating to observers and the program in general. Each question box contains a blank area to record comments if desired.

We will also use a Non-response Follow-up Form. This follow-up will be performed either in person or by phone. This Form's heading information also includes the vessel operator's name, the vessel name, the date submitted, the observer name, the company name of the observer provider, and the dates the observer was onboard. This Form asks three questions regarding responding to the forms, one regarding whether they were satisfied with the observer, one regarding whether they were satisfied with the Observer Program, and provides space for comments about their observer, the Program, and anything in general.

The number of surveys will be counted and the responses for each question will be counted and summarized. We will also present the number of trips that observers were on, the number of different vessels/plants on which they deployed, and the number of different vessels/plants that responded to the survey. The summaries will be produced annually. The summaries will be posted on the FMA website listed above. Vessel/plant names and person's names will be held confidential and will not be released outside of NPGOP staff. Two members of the FMA Division will read survey responses in a timely manner so that problem areas can be addressed and requested information responded to promptly.

As explained in the preceding paragraphs, the information gathered has utility. NOAA Fisheries will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards of confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. See response #10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. The information collection is designed to yield data that meet all applicable information quality guidelines. Prior to dissemination, the information will be subjected to quality control measures and a pre-dissemination review pursuant to Section 515 of Public Law 106-554.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.

In addition to hard copies, the comment form will also be made available electronically on our FMA website at: <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/observers/default.htm>. The non-response follow-up form will be completed in person or by telephone.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

The government is currently collecting no such information from vessels operating neither in Federal waters off Alaska nor in plants receiving fish from vessels operating in Federal waters off Alaska.

5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

The number of questions was restricted to only the most important issues related to the performance of the observer and the program.

6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.

Without this comment form, the government will not receive direct feedback from the fishermen. If there are complaints about observers onboard fishing vessels or at plants or the way, the program is administered, the program will not have any formal knowledge of them without this collection of information. The program would like to get real time information about the performance of observers and collection of scientific data directly from fishermen and address any complaints in order to improve the program, education, training, and/or outreach.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

Not applicable.

8. Provide a copy of the PRA Federal Register notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

No public comments were received.

The Comment Form was developed by three members of our staff with a combined work experience of over 60 years working with observer programs. The questions on the comment form relate to areas most commonly criticized by fishermen, program reviews, NMFS enforcement agents, and observer program employees. To be fair to the observers, this form also allows for positive comments regarding the work performed by observers. Information on potential program shortfalls has been conveyed informally through conversations with fishermen on the docks and at Council meetings and other gatherings of fishermen and NPGOP staff. Prior to sending this form through the Paperwork Reduction process, proposed contents of the form were made available to members of the North Pacific Council's Observer Oversight Committee, which includes members of industry, enforcement, the observer community, and the observer providers. Further, input was solicited from a member of the Enforcement Division in Anchorage and a member of the AFSC's Socio-Economics group.

9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

Not applicable.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

Vessel/plant names and person's names will be held confidential and will not be released outside of NPGOP staff. Section 402(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act, NOAA Administrative Order 216-100, and Section 118 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act are the statutory authorities for confidentiality.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

Not applicable.

12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 30 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

Vessels/plants may carry several observers or the same observer on several trips throughout the year. Due to extensive outreach, availability of the Comment Form, and ease of completion and return (either via postage paid mail or the internet), we expect 75% of the vessel/plant operators to fill out the Comment Card. It is expected that NPGOP may observe 400 different vessels/plants a year. The average number of times a vessel/plant is observed per year is three, for an average yearly total of 1200 observations. At a 75% return rate, we expect to receive 900 Comment Forms per year. With an average of 30 minutes to complete a Comment Form, the estimated total number of annual hours would be 450.

We will also use a Non-response Follow-up Form. This follow-up will be performed either in person or by phone. We expect to use 300 of these forms per year. With an average of 10 minutes to complete this alternate form, the estimated total number of additional hours would be 50, for an overall total of 500 hours, annually.

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in #12 above).

There is \$0.00 total annual cost burden to the public.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

It is estimated that it would cost the program \$625.00 in copying costs and \$625.00 in postage and envelopes per year.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB 83-I.

New collection.

16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

We do not intend to extrapolate the survey responses. The number of surveys will be counted and the responses for each question will be counted and summarized. We will also present the number of trips that observers were on, the number of different vessels/plants on which they deployed, and the number of different vessels/plants that responded to the survey. The summaries will be produced annually. The summaries will be posted on the FMA website listed above. Vessel/plant names and person's names will be held confidential and will not be released outside of NPGOP staff. Two members of the FMA Division will read survey responses in a timely manner so that problem areas can be addressed and requested information responded to promptly.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.

Not applicable.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19 of the OMB 83-I.

Not applicable.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g. establishments, State and local governmental units, households, or persons) in the universe and the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form. The tabulation must also include expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection has been conducted before, provide the actual response rate achieved.

Vessels/plants may carry several observers or the same observer on several trips throughout the year. We expect Comment Forms to be returned after 75% of the trips. It is expected that NPGOP may observe 400 different vessels/plants a year. The average number of times a vessel/plant is observed per year is three, for an average yearly total of 1200 observations. At a 75% return rate, we expect to receive 900 Comment Forms per year.

2. Describe the procedures for the collection, including: the statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection; the estimation procedure; the degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification; any unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures; and any use of periodic (less frequent than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden.

Every observer will leave a copy of this Comment Form on the vessel (or at the plant) at the completion of each trip, unless the vessel/plant operator already has one and does not wish to have another. Extra copies will be made available at the plants and at our field stations. The Comment Form will also be made available electronically on our FMA website at:

<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/observers/default.htm>

Hard copies of the Comment Form may also be made available at Fisheries Management Council Meetings and other outreach events. The Comment Forms may also be distributed by the various fishing organizations to their members. Each Comment Form will be accompanied by a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope.

3. Describe the methods used to maximize response rates and to deal with nonresponse. The accuracy and reliability of the information collected must be shown to be adequate for the intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided if they will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

The response rates will be maximized by ease of completion and availability of the Comment Form. Forms will be handed out by observers, by field station staff, at public meetings and will also be available on the web. This form is being developed at the request of industry, and we will stress the need for a high response rate at Fisheries Management Council Meetings and other outreach events. We will also follow up with the fishermen in person at the docks and at public meetings to encourage participation. Each Comment Form will be accompanied by a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope.

We will also use a Non-response Follow-up Form. This follow-up will be performed either in person or by phone.

4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Tests are encouraged as effective means to refine collections, but if ten or more test respondents are involved OMB must give prior approval.

Not applicable.

5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on the statistical aspects of the design, and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

Jerald Berger, NOAA/NMFS/AFSC/FMA, 206-526-4193
William Karp, NOAA/NMFS/AFSC/FMA, 206-526-4194
Martin Loefflad, NOAA/NMFS/AFSC/FMA, 206-526-4195
Allison Barns, NOAA/NMFS/AFSC/FMA, 206-526-4725
Bob Maier, NOAA/NMFS/AFSC/FMA, 206-526-4197



Date Revised: April 6, 2006

NPGOP VESSEL/PLANT OPERATOR COMMENT FORM

Vessel/Plant Operator _____ Vessel/Plant Name _____ Today's Date _____

Observer _____ Observer Provider _____ Dates observer onboard _____

Questions about your observer	Yes	No	Comments
Did the observer interact with you and your crew in a professional manner?			
Did the observer discuss his/her work needs with you and your crew?			
Did the observer follow vessel/plant rules or policies? If not, please elaborate.			
Did the observer participate fully in safety drills? If not, why not?			
Did the observer inform you of any suspected violations of regulations when these were witnessed?			
Did the observer put himself/herself in any unsafe situations? If yes, please elaborate.			
Did you have any issues with the observer's duties and responsibilities? If yes, please elaborate.			
Did you discuss any issues regarding observer duties with the observer?			Were the issues resolved? How?
Did you discuss any issues regarding observer duties with anyone else? (please circle) Observer Program staff			Please identify the person you spoke with and whether the issues were resolved.
Observer provider My fishing company			



Did the observer do anything specific that you appreciated? Please elaborate.	Yes	No	Comments
Questions about the program			
Do you have questions about the work performed by observers? (sampling methods, work schedules, etc)			
Did you ask the observer?			
Would you like to ask a member of our staff?			
Would you like someone on our staff to contact you? (If yes, please provide contact information below)			
In general, are you satisfied with the observers you have had on your vessel or at your plant? Please use this space to provide any relevant comments or suggestions.			

If you would like us to contact you, please provide:

Phone _____ Email _____ Address _____



PUBLIC REPORTING BURDEN STATEMENT

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing the instructions, searching the existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to William A. Karp, Director, Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Before completing this form, please note the following: 1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number; 2) This information is voluntary and will be used to improve observer training under section 403(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1801, *et seq.*); 3) **All identifying data submitted will be handled as confidential material in accordance with NOAA Administrative Order 216-100, Protection of Confidential Fishery Statistics.** Other information collected on this form may be subject to public release under various statutes.

NPGOP VESSEL/PLANT OPERATOR COMMENT FORM

NORTH PACIFIC GROUND FISH OBSERVER PROGRAM

The information on this form will be used by the National Marine Fisheries Service to evaluate how well the observers are performing their duties and to serve as a line of communication between the fishermen and the Observer Program.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15minute per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

All identifying data submitted will be handled as confidential material in accordance with NOAA Administrative Order 216-100, Protection of Confidential Fishery Statistics. Notwithstanding any other provisions of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subjected to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.

INSTRUCTIONS

Anonymous responses have little value in this process, so please fill in the identifying information completely. If you don't remember the Observer's name, please fill in the rest of the identifying information and indicate whether the Observer was the Primary or Secondary observer (if known).

In addition to answering Yes or No to each question, please use the Comments section to provide additional information about your answer. If the answer is neither Yes nor No, please use the Comments section to record the appropriate answer (i.e. Sometimes or N/A [not applicable]).

Though this form's primary intent is to allow you to provide information regarding specific observers, the second page affords you an opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions about the Observer Program in general or to open up a line of communication between you and a member of our staff.

Please take the time to answer this Comment Form completely.

Thank you for your time!



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
 Alaska Fisheries Science Center
 Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division
 7600 Sand Point Way Northeast
 Seattle, Washington 98115-0070



OMB Control No. 0648-xxxx
 Expiration Date: xx/xx/xxxx

NPGOP NON-RESPONSE FOLLOW-UP FORM

Vessel/Plant Operator _____ Vessel/Plant Name _____ Today's Date _____

Observer _____ Observer Provider _____ Dates observer onboard _____

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Why didn't you respond to the Comment Form? | Didn't receive the form (go to question 2)
Too busy to fill it out (go to question 3)
Don't believe it will accomplish anything (go to question 3) |
| 2. Will you respond to the Comment Form if you receive one? | Yes (send them a form and stop this survey)
No (go to question 3) |
| 3. Will you respond to a short survey now? | Yes (go to question 4)
No (stop this survey) |
| 4. In general, were you satisfied with your observer? | Satisfied Comments:
Not satisfied |
| 5. In general, are you satisfied with the Observer Program | Satisfied Comments:
Not satisfied |
| 6. Any further comment? | |

PUBLIC REPORTING BURDEN STATEMENT

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 30 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing the instructions, searching the existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to William A. Karp, Director, Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Before completing this form, please note the following: 1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number; 2) This information is voluntary and will be used to improve observer training under section 403(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1801, et seq.); 3) **All identifying data submitted will be handled as confidential material in accordance with NOAA Administrative Order 216-100, Protection of Confidential Fishery Statistics.** Other information collected on this form may be subject to public release under various statutes.

Taking of Marine Mammals Incidental to Commercial Fishing Operations

16 U.S.C. 1387

Sec. 118. (a) IN GENERAL. —

(1) Effective on the date of enactment of this section [April 30, 1994], and except as provided in section 114 and in paragraphs (2), (3), and (4) of this subsection, the provisions of this section shall govern the incidental taking of marine mammals in the course of commercial fishing operations by persons using vessels of the United States or vessels which have valid fishing permits issued by the Secretary in accordance with section 204(b) of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1824(b)). In any event it shall be the immediate goal that the incidental mortality or serious injury of marine mammals occurring in the course of commercial fishing operations be reduced to insignificant levels approaching a zero mortality and serious injury rate within 7 years after the date of enactment of this section [April 30, 2001].

(2) In the case of the incidental taking of marine mammals from species or stocks designated under this Act as depleted on the basis of their listing as threatened species or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), both this section and section 101(a)(5)(E) of this Act shall apply.

(3) Sections 104(h) and title III, and not this section, shall govern the taking of marine mammals in the course of commercial purse seine fishing for yellowfin tuna in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

(4) This section shall not govern the incidental taking of California sea otters and shall not be deemed to amend or repeal the Act of November 7, 1986 (Public Law 99-625; 100 Stat. 3500).

(5) Except as provided in section 101(c), the intentional lethal take of any marine mammal in the course of commercial fishing operations is prohibited.

(6) Sections 103 and 104 shall not apply to the incidental taking of marine mammals under the authority of this section.

(b) ZERO MORTALITY RATE GOAL. —

(1) Commercial fisheries shall reduce incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals to insignificant levels approaching a zero mortality and serious injury rate within 7 years after the date of enactment of this section [April 30, 2001].

(2) Fisheries which maintain insignificant serious injury and mortality levels approaching a zero rate shall not be required to further reduce their mortality and serious injury rates.

(3) Three years after such date of enactment [April 30, 1997], the Secretary shall review the progress of all commercial fisheries, by fishery, toward reducing incidental mortality and serious injury to insignificant levels approaching a zero rate. The Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries of the House of Representatives a report setting forth the results of such review within 1 year after commencement of the review. The Secretary shall note any commercial fishery for which additional information is required to accurately assess the level of incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals in the fishery.

(4) If the Secretary determines after review under paragraph (3) that the rate of incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals in a commercial fishery is not consistent with paragraph (1), then the Secretary shall take appropriate action under subsection (f).

(c) REGISTRATION AND AUTHORIZATION. —

(1) The Secretary shall, within 90 days after the date of enactment of this section [July 29, 1994]—

(A) publish in the Federal Register for public comment, for a period of not less than 90 days, any necessary changes to the Secretary's list of commercial fisheries published under section 114(b)(1) and which is in existence on March 31, 1994 (along with an explanation of such changes and a statement describing the marine mammal stocks interacting with, and the approximate number of vessels or persons actively involved in, each such fishery), with respect to commercial fisheries that have—

(i) frequent incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals;

(ii) occasional incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals; or

(iii) a remote likelihood of or no known incidental mortality or serious injury of marine mammals;

(B) after the close of the period for such public comment, publish in the Federal Register a revised list of commercial fisheries and an update of information required by subparagraph (A), together with a summary of the provisions of this section and information sufficient to advise vessel owners on how to obtain an authorization and otherwise comply with the requirements of this section; and

(C) at least once each year thereafter, and at such other times as the Secretary considers appropriate, reexamine, based on information gathered under this Act and other relevant sources and after notice and opportunity for public comment, the classification of commercial fisheries and other determinations required under subparagraph (A) and publish in the Federal Register any necessary changes.

(2)(A) An authorization shall be granted by the Secretary in accordance with this section for a vessel engaged in a commercial fishery listed under paragraph (1)(A) (i) or (ii), upon receipt by the Secretary of a completed registration form providing the name of the vessel owner and operator, the name and description of the vessel, the fisheries in which it will be engaged, the approximate time, duration, and location of such fishery operations, and the general type and nature of use of the fishing gear and techniques used. Such information shall be in a readily usable format that can be efficiently entered into and utilized by an automated or computerized data processing system. A decal or other physical evidence that the authorization is current and valid shall be issued by the Secretary at the time an authorization is granted, and so long as the authorization remains current and valid, shall be reissued annually thereafter.

(B) No authorization may be granted under this section to the owner of a vessel unless such vessel—

(i) is a vessel of the United States; or

(ii) has a valid fishing permit issued by the Secretary in accordance with section 204(b) of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1824(b)).

(C) Except as provided in subsection (a), an authorization granted under this section shall allow the incidental taking of all species and stocks of marine mammals to which this Act applies.

(3)(A) An owner of a vessel engaged in any fishery listed under paragraph (1)(A) (i) or (ii) shall, in order to engage in the lawful incidental taking of marine mammals in a commercial fishery—

(i) have registered as required under paragraph (2) with the Secretary in order to obtain for each such vessel owned and used in the fishery an authorization for the purpose of incidentally taking marine mammals in accordance with this section, except that owners of vessels holding valid certificates of exemption under section 114 are deemed to have registered for purposes of this subsection for the period during which such exemption is valid;

(ii) ensure that a decal or such other physical evidence of a current and valid authorization as the Secretary may require is displayed on or is in the possession of the master of each such vessel;

(iii) report as required by subsection (e); and

(iv) comply with any applicable take reduction plan and emergency regulations issued under this section.

(B) Any owner of a vessel receiving an authorization under this section for any fishery listed under paragraph (1)(A) (i) or (ii) shall, as a condition of that authorization, take on board an observer if requested to do so by the Secretary.

(C) An owner of a vessel engaged in a fishery listed under paragraph (1)(A) (i) or (ii) who—

(i) fails to obtain from the Secretary an authorization for such vessel under this section;

(ii) fails to maintain a current and valid authorization for such vessel; or

(iii) fails to ensure that a decal or other physical evidence of such authorization issued by the

Secretary is displayed on or is in possession of the master of the vessel,

and the master of any such vessel engaged in such fishery, shall be deemed to have violated this title, and for violations of clauses (i) and (ii) shall be subject to the penalties of this title, and for violations of clause (iii) shall be subject to a fine of not more than \$100 for each offense.

(D) If the owner of a vessel has obtained and maintains a current and valid authorization from the Secretary under this section and meets the requirements set forth in this section, including compliance with any regulations to implement a take reduction plan under this section, the owner of such vessel, and the master and crew members of the vessel, shall not be subject to the penalties set forth in this title for the incidental taking of marine mammals while such vessel is engaged in a fishery to which the authorization applies.

(E) Each owner of a vessel engaged in any fishery not listed under paragraph (1)(A) (i) or (ii), and the master and crew members of such a vessel, shall not be subject to the penalties set forth in this title for the incidental taking of marine mammals if such owner reports to the Secretary, in the form and manner required under subsection (e), instances of incidental mortality or injury of marine mammals in the course of that fishery.

(4)(A) The Secretary shall suspend or revoke an authorization granted under this section and shall not issue a decal or other physical evidence of the authorization for any vessel until the owner of such vessel complies with the reporting requirements under subsection (e) and such requirements to take on board an observer under paragraph (3)(B) as are applicable to such vessel. Previous failure to comply with the requirements of section 114 shall not bar authorization under this section for an owner who complies with the requirements of this section.

(B) The Secretary may suspend or revoke an authorization granted under this subsection, and may not issue a decal or other physical evidence of the authorization for any vessel which fails to comply with a take reduction plan or emergency regulations issued under this section.

(C) The owner and master of a vessel which fails to comply with a take reduction plan shall be subject to the penalties of sections 105 and 107, and may be subject to section 106.

(5)(A) The Secretary shall develop, in consultation with the appropriate States, affected Regional Fishery Management Councils, and other interested persons, the means by which the granting and administration of authorizations under this section shall be integrated and coordinated, to the maximum extent practicable, with existing fishery licenses, registrations, and related programs.

(B) The Secretary shall utilize newspapers of general circulation, fishery trade associations, electronic media, and other means of advising commercial fishermen of the provisions of this section and the means by which they can comply with its requirements.

(C) The Secretary is authorized to charge a fee for the granting of an authorization under this section. The level of fees charged under this subparagraph shall not exceed the administrative costs incurred in granting an authorization. Fees collected under this subparagraph shall be available to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere for expenses incurred in the granting and administration of authorizations under this section.

(d) MONITORING OF INCIDENTAL TAKES. —

(1) The Secretary shall establish a program to monitor incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals during the course of commercial fishing operations. The purposes of the monitoring program shall be to—

(A) obtain statistically reliable estimates of incidental mortality and serious injury;

(B) determine the reliability of reports of incidental mortality and serious injury under subsection (e);
and

(C) identify changes in fishing methods or technology that may increase or decrease incidental mortality and serious injury.

(2) Pursuant to paragraph (1), the Secretary may place observers on board vessels as necessary, subject to the provisions of this section. Observers may, among other tasks—

(A) record incidental mortality and injury, or by catch of other nontarget species;

(B) record numbers of marine mammals sighted; and

(C) perform other scientific investigations.

(3) In determining the distribution of observers among commercial fisheries and vessels within a fishery, the Secretary shall be guided by the following standards:

(A) The requirement to obtain statistically reliable information.

(B) The requirement that assignment of observers is fair and equitable among fisheries and among vessels in a fishery.

(C) The requirement that no individual person or vessel, or group of persons or vessels, be subject to excessive or overly burdensome observer coverage.

(D) To the extent practicable, the need to minimize costs and avoid duplication.

(4) To the extent practicable, the Secretary shall allocate observers among commercial fisheries in accordance with the following priority:

(A) The highest priority for allocation shall be for commercial fisheries that have incidental mortality or serious injury of marine mammals from stocks listed as endangered species or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

(B) The second highest priority for allocation shall be for commercial fisheries that have incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals from strategic stocks.

(C) The third highest priority for allocation shall be for commercial fisheries that have incidental mortality or serious injury of marine mammals from stocks for which the level of incidental mortality and

serious injury is uncertain.

(5) The Secretary may establish an alternative observer program to provide statistically reliable information on the species and number of marine mammals incidentally taken in the course of commercial fishing operations. The alternative observer program may include direct observation of fishing activities from vessels, airplanes, or points on shore.

(6) The Secretary is not required to place an observer on a vessel in a fishery if the Secretary finds that—

(A) in a situation in which harvesting vessels are delivering fish to a processing vessel and the catch is not taken on board the harvesting vessel, statistically reliable information can be obtained from an observer on board the processing vessel to which the fish are delivered;

(B) the facilities on a vessel for quartering of an observer, or for carrying out observer functions, are so inadequate or unsafe that the health or safety of the observer or the safe operation of the vessel would be jeopardized; or

(C) for reasons beyond the control of the Secretary, an observer is not available.

(7) The Secretary may, with the consent of the vessel owner, station an observer on board a vessel engaged in a fishery not listed under subsection (c)(1)(A) (i) or (ii).

(8) Any proprietary information collected under this subsection shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed except—

(A) to Federal employees whose duties require access to such information;

(B) to State or tribal employees pursuant to an agreement with the Secretary that prevents public disclosure of the identity or business of any person;

(C) when required by court order; or

(D) in the case of scientific information involving fisheries, to employees of Regional Fishery Management Councils who are responsible for fishery management plan development and monitoring.

(9) The Secretary shall prescribe such procedures as may be necessary to preserve such confidentiality, except that the Secretary shall release or make public upon request any such information in aggregate, summary, or other form which does not directly or indirectly disclose the identity or business of any person.

(e) **REPORTING REQUIREMENT.** — The owner or operator of a commercial fishing vessel subject to this Act shall report all incidental mortality and injury of marine mammals in the course of commercial fishing operations to the Secretary by mail or other means acceptable to the Secretary within 48 hours after the end of each fishing trip on a standard postage-paid form to be developed by the Secretary under this section. Such form shall be capable of being readily entered into and usable by an automated or computerized data processing system and shall require the vessel owner or operator to provide the following:

(1) The vessel name, and Federal, State, or tribal registration numbers of the registered vessel.

(2) The name and address of the vessel owner or operator.

(3) The name and description of the fishery.

(4) The species of each marine mammal incidentally killed or injured, and the date, time, and approximate geographic location of such occurrence.

(f) TAKE REDUCTION PLANS. —

(1) The Secretary shall develop and implement a take reduction plan designed to assist in the recovery or prevent the depletion of each strategic stock which interacts with a commercial fishery listed under subsection (c)(1)(A) (i) or (ii), and may develop and implement such a plan for any other marine mammal stocks which interact with a commercial fishery listed under subsection (c)(1)(A)(i) which the Secretary determines, after notice and opportunity for public comment, has a high level of mortality and serious injury across a number of such marine mammal stocks.

(2) The immediate goal of a take reduction plan for a strategic stock shall be to reduce, within 6 months of its implementation, the incidental mortality or serious injury of marine mammals incidentally taken in the course of commercial fishing operations to levels less than the potential biological removal level established for that stock under section 117. The long-term goal of the plan shall be to reduce, within 5 years of its implementation, the incidental mortality or serious injury of marine mammals incidentally taken in the course of commercial fishing operations to insignificant levels approaching a zero mortality and serious injury rate, taking into account the economics of the fishery, the availability of existing technology, and existing State or regional fishery management plans.

(3) If there is insufficient funding available to develop and implement a take reduction plan for all such stocks that interact with commercial fisheries listed under subsection (c)(1)(A) (i) or (ii), the Secretary shall give highest priority to the development and implementation of take reduction plans for species or stocks whose level of incidental mortality and serious injury exceeds the potential biological removal level, those that have a small population size, and those which are declining most rapidly.

(4) Each take reduction plan shall include—

(A) a review of the information in the final stock assessment published under section 117(b) and any substantial new information;

(B) an estimate of the total number and, if possible, age and gender, of animals from the stock that are being incidentally lethally taken or seriously injured each year during the course of commercial fishing operations, by fishery;

(C) recommended regulatory or voluntary measures for the reduction of incidental mortality and serious injury;

(D) recommended dates for achieving the specific objectives of the plan.

(5)(A) For any stock in which incidental mortality and serious injury from commercial fisheries exceeds the potential biological removal level established under section 117, the plan shall include measures the Secretary expects will reduce, within 6 months of the plan's implementation, such mortality and serious injury

to a level below the potential biological removal level.

(B) For any stock in which human-caused mortality and serious injury exceeds the potential biological removal level, other than a stock to which subparagraph (A) applies, the plan shall include measures the Secretary expects will reduce, to the maximum extent practicable within 6 months of the plan's implementation, the incidental mortality and serious injury by such commercial fisheries from that stock. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term "maximum extent practicable" means to the lowest level that is feasible for such fisheries within the 6-month period.

(6)(A) At the earliest possible time (not later than 30 days) after the Secretary issues a final stock assessment under section 117(b) for a strategic stock, the Secretary shall, and for stocks that interact with a fishery listed under subsection (c)(1)(A)(i) for which the Secretary has made a determination under paragraph (1), the Secretary may—

(i) establish a take reduction team for such stock and appoint the members of such team in accordance with subparagraph (C); and

(ii) publish in the Federal Register a notice of the team's establishment, the names of the team's appointed members, the full geographic range of such stock, and a list of all commercial fisheries that cause incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals from such stock.

(B) The Secretary may request a take reduction team to address a stock that extends over one or more regions or fisheries, or multiple stocks within a region or fishery, if the Secretary determines that doing so would facilitate the development and implementation of plans required under this subsection.

(C) Members of take reduction teams shall have expertise regarding the conservation or biology of the marine mammal species which the take reduction plan will address, or the fishing practices which result in the incidental mortality and serious injury of such species. Members shall include representatives of Federal agencies, each coastal State which has fisheries which interact with the species or stock, appropriate Regional Fishery Management Councils, interstate fisheries commissions, academic and scientific organizations, environmental groups, all commercial and recreational fisheries groups and gear types which incidentally take the species or stock, Alaska Native organizations or Indian tribal organizations, and others as the Secretary deems appropriate. Take reduction teams shall, to the maximum extent practicable, consist of an equitable balance among representatives of resource user interests and nonuser interests.

(D) Take reduction teams shall not be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 App. U.S.C.). Meetings of take reduction teams shall be open to the public, and prior notice of meetings shall be made public in a timely fashion.

(E) Members of take reduction teams shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed by the Secretary, upon request, for reasonable travel costs and expenses incurred in performing their duties as members of the team.

(7) Where the human-caused mortality and serious injury from a strategic stock is estimated to be equal to or greater than the potential biological removal level established under section 117 for such stock and such stock interacts with a fishery listed under subsection (c)(1)(A) (i) or (ii), the following procedures shall apply in the development of the take reduction plan for the stock:

(A)(i) Not later than 6 months after the date of establishment of a take reduction team for the stock, the team shall submit a draft take reduction plan for such stock to the Secretary, consistent with the other provisions of this section.

(ii) Such draft take reduction plan shall be developed by consensus. In the event consensus cannot be reached, the team shall advise the Secretary in writing on the range of possibilities considered by the team, and the views of both the majority and minority.

(B)(i) The Secretary shall take the draft take reduction plan into consideration and, not later than 60 days after the submission of the draft plan by the team, the Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register the plan proposed by the team, any changes proposed by the Secretary with an explanation of the reasons therefor, and proposed regulations to implement such plan, for public review and comment during a period of not to exceed 90 days.

(ii) In the event that the take reduction team does not submit a draft plan to the Secretary within 6 months, the Secretary shall, not later than 8 months after the establishment of the team, publish in the Federal Register a proposed take reduction plan and implementing regulations, for public review and comment during a period of not to exceed 90 days.

(C) Not later than 60 days after the close of the comment period required under subparagraph (B), the Secretary shall issue a final take reduction plan and implementing regulations, consistent with the other provisions of this section.

(D) The Secretary shall, during a period of 30 days after publication of a final take reduction plan, utilize newspapers of general circulation, fishery trade associations, electronic media, and other means of advising commercial fishermen of the requirements of the plan and how to comply with them.

(E) The Secretary and the take reduction team shall meet every 6 months, or at such other intervals as the Secretary determines are necessary, to monitor the implementation of the final take reduction plan until such time that the Secretary determines that the objectives of such plan have been met.

(F) The Secretary shall amend the take reduction plan and implementing regulations as necessary to meet the requirements of this section, in accordance with the procedures in this section for the issuance of such plans and regulations.

(8) Where the human-caused mortality and serious injury from a strategic stock is estimated to be less than the potential biological removal level established under section 117 for such stock and such stock interacts with a fishery listed under subsection (c)(1)(A) (i) or (ii), or for any marine mammal stocks which interact with a commercial fishery listed under subsection (c)(1)(A)(i) for which the Secretary has made a determination under paragraph (1), the following procedures shall apply in the development of the take reduction plan for such stock:

(A)(i) Not later than 11 months after the date of establishment of a take reduction team for the stock, the team shall submit a draft take reduction plan for the stock to the Secretary, consistent with the other provisions of this section.

(ii) Such draft take reduction plan shall be developed by consensus. In the event consensus cannot be reached, the team shall advise the Secretary in writing on the range of possibilities

considered by the team, and the views of both the majority and minority.

(B)(i) The Secretary shall take the draft take reduction plan into consideration and, not later than 60 days after the submission of the draft plan by the team, the Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register the plan proposed by the team, any changes proposed by the Secretary with an explanation of the reasons therefor, and proposed regulations to implement such plan, for public review and comment during a period of not to exceed 90 days.

(ii) In the event that the take reduction team does not submit a draft plan to the Secretary within 11 months, the Secretary shall, not later than 13 months after the establishment of the team, publish in the Federal Register a proposed take reduction plan and implementing regulations, for public review and comment during a period of not to exceed 90 days.

(C) Not later than 60 days after the close of the comment period required under subparagraph (B), the Secretary shall issue a final take reduction plan and implementing regulations, consistent with the other provisions of this section.

(D) The Secretary shall, during a period of 30 days after publication of a final take reduction plan, utilize newspapers of general circulation, fishery trade associations, electronic media, and other means of advising commercial fishermen of the requirements of the plan and how to comply with them.

(E) The Secretary and the take reduction team shall meet on an annual basis, or at such other intervals as the Secretary determines are necessary, to monitor the implementation of the final take reduction plan until such time that the Secretary determines that the objectives of such plan have been met.

(F) The Secretary shall amend the take reduction plan and implementing regulations as necessary to meet the requirements of this section, in accordance with the procedures in this section for the issuance of such plans and regulations.

(9) In implementing a take reduction plan developed pursuant to this subsection, the Secretary may, where necessary to implement a take reduction plan to protect or restore a marine mammal stock or species covered by such plan, promulgate regulations which include, but are not limited to, measures to—

(A) establish fishery-specific limits on incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals in commercial fisheries or restrict commercial fisheries by time or area;

(B) require the use of alternative commercial fishing gear or techniques and new technologies, encourage the development of such gear or technology, or convene expert skippers' panels;

(C) educate commercial fishermen, through workshops and other means, on the importance of reducing the incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals in affected commercial fisheries; and

(D) monitor, in accordance with subsection (d), the effectiveness of measures taken to reduce the level of incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals in the course of commercial fishing operations.

(10)(A) Notwithstanding paragraph (6), in the case of any stock to which paragraph (1) applies for which a final stock assessment has not been published under section 117(b)(3) by April 1, 1995, due to a proceeding under section 117(b)(2), or any Federal court review of such proceeding, the Secretary shall establish a take reduction team under paragraph (6) for such stock as if a final stock assessment had been published.

(B) The draft stock assessment published for such stock under section 117(b)(1) shall be deemed the final stock assessment for purposes of preparing and implementing a take reduction plan for such stock under this section.

(C) Upon publication of a final stock assessment for such stock under section 117(b)(3) the Secretary shall immediately reconvene the take reduction team for such stock for the purpose of amending the take reduction plan, and any regulations issued to implement such plan, if necessary, to reflect the final stock assessment or court action. Such amendments shall be made in accordance with paragraph (7)(F) or (8)(F), as appropriate.

(D) A draft stock assessment may only be used as the basis for a take reduction plan under this paragraph for a period of not to exceed two years, or until a final stock assessment is published, whichever is earlier. If, at the end of the two-year period, a final stock assessment has not been published, the Secretary shall categorize such stock under section 117(a)(5)(A) and shall revoke any regulations to implement a take reduction plan for such stock.

(E) Subparagraph (D) shall not apply for any period beyond two years during which a final stock assessment for such stock has not been published due to review of a proceeding on such stock assessment by a Federal court. Immediately upon final action by such court, the Secretary shall proceed under subparagraph (C).

(11) Take reduction plans developed under this section for a species or stock listed as a threatened species or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) shall be consistent with any recovery plan developed for such species or stock under section 4 of such Act.

(g) EMERGENCY REGULATIONS. —

(1) If the Secretary finds that the incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals from commercial fisheries is having, or is likely to have, an immediate and significant adverse impact on a stock or species, the Secretary shall take actions as follows:

(A) In the case of a stock or species for which a take reduction plan is in effect, the Secretary shall—

(i) prescribe emergency regulations that, consistent with such plan to the maximum extent practicable, reduce incidental mortality and serious injury in that fishery; and

(ii) approve and implement, on an expedited basis, any amendments to such plan that are recommended by the take reduction team to address such adverse impact.

(B) In the case of a stock or species for which a take reduction plan is being developed, the Secretary shall—

(i) prescribe emergency regulations to reduce such incidental mortality and serious injury in that fishery; and

(ii) approve and implement, on an expedited basis, such plan, which shall provide methods to address such adverse impact if still necessary.

(C) In the case of a stock or species for which a take reduction plan does not exist and is not being developed, or in the case of a commercial fishery listed under subsection (c)(1)(A)(iii) which the Secretary believes may be contributing to such adverse impact, the Secretary shall—

(i) prescribe emergency regulations to reduce such incidental mortality and serious injury in that fishery, to the extent necessary to mitigate such adverse impact;

(ii) immediately review the stock assessment for such stock or species and the classification of such commercial fishery under this section to determine if a take reduction team should be established; and

(iii) may, where necessary to address such adverse impact on a species or stock listed as a threatened species or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), place observers on vessels in a commercial fishery listed under subsection (c)(1)(A)(iii), if the Secretary has reason to believe such vessels may be causing the incidental mortality and serious injury to marine mammals from such stock.

(2) Prior to taking action under paragraph (1) (A), (B), or (C), the Secretary shall consult with the Marine Mammal Commission, all appropriate Regional Fishery Management Councils, State fishery managers, and the appropriate take reduction team (if established).

(3) Emergency regulations prescribed under this subsection—

(A) shall be published in the Federal Register, together with an explanation thereof;

(B) shall remain in effect for not more than 180 days or until the end of the applicable commercial fishing season, whichever is earlier; and

(C) may be terminated by the Secretary at an earlier date by publication in the Federal Register of a notice of termination, if the Secretary determines that the reasons for emergency regulations no longer exist.

(4) If the Secretary finds that incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals in a commercial fishery is continuing to have an immediate and significant adverse impact on a stock or species, the Secretary may extend the emergency regulations for an additional period of not more than 90 days or until reasons for the emergency no longer exist, whichever is earlier.

(h) PENALTIES. — Except as provided in subsection (c), any person who violates this section shall be subject to the provisions of sections 105 and 107, and may be subject to section 106 as the Secretary shall establish by regulations.

(i) ASSISTANCE. — The Secretary shall provide assistance to Regional Fishery Management Councils, States,

interstate fishery commissions, and Indian tribal organizations in meeting the goal of reducing incidental mortality and serious injury to insignificant levels approaching a zero mortality and serious injury rate.

(j) CONTRIBUTIONS. — For purposes of carrying out this section, the Secretary may accept, solicit, receive, hold, administer, and use gifts, devises, and bequests.

(k) CONSULTATION WITH SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR. — The Secretary shall consult with the Secretary of the Interior prior to taking actions or making determinations under this section that affect or relate to species or population stocks of marine mammals for which the Secretary of the Interior is responsible under this title.

(l) DEFINITIONS. — As used in this section and section 101(a)(5)(E), each of the terms "fishery" and "vessel of the United States" has the same meaning it does in section 3 of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1802).

Subpart E—Groundfish Observer Program

Source:

61 FR 56431, Nov. 1, 1996, unless otherwise noted.

§679.50 Groundfish Observer Program applicable through December 31, 2007.

(a) *General.* Operators of vessels possessing a Federal fisheries permit under §679.4(b)(1) and processors that possess a Federal processor permit under §679.4(f)(1), must comply with this section. The owner of a fishing vessel subject to this part or a processor subject to this part must ensure that the operator or manager complies with this section and is jointly and severally liable for such compliance. Observer coverage for the CDQ fisheries obtained in compliance with paragraphs (c)(4) and (d)(4) of this section may not be used to comply with observer coverage requirements for non-CDQ groundfish fisheries specified in this section.

(b) *Purpose.* The purpose of the Groundfish Observer Program is to allow observers to collect Alaska fisheries data deemed by the Regional Administrator to be necessary and appropriate for management, compliance monitoring, and research of groundfish fisheries and for the conservation of marine resources or their environment.

(c) *Observer requirements for vessels.* (1) Observer coverage is required as follows:

(i) A mothership of any length that processes 1,000 mt or more in round-weight equivalent of groundfish during a calendar month is required to have an observer aboard the vessel each day it receives or processes groundfish during that month.

(ii) A mothership of any length that processes from 500 mt to 1,000 mt in round-weight equivalent of groundfish during a calendar month is required to have an observer aboard the vessel at least 30 percent of the days it receives or processes groundfish during that month.

(iii) Each mothership that receives pollock harvested by catcher vessels in the catcher vessel operational area during the second pollock season that starts on September 1 under §679.23(e)(2) is required to have a second observer aboard, in addition to the observer required under paragraphs (c)(1) (i) and (ii) of this section, for each day of the second pollock season until the chum salmon savings area is closed under §679.21(e)(7)(vi), or October 15, whichever occurs first.

(iv) A catcher/processor or catcher vessel 125 ft (38.1 m) LOA or longer must carry an observer during 100 percent of its fishing days except for a vessel fishing for groundfish with pot gear as provided in paragraph (c)(1)(vii) of this section.

(v) A catcher/processor or catcher vessel equal to or greater than 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA, but less than 125 ft (38.1 m) LOA, that participates for more than 3 fishing days in a directed fishery for groundfish in a calendar quarter must carry an observer during at least 30 percent of its fishing days in that calendar quarter and at all times during at least one fishing trip in that calendar quarter for each of the groundfish fishery categories defined under paragraph (c)(2) of this section in which the vessel participates.

(vi) A catcher/processor or catcher vessel fishing with hook-and-line gear that is required to carry an observer under paragraph (c)(1)(v) of this section must carry an observer during at least one entire fishing trip using hook-and-line gear in the Eastern GOA regulatory area during each calendar quarter in which the vessel participates in a directed fishery for groundfish in the Eastern Regulatory Area using hook-and-line gear.

(vii) *Vessels using pot gear.* (A) A catcher/processor or catcher vessel equal to or greater than 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA fishing with pot gear that participates for more than 3 fishing days in a directed fishery for groundfish in a calendar quarter must carry an observer:

(1) For at least 30 percent of the total number of pot retrievals for that calendar quarter, and

(2) For at least one entire fishing trip using pot gear in a calendar quarter, for each of the groundfish fishery categories defined under paragraph (c)(2) of this section in which the vessel participates.

(B) Groundfish are required to be retained each day that pot gear is retrieved in order for gear retrieved that day to count toward observer coverage requirements for all catcher vessels and catcher/processors using pot gear and required to carry observers.

(viii) *Red King Crab Savings Area.* (A) Any catcher/processor or catcher vessel used to fish for groundfish in the Red King Crab Savings area must carry an observer during 100 percent of its fishing days in which the vessel uses pelagic trawl gear, pot, jig, or longline gear.

(B) Any catcher/processor or catcher vessel used to fish for groundfish in the Red King Crab Savings Subarea and subject to this subarea being open to vessels fishing for groundfish with non-pelagic trawl gear under §679.21(e)(3)(ii)(B), must carry an observer during 100 percent of its fishing days in which the vessel uses non-pelagic trawl gear.

(ix) *Nearshore Bristol Bay Trawl Closure.* Any catcher/processor or catcher vessel used to fish for groundfish in the Nearshore Bristol Bay Trawl Closure area must carry an observer during 100 percent of its fishing days in which the vessel uses trawl gear. (x) A vessel directed fishing with trawl gear for Atka mackerel in the Aleutian Islands subarea must carry two NMFS-certified observers at all times while directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the HLA directed fishery, as specified in §679.20(a)(8).

(2) *Groundfish fishery categories requiring separate coverage.* Directed fishing for groundfish, during any fishing trip, that results:

(i) *Pollock fishery.* In a retained catch of pollock that is greater than the retained catch of any other groundfish species or species group that is specified as a separate groundfish fishery under this paragraph (c)(2).

(ii) *Pacific cod fishery.* In a retained catch of Pacific cod that is greater than the retained catch of any other groundfish species or species group that is specified as a separate groundfish fishery under this paragraph (c)(2).

(iii) *Sablefish fishery.* In a retained catch of sablefish that is greater than the retained catch of any other groundfish species or species group that is specified as a separate groundfish fishery under this paragraph (c)(2).

(iv) *Rockfish fishery.* In a retained aggregate catch of rockfish that is greater than the retained catch of any other groundfish species or species group that is specified as a separate groundfish fishery under this paragraph (c)(2).

(v) *Flatfish fishery.* In a retained aggregate catch of all flatfish species, except Pacific halibut, that is greater than the retained catch of any other groundfish species or species group that is specified as a separate groundfish fishery under this paragraph (c)(2).

(vi) *Other species fishery.* In a retained catch of groundfish that does not qualify as a pollock, Pacific cod, sablefish, rockfish, or flatfish fishery as defined under paragraphs (c)(2) (i) through (v) of this section.

(3) *Assignment of vessels to fisheries.* At the end of any fishing trip, a vessel's retained catch of groundfish species or species groups for which a TAC has been specified under §679.20, in round-weight equivalent, will determine to which fishery category listed under paragraph (c)(2) of this section the vessel is assigned.

(i) *Catcher/processors.* A catcher/processor will be assigned to a fishery category based on the retained groundfish catch composition reported on the vessel's weekly production report submitted to the Regional Administrator under §679.5(i).

(ii) *Catcher vessel delivery in Federal waters.* A catcher vessel that delivers to a mothership in Federal waters will be assigned to a fishery category based on the retained groundfish catch composition reported on the weekly production report submitted to the Regional Administrator for that week by the mothership under §679.5(i).

(iii) *Catcher vessel delivery in Alaska State waters.* A catcher vessel that delivers groundfish to a shoreside processor or stationary floating processor will be assigned to a fishery category based on the retained groundfish catch composition reported on one or more ADF&G fish tickets as required under Alaska Statutes at A.S. 16.05.690.

(4) *Groundfish and halibut CDQ fisheries.* The owner or operator of a vessel groundfish CDQ fishing or halibut CDQ fishing as defined at §679.2 must comply with the following minimum observer coverage requirements each day that the vessel is used to transport (catcher vessels only), harvest, process, deliver or take delivery of CDQ or PSQ species. The time required for the level 2 observer to complete sampling, data recording, and data communication duties shall not exceed 12 hours in each 24-hour period, and, the level 2 observer is required to sample no more than 9 hours in each 24-hour period.

(i) *Motherships or catcher/processors using trawl gear—(A) Multi-species CDQ fishery.* A mothership or catcher/processor using trawl gear to participate in the multi-species CDQ fishery must have at least two level 2 observers as described at paragraphs (j)(1)(v)(D) and (E) of this section aboard the vessel, at least one of whom must be certified as a lead level 2 observer.

(B) *Pollock CDQ fishery.* A mothership or catcher/processor using trawl gear to participate in a directed fishery for pollock CDQ must have at least two NMFS-certified observers aboard the vessel, at least one of whom must be certified as a lead level 2 observer.

(ii) *Catcher/processors using hook-and-line gear.* A catcher/processor using hook-and-line gear must have at least two level 2 observers as described at paragraphs (j)(1)(v)(D) and (E) of this section aboard the vessels, unless NMFS approves a CDP authorizing the vessel to carry only one lead level 2 observer. At least one of the level 2 observers must be certified as a lead level 2 observer. NMFS may approve a CDP authorizing the vessel to carry only one lead level 2 observer if the CDQ group supplies vessel logbook or observer data that demonstrates that one level 2 observer can sample each CDQ set for species composition in one 12-hour shift per fishing day. NMFS will not approve a CDP that would require the observer to divide a 12-hour shift into shifts of less than 6 hours.

(iii) *Catcher/processors using pot gear.* A catcher/processor using pot gear must have at least one lead level 2 observer as described at paragraph (j)(1)(v)(E) of this section aboard the vessel.

(iv) *Catcher vessel using trawl gear.* A catcher vessel equal to or greater than 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA using trawl gear, except a catcher vessel that delivers only unsorted codends to a processor or another vessel, must have at least one level 2 observer as described at paragraph (j)(1)(v)(D) of this section aboard the vessel.

(v) *Catcher vessel using nontrawl gear.* A catcher vessel equal to or greater than 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA using nontrawl gear must meet the following observer coverage requirements:

(A) *Option 1.* If the vessel operator selected Option 1 (as described at § 679.32(c)(2)(ii)(A)) for CDQ catch accounting, then at least one CDQ observer as described at paragraph (j)(1)(v)(D) of this section must be aboard the vessel.

(B) *Option 2.* If the vessel operator selected Option 2 (as described at § 679.32(c)(2)(ii)(B)) for CDQ catch accounting, then at least one lead CDQ observer as described at paragraph (j)(1)(v)(E) of this section must be aboard the vessel.

(5) *AFA catcher/processors and motherships—(i) Coverage requirement—(A) Listed AFA catcher/processors and AFA motherships.* The owner or operator of a listed AFA catcher/processor or AFA mothership must provide at least two NMFS-certified observers, at least one of which must be certified as a lead level 2 observer, for each day that the vessel is used to harvest, process, or take deliveries of groundfish. More than two observers are required if the observer workload restriction at paragraph (c)(5)(iii) of this section would otherwise preclude sampling as required under §679.63(a)(1).

(B) *Unlisted AFA catcher/processors.* The owner or operator of an unlisted AFA catcher/processor must provide at least two NMFS-certified observers for each day that the vessel is used to engage in directed fishing for pollock in the BSAI, or takes deliveries of pollock harvested in the BSAI. At least one observer must be certified as a lead level 2 observer. When an unlisted AFA catcher/processor is not engaged in directed fishing for BSAI pollock and is not receiving deliveries of pollock harvested in the BSAI, the observer coverage requirements at paragraph (c)(1)(iv) of this section apply.

(ii) *Observer work load.* The time required for the observer to complete sampling, data recording, and data communication duties may not exceed 12 consecutive hours in each 24-hour period, and, the observer may not sample more than 9 hours in each 24-hour period.

(d) *Observer requirements for shoreside processors and stationary floating processors.* Observer coverage is required as follows. A shoreside processor or stationary floating processor that:

(1) Processes 1,000 mt or more in round-weight equivalent of groundfish during a calendar month is required to have an observer present at the facility each day it receives or processes groundfish during that month.

(2) Processes 500 mt to 1,000 mt in round-weight equivalent of groundfish during a calendar month is required to have an observer present at the facility at least 30 percent of the days it receives or processes groundfish during that month.

(3) Is subject to observer requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section that receives pollock or Pacific cod, may reduce observer coverage in the event that a directed fishery for such species closes, subject to the following conditions:

(i) The shoreside or stationary floating processor must maintain observer coverage for 30 percent of all days that groundfish are received or processed, beginning on the fourth calendar day following the day that the directed fishery for pollock or Pacific cod was closed and ending on the last day of the month, except as allowed in this paragraph (d)(3)(iv) of this section.

(ii) Observer coverage for the month following the month with reduced observer coverage will be based on monthly landings projections and thresholds as specified in paragraphs (d)(1) and (2) of this section, but may also be reduced for that subsequent month as specified in this paragraph (d)(3) of this section.

(iii) Total groundfish landings received by a shoreside or stationary floating processor under reduced observer coverage as authorized under this paragraph (d)(3) may not exceed 250 mt per calendar week.

(iv) If greater than 250 mt in round weight equivalent of groundfish are projected to be received in a given calendar week by a shoreside or stationary floating processor during a month with reduced observer coverage, as authorized under this paragraph (d)(3), the shoreside or stationary floating processor must return to observer coverage requirements as specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section until all fish received during that week is processed. The shoreside or stationary floating processor may then return to reduced observer coverage as authorized under this paragraph (d)(3) for the remainder of the calendar month.

(4) Offloads pollock at more than one location on the same dock and has distinct and separate equipment at each location to process those pollock and that receives pollock harvested by catcher vessels in the catcher vessel operational area.

(5) *Groundfish and halibut CDQ fisheries*—(i) *CDQ deliveries requiring observer coverage.* Subject to paragraph (d)(4)(ii) of this section, each shoreside processor or stationary floating processor taking deliveries of groundfish or halibut CDQ must have at least one level 2 observer as described at paragraph (j)(1)(v)(D) of this section present at all times while CDQ is being received or processed.

(ii) *CDQ deliveries not requiring level 2 observer coverage.* A shoreside processor is not required to provide a level 2 observer for CDQ deliveries from the following vessels:

(A) Vessels less than 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA that are halibut CDQ fishing;

(B) Vessels equal to or greater than 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA using nontrawl gear that have selected Option 1 (as described at § 679.32(c)(2)(ii)(A)) for CDQ catch accounting, so long as the level 2 observer on the catcher vessel monitors the entire delivery without exceeding the working hour limitations described in paragraph (d)(4)(iii) of this section; and

(C) Vessels equal to or greater than 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA using nontrawl gear that have selected Option 2 (as described at § 679.32(c)(2)(ii)(B)) for CDQ catch accounting.

(iii) *Observer working hours.* The time required for the level 2 observer to complete sampling, data recording, and data communication duties may not exceed 12 hours in each 24-hour period, and the level 2 observer is required to sample no more than 9 hours in each 24-hour period.

(6) *AFA inshore processors*—(i) *Coverage level*. An AFA inshore processor is required to provide a NMFS certified observer for each 12 consecutive hour period of each calendar day during which the processor takes delivery of, or processes, groundfish harvested by a vessel engaged in a directed pollock fishery in the BSAI. An AFA inshore processor that takes delivery of or processes pollock harvested in the BSAI directed pollock fishery for more than 12 consecutive hours in a calendar day is required to provide two NMFS-certified observers for each such day.

(ii) *Multiple processors*. An observer deployed to an AFA inshore processor may not be assigned to cover more than one processor during a calendar day in which the processor receives or processes pollock harvested in the BSAI directed pollock fishery.

(iii) *Observers transferring between vessels and processors*. An observer transferring from an AFA catcher vessel to an AFA inshore processor may not be assigned to cover the AFA inshore processor until at least 12 hours after offload and sampling of the catcher vessel's delivery is completed.

(e) *NMFS staff observers*. (1) Any vessel, shoreside processor, or stationary floating processor required to comply with observer coverage requirements under paragraph (c) or (d) of this section or under §679.7(f)(4) must use, upon written notification by the agency, NMFS staff or an individual authorized by NMFS for purposes of coverage requirements as specified in paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section or for other conservation and management purposes.

(2) Prior to deployment of NMFS staff or individuals authorized by NMFS, the agency will provide written notification to the owner or operator of a vessel, shoreside processor, or stationary floating processor whether observer coverage credit will be granted for that deployment.

(3) Vessel, shoreside processor, and stationary floating processor owners and operators, as well as observers and observer providers, may contact NMFS in writing to request assistance in improving observer data quality and resolving observer sampling issues. Requests may be submitted to: NMFS Observer Program Office, P.O. Box 15700, Seattle, Washington 98115–0070 or transmitted by facsimile to 206–526–4066.

(f) *Inseason adjustments in observer coverage requirements*. (1) The Regional Administrator may adjust the observer coverage requirements set out under paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section at any time to improve the accuracy, reliability, and availability of observer data, so long as the changes are based on one or more of the following:

(i) A finding that fishing methods, times, or areas, or catch or bycatch composition for a specific fishery or fleet component have changed significantly, or are likely to change significantly.

(ii) A finding that such modifications are necessary to improve data availability or quality in order to meet specific fishery management objectives.

(2) *Procedure.* Observer coverage requirements may be adjusted in accordance with §679.25(c). NMFS must publish changes in observer coverage requirements in the *Federal Register*, with the reasons for the changes and any special instructions to vessels, shoreside processors or stationary floating processors required to carry observers, at least 10 calendar days prior to their effective date.

(g) *Responsibilities*—(1) *Vessel responsibilities.* An operator of a vessel required to carry one or more observers must:

(i) *Accommodations and food.* Provide, at no cost to observers or the United States, accommodations and food on the vessel for the observer or observers that are equivalent to those provided for officers, engineers, foremen, deck-bosses or other management level personnel of the vessel.

(ii) *Safe conditions.* (A) Maintain safe conditions on the vessel for the protection of observers including adherence to all U.S. Coast Guard and other applicable rules, regulations, or statutes pertaining to safe operation of the vessel.

(B) Have on board:

(1) A valid Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Decal issued within the past 2 years that certifies compliance with regulations found in 33 CFR Chapter I and 46 CFR Chapter I;

(2) A certificate of compliance issued pursuant to [46 CFR 28.710](#); or

(3) A valid certificate of inspection pursuant to [46 U.S.C. 3311](#).

(iii) *Transmission of data.* Facilitate transmission of observer data by:

(A) *Observer use of equipment.* Allowing observers to use the vessel's communication equipment and personnel, on request, for the entry, transmission, and receipt of work-related messages, at no cost to the observers or the United States.

(B) *Communication equipment requirements*—(1) *Hardware and software.* Providing for use by the observer a personal computer in working condition that contains a full 486DX 66Mhz or greater capacity processing chip, at least 16 megabytes of RAM, at least 75 megabytes of free hard disk storage, DOS version 6.0 or a successor version of the DOS operating system, Windows 3.1, 3.11, or Windows95 (or equivalent and compatible software approved by NMFS), a mouse, and a 3.5-inch floppy disk drive. The computer equipment specified in this paragraph (B) must be connected to either an INMARSAT Standard C unit capable of transmitting binary files or a communication device that provides a point-to-point modem connection to the NMFS host computer and supports one or more of the following protocols: ITU V.22, ITU V.22bis, ITU V.32, ITU V.32bis, or ITU V.34. Those processors that use other than an INMARSAT Standard C unit must have at least a 28.8kbs Hayes-compatible modem. The above-specified hardware and software requirements do not apply to processors that do not process groundfish.

(2) *NMFS-supplied Software*. Ensuring that each mothership that is required to have a second observer aboard under paragraph (c)(iii) of this section, obtains the data entry software provided by the Regional Administrator for use by the observer.

(C) *Functional and operational equipment*. Ensuring that the communication equipment that is on motherships as specified at paragraph (f)(1)(iii)(B) of this section, and that is used by observers to enter and transmit data, is fully functional and operational.

(iv) *Vessel position*. Allow observers access to, and the use of, the vessel's navigation equipment and personnel, on request, to determine the vessel's position.

(v) *Access*. Allow observers free and unobstructed access to the vessel's bridge, trawl or working decks, holding bins, processing areas, freezer spaces, weight scales, cargo holds, and any other space that may be used to hold, process, weigh, or store fish or fish products at any time.

(vi) *Prior notification*. Notify observers at least 15 minutes before fish are brought on board, or fish and fish products are transferred from the vessel, to allow sampling the catch or observing the transfer, unless the observers specifically request not to be notified.

(vii) *Records*. Allow observers to inspect and copy the vessel's DFL, DCPL, product transfer forms, any other logbook or document required by regulations, printouts or tallies of scale weights, scale calibration records, bin sensor readouts, and production records.

(viii) *Assistance*. Provide all other reasonable assistance to enable observers to carry out their duties, including, but not limited to:

(A) Measuring decks, codends, and holding bins.

(B) Providing the observers with a safe work area adjacent to the sample collection site.

(C) Collecting bycatch when requested by the observers.

(D) Collecting and carrying baskets of fish when requested by observers.

(E) Allowing observers to determine the sex of fish when this procedure will not decrease the value of a significant portion of the catch.

(ix) *Transfer at sea*. (A) Ensure that transfers of observers at sea via small boat or raft are carried out during daylight hours, under safe conditions, and with the agreement of observers involved.

(B) Notify observers at least 3 hours before observers are transferred, such that the observers can collect personal belongings, equipment, and scientific samples.

(C) Provide a safe pilot ladder and conduct the transfer to ensure the safety of observers during transfers.

(D) Provide an experienced crew member to assist observers in the small boat or raft in which any transfer is made.

(2) *Shoreside processor or stationary floating processor responsibilities.* A manager of a shoreside processor or stationary floating processor must do the following:

(i) *Safe conditions.* Maintain safe conditions at the shoreside processing facility for the protection of observers by adhering to all applicable rules, regulations, or statutes pertaining to safe operation and maintenance of the processing facility.

(ii) *Operations information.* Notify the observers, as requested, of the planned facility operations and expected receipt of groundfish prior to receipt of those fish.

(iii) *Transmission of data.* Facilitate transmission of observer data by:

(A) *Observer use of equipment.* Allowing observers to use the shoreside processor's or stationary floating processor's communication equipment and personnel, on request, for the entry, transmission, and receipt of work-related messages, at no cost to the observers or the United States.

(B) *Communication equipment requirements—(1) Hardware and software.* Making available for use by the observer a personal computer in working condition that contains a full 486DX 66Mhz or greater capacity processing chip, at least 16 megabytes of RAM, at least 75 megabytes of free hard disk storage, DOS version 6.0 or a successor version of the DOS operating system, Windows 3.1, 3.11, or Windows95 (or equivalent and compatible software approved by NMFS), at least a 28.8kbs Hayes-compatible modem, a mouse, and a 3.5-inch floppy disk drive. The computer equipment specified in this paragraph (B) must be connected to a communication device that provides a point-to-point modem connection to the NMFS host computer and supports one or more of the following protocols: ITU V.22, ITU V.22bis, ITU V.32, ITU V.32bis, or ITU V.34. The above-specified hardware and software requirements do not apply to processors that do not process groundfish.

(2) *NMFS-supplied software.* Ensuring that each shoreside processor that is required to have an additional observer under paragraph (d)(3) of this section, obtains the data entry software provided by the Regional Administrator for use by the observer.

(C) *Functional and operational equipment.* Ensuring that the communication equipment that is in the shoreside processor as specified at paragraph (f)(2)(iii)(B) of this section and that is used by observers to transmit data is fully functional and operational.

(iv) *Access.* Allow observers free and unobstructed access to the shoreside processor's or stationary floating processor's holding bins, processing areas, freezer spaces, weight

scales, warehouses, and any other space that may be used to hold, process, weigh, or store fish or fish products at any time.

(v) *Document access.* Allow observers to inspect and copy the shoreside processor's or stationary floating processor's DCPL, product transfer forms, any other logbook or document required by regulations; printouts or tallies of scale weights; scale calibration records; bin sensor readouts; and production records.

(vi) *Assistance.* Provide all other reasonable assistance to enable the observer to carry out his or her duties, including, but not limited to:

(A) Assisting the observer in moving and weighing totes of fish.

(B) Cooperating with product recovery tests.

(C) Providing a secure place to store baskets of sampling gear.

(h) *Procurement of observer services.* Owners of vessels, shoreside processors, or stationary floating processors required to use observers under paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section must arrange for observer services from a permitted observer provider, except that:

(1) Owners of vessels, shoreside processors, or stationary floating processors are required to procure observer services directly from NMFS when the agency has determined and notified them under paragraph (e) of this section that their vessel, shoreside processor, or stationary floating processor will use NMFS staff or an individual authorized by NMFS in lieu of an observer provided through a permitted observer provider to satisfy requirements under paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section or for other conservation and management purposes.

(2) Owners of vessels, shoreside processors, or stationary floating processors are required to procure observer services directly from NMFS and a permitted observer provider when NMFS has determined and notified them under paragraph (e) of this section, that their vessel, shoreside processor, or stationary floating processor will use NMFS staff or individuals authorized by NMFS, in addition to an observer provided through an observer provider to satisfy requirements under paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section or for other conservation and management purposes.

(i) *Observer provider permitting and responsibilities—(1) Observer provider permits—*

(i) *General.* (A) Persons seeking to provide observer services under this section must obtain an observer provider permit from NMFS.

(B) *New observer providers.* An applicant seeking an observer provider permit must submit a completed application by fax or mail to the Observer Program Office at the address listed in paragraph (e)(3) of this section.

(C) *Existing observer providers as of 2002.* NMFS-certified providers who deployed observers under the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program in 2002 are exempt from the requirement to apply for a permit and will be issued an observer provider permit, except that a change in ownership of an existing observer provider after January 1, 2003, requires a new permit application under paragraph (i)(1)(vi) of this section if the change involves a new person. Such observer providers must submit to the Observer Program Office within 30 days of receiving the observer provider permit issued under this paragraph any changes or corrections regarding information required under paragraphs (i)(1)(ii)(A) and (i)(1)(ii)(B) of this section.

(ii) *Contents of application.* An application for an observer provider permit shall consist of a narrative that contains the following:

(A) Identification of the management, organizational structure, and ownership structure of the applicant's business, including identification by name and general function of all controlling management interests in the company, including but not limited to owners, board members, officers, authorized agents, and staff. If the applicant is a corporation, the articles of incorporation must be provided. If the applicant is a partnership, the partnership agreement must be provided.

(B) *Contact information—(1) Owner(s) information.* The permanent mailing address, phone and fax numbers where the owner(s) can be contacted for official correspondence.

(2) *Business information.* Current physical location, business mailing address, business telephone and fax numbers, and business e-mail address for each office.

(3) *Authorized agent.* For observer providers with ownership based outside the United States, identify an authorized agent and provide contact information for that agent including mailing address and phone and fax numbers where the agent can be contacted for official correspondence. An authorized agent means a person appointed and maintained within the United States who is authorized to receive and respond to any legal process issued in the United States to an owner or employee of an observer provider. Any diplomatic official accepting such an appointment as designated agent waives diplomatic or other immunity in connection with the process.

(C) A statement signed under penalty of perjury from each owner, or owners, board members, and officers if a corporation, that they are free from a conflict of interest as described under paragraph (i)(3) of this section.

(D) A statement signed under penalty of perjury from each owner, or owners, board members, and officers if a corporation, describing any criminal convictions, Federal contracts they have had and the performance rating they received on the contract, and previous decertification action while working as an observer or observer provider.

(E) A description of any prior experience the applicant may have in placing individuals in remote field and/or marine work environments. This includes, but is not limited to, recruiting, hiring, deployment, and personnel administration.

(F) A description of the applicant's ability to carry out the responsibilities and duties of an observer provider as set out under paragraph (i)(2) of this section, and the arrangements to be used.

(iii) *Application evaluation.* (A) The Regional Administrator will establish an observer provider permit application review board to review and evaluate an application submitted under paragraph (i)(1) of this section. The board will be comprised of NMFS staff. Issuance of a permit will be based on the completeness of the applicant's application, as well as the following evaluation criteria for each owner, or owners, board members, and officers if a corporation:

(1) Absence of conflict of interest as defined under paragraph (i)(3) of this section;

(2) Absence of criminal convictions related to:

(i) Embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements or receiving stolen property, or

(ii) The commission of any other crimes of dishonesty, as defined by Alaska State law or Federal law that would seriously and directly affect the fitness of an applicant in providing observer services under this section;

(3) Satisfactory performance ratings on any Federal contracts held by the applicant; and

(4) Absence of any history of decertification as either an observer or observer provider;

(B) The evaluation by the review board will provide a basis for the board's initial agency determination (IAD) on whether the application is complete and all evaluation criteria are met.

(iv) *Evidentiary period.* The observer provider permitting review board will specify, by letter via certified return-receipt mail, a 60-day evidentiary period during which a candidate may provide additional information or evidence to support the application, if the application is found to be deficient.

(v) *Agency determination on an application—(A) Approval of an application.* Upon determination by the review board that the application is complete and all evaluation criteria are met, an IAD is made to approve the application and the observer provider permit application review board will issue an observer provider permit to the applicant.

(B) *Denial of an application.* An application will be denied if the observer provider permit application review board determines that the information provided in the

application was not complete or all the evaluation criteria were not met. The observer provider permit application review board will prepare and send a written IAD to the applicant upon evaluation of a completed application. The IAD will identify any deficiencies in the application or any information submitted in support of the application. An applicant who receives an IAD that denies his or her application may appeal under §679.43. An applicant who appeals the IAD will not be issued an interim observer provider permit and will not receive a permit unless the final resolution of that appeal is in favor of the applicant.

(vi) *Transferability*. An observer provider permit is not transferable. An observer provider that experiences a change in ownership that involves a new person must submit a new permit application and cannot continue to operate until a new permit is issued under this paragraph.

(vii) *Expiration of Permit*. (A) The observer provider permit will expire after a period of 12 continuous months during which no observers are deployed by the provider under this section to the North Pacific groundfish industry.

(B) The Regional Administrator will provide a written determination to an observer provider if NMFS deployment records indicate that the permit has expired. An observer provider who receives a written IAD of permit expiration may appeal under §679.43. A permit holder who appeals the IAD will be issued an extension of the expiration date of the permit until after the final resolution of that appeal.

(viii) *Sanctions*. Procedures governing sanctions of permits are found at subpart D of [15 CFR part 904](#).

(2) *Responsibilities of observer providers*. Observer providers must:

(i) *Provide qualified candidates to serve as observers*. (A) To be qualified, a candidate must have:

(1) A Bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited college or university with a major in one of the natural sciences;

(2) Successfully completed a minimum of 30 semester hours or equivalent in applicable biological sciences with extensive use of dichotomous keys in at least one course;

(3) Successfully completed at least one undergraduate course each in math and statistics with a minimum of 5 semester hours total for both; and

(4) Computer skills that enable the candidate to work competently with standard database software and computer hardware.

(B) Prior to hiring an observer candidate, the observer provider must:

(1) Provide to the candidate copies of NMFS-provided pamphlets and other literature describing observer duties; and

(2) Provide to the candidate a copy of the Observer Program's drug and alcohol policy. Observer job pamphlets and the drug and alcohol policy are available from the Observer Program Office at the address listed in paragraph (e)(3) of this section or at the Observer Program's web site at <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/observers/default.htm>.

(C) For each observer employed by an observer provider, either a written contract or a written contract addendum must exist that is signed by the observer and observer provider prior to the observer's deployment and that contains the following provisions for continued employment:

(1) That the observer comply with the Observer Program's drug and alcohol policy;

(2) That all the observer's in-season catch messages between the observer and NMFS are delivered to the Observer Program Office at least every 7 days, unless otherwise specified by the Observer Program;

(3) That the observer completes in-person mid-deployment data reviews, unless:

(i) The observer is specifically exempted by the Observer Program, or

(ii) The observer does not at any time during their deployment travel through a location where Observer Program staff are available for an in-person data review and the observer completes a phone or fax mid-deployment data review as described in the observer manual; and

(4) The observer inform the observer provider prior to the time of embarkation if he or she is experiencing any new mental illness or physical ailments or injury since submission of the physician's statement as required in paragraph (i)(2)(ix)(C) of this section that would prevent him or her from performing their assigned duties;

(ii) *Ensure that observers complete duties in a timely manner:* An observer provider must ensure that observers employed by that observer provider do the following in a complete and timely manner:

(A) Once an observer is scheduled for a final deployment debriefing under paragraph (i)(2)(ix)(E) of this section, submit to NMFS all data, reports required by the Observer Manual, and biological samples from the observer's deployment by the completion of the electronic vessel and/or processor survey(s);

(B) Complete NMFS electronic vessel and/or processor surveys before performing other jobs or duties which are not part of NMFS groundfish observer requirements;

(C) Report for his or her scheduled debriefing and complete all debriefing responsibilities; and

(D) Return all sampling and safety gear to the Observer Program Office.

(iii) *Observer vessel and processor assignment.* An observer provider must assign to vessels or shoreside or floating processors only observers:

(A) With valid North Pacific groundfish observer certifications and endorsements to provide observer services;

(B) Who have not informed the provider prior to the time of embarkation that he or she is experiencing a mental illness or a physical ailment or injury developed since submission of the physician's statement, as required in paragraph (i)(2)(ix)(C) of this section that would prevent him or her from performing his or her assigned duties; and

(C) Who have successfully completed all NMFS required training and briefing before deployment.

(iv) *Response to industry requests for observers.* An observer provider must provide an observer for deployment as requested by vessels and processors to fulfill vessel and processor requirements for observer coverage under sections (c) and (d) of this section. An alternate observer must be supplied in each case where injury or illness prevents the observer from performing his or her duties or where the observer resigns prior to completion of his or her duties.

(v) *Observer salaries and benefits.* An observer provider must provide to its observer employees salaries and any other benefits and personnel services in accordance with the terms of each observer's contract.

(vi) *Observer deployment logistics.* (A) An observer provider must provide to each of its observers under contract:

(1) All necessary transportation, including arrangements and logistics, of observers to the initial location of deployment, to all subsequent vessel and shoreside or stationary floating processor assignments during that deployment, and to the debriefing location when a deployment ends for any reason; and

(2) Lodging, per diem, and any other necessary services to observers aboard fishing vessels or at the site of shoreside or stationary floating processing facilities.

(B) Except as provided in paragraphs (i)(2)(vi)(C) and (i)(2)(vi)(D) of this section, each observer deployed to a shoreside processing facility, and each observer between vessel or shoreside assignments while still under contract with a certified observer provider company, shall be provided with accommodations at a licensed hotel, motel, bed and breakfast, or with private land-based accommodations for the duration of each shoreside

assignment or period between vessel or shoreside assignments. Such accommodations must include an individually assigned bed for each observer for the duration of that observer's shoreside assignment or period between vessel or shoreside assignments, such that no other person is assigned to that bed during the same period of the observer's shoreside assignment or period between vessel or shoreside assignments. Additionally, no more than four beds may be in any individual room housing observers at accommodations meeting the requirements of this section.

(C) Observers may be housed on vessels they will be, or currently are, assigned to for a period not to exceed 24 hours:

(1) Prior to their vessel's initial departure from port;

(2) Following the completion of an offload where the observer has duties and is scheduled to disembark; or

(3) Following the completion of an offload where the observer has duties and is scheduled to disembark.

(D) During all periods an observer is housed on a vessel, the observer provider must ensure that the vessel skipper or at least one crew member is aboard and that such housing is logistically practical for the observer and the vessel personal. Alternative housing accommodations must be arranged if the conditions in this paragraph (D) are not met or if the observer wants to get off the vessel as soon as it docks or if the vessel operator requests the observer to leave upon docking.

(E) Each observer deployed to shoreside processing facilities shall be provided with individually assigned communication equipment in working order, such as a cell phone or pager for notification of upcoming deliveries or other necessary communication. Each observer assigned to a shoreside processing facility located more than 1 mile from the observer's local accommodations shall be provided with motorized transportation that will ensure the observer's arrival at the processing facility in a timely manner such that the observer can complete his or her assigned duties. Unless alternative arrangements are approved by the Observer Program Office:

(vii) *Observer deployment limitations.* Unless alternative arrangements are approved by the Observer Program Office, an observer provider must not:

(A) Deploy an observer on the same vessel or at the same shoreside or stationary floating processor for more than 90 days in a 12-month period;

(B) Deploy an observer for more than 90 days in a single deployment;

(C) Include in a single deployment of an observer assignments to more than four vessels, including groundfish and all other vessels, and/or shoreside processors; or

(D) Move an observer from a vessel or floating or shoreside processor before that observer has completed his or her sampling or data transmission duties.

(viii) *Vessel safety decal verification.* An observer provider must verify that a vessel has a valid USCG safety decal as required under paragraph (g)(1)(ii)(B) of this section before an observer may get underway aboard the vessel. One of the following acceptable means of verification must be used to verify the decal validity:

(A) an employee of the observer provider, including the observer, visually inspects the decal aboard the vessel and confirms that the decal is valid according to the decal date of issuance; or

(B) the observer provider receives a hard copy of the USCG documentation of the decal issuance from the vessel owner or operator.

(ix) *Communications with observers.* An observer provider must have an employee responsible for observer activities on call 24 hours a day to handle emergencies involving observers or problems concerning observer logistics, whenever observers are at sea, stationed at shoreside or floating processor facilities, in transit, or in port awaiting vessel or processor reassignment.

(x) *Communications with the Observer Program Office.* An observer provider must provide all of the following information to the Observer Program Office by electronic transmission (e-mail), fax, or other method specified by NMFS.

(A) *Observer training and briefing.* Observer training and briefing registration materials. This information must be submitted to the Observer Program Office at least 5 business days prior to the beginning of a scheduled observer certification training or briefing session. Registration materials consist of the following:

(1) Observer training registration, including:

(i) Date of requested training;

(ii) A list of observer candidates. The list must include each candidate's full name (i.e., first, middle and last names), date of birth, and sex;

(iii) A copy of each candidate's academic transcripts and resume; and

(iv) A statement signed by the candidate under penalty of perjury which discloses the candidate's criminal convictions.

(2) Observer briefing registration, including:

(i) Date and type of requested briefing session and briefing location; and

(ii) List of observers to attend the briefing session. Each observer's full name (first, middle, and last names) must be included.

(B) *Projected observer assignments.* Prior to the observer or observer candidate's completion of the training or briefing session, the observer provider must submit to the Observer Program Office a statement of projected observer assignments that include the observer's name; vessel, shoreside processor, or stationary floating processor assignment, gear type, and vessel/processor code; port of embarkation; target species; and area of fishing.

(C) *Physical examination.* A signed and dated statement from a licensed physician that he or she has physically examined an observer or observer candidate. The statement must confirm that, based on that physical examination, the observer or observer candidate does not have any health problems or conditions that would jeopardize that individual's safety or the safety of others while deployed, or prevent the observer or observer candidate from performing his or her duties satisfactorily. The statement must declare that, prior to the examination, the physician was made aware of the duties of the observer and the dangerous, remote, and rigorous nature of the work by reading the NMFS-prepared pamphlet, provided to the candidate by the observer provider as specified in paragraph (i)(2)(i)(B)(1) of this section. The physician's statement must be submitted to the Observer Program Office prior to certification of an observer. The physical exam must have occurred during the 12 months prior to the observer's or observer candidate's deployment. The physician's statement will expire 12 months after the physical exam occurred. A new physical exam must be performed, and accompanying statement submitted, prior to any deployment occurring after the expiration of the statement.

(D) *Observer deployment/logistics reports.* A deployment/logistics report must be submitted by Wednesday, 4:30 pm, Pacific local time, of each week with regard to each observer deployed by the observer provider during that week. The deployment/logistics report must include the observer's name, cruise number, current vessel, shoreside processor, or stationary floating processor assignment and vessel/processor code, embarkation date, and estimated or actual disembarkation dates. If the observer is currently not assigned to a vessel, shoreside processor, or stationary floating processor, the observer's location must be included in the report.

(E) *Observer debriefing registration.* The observer provider must contact the Observer Program within 5 business days after the completion of an observer's deployment to schedule a date, time and location for debriefing. Observer debriefing registration information must be provided at the time of debriefing scheduling and must include the observer's name, cruise number, vessel, or shoreside or stationary floating processor assignment name(s) and code(s), and requested debriefing date.

(F) *Certificates of Insurance.* Copies of "certificates of insurance", that name the NMFS Observer Program leader as the "certificate holder", shall be submitted to the Observer Program Office by February 1 of each year. The certificates of insurance shall verify the

following coverage provisions and state that the insurance company will notify the certificate holder if insurance coverage is changed or canceled.

(1) Maritime Liability to cover “seamen's” claims under the Merchant Marine Act (Jones Act) and General Maritime Law (\$1 million minimum).

(2) Coverage under the U.S. Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act (\$1 million minimum).

(3) States Worker's Compensation as required.

(4) Commercial General Liability.

(G) *Copies of observer provider contracts with entities requiring observer services and with observers.* Observer providers must submit to the Observer Program Office a completed and unaltered copy of each type of signed and valid contract (including all attachments, appendices, addendums, and exhibits incorporated into the contract) between the observer provider and those entities requiring observer services under paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section. Observer providers must also submit to the Observer Program Office upon request, a completed and unaltered copy of the current or most recent signed and valid contract (including all attachments, appendices, addendums, and exhibits incorporated into the contract and any agreements or policies with regard to observer compensation or salary levels) between the observer provider and the particular entity identified by the Observer Program or with specific observers. Said copies must be submitted to the Observer Program Office via fax or mail within 5 business days of the request for the contract at the address or fax number listed in paragraph (e)(3) of this section. Signed and valid contracts include the contracts an observer provider has with:

(1) Vessels required to have observer coverage as specified at paragraphs (c)(1)(i) and (c)(1)(iv) of this section;

(2) Vessels required to have observer coverage as specified at paragraphs (c)(1)(ii), (c)(1)(v), and (c)(1)(vii) of this section;

(3) Shoreside processors or stationary floating processors required to have observer coverage as specified at paragraph (d)(1) of this section;

(4) Shoreside processors or stationary floating processors required to have observer coverage as specified at paragraph (d)(2) of this section; and

(5) Observers.

(H) *Change in observer provider management and contact information.* Except for changes in ownership addressed under paragraph (i)(1)(vi) of this section, an observer provider must submit notification of any other change to the information submitted on the provider's permit application under paragraphs (i)(1)(ii)(A) through (D) of this section.

Within 30 days of the effective date of such change, this information must be submitted by fax or mail to the Observer Program Office at the address listed in paragraph (e)(3) of this section. Any information submitted under (i)(1)(ii)(C) or (i)(1)(ii)(D) of this section will be subject to NMFS review and determinations under (i)(1)(iii) through (viii) of this section.

(I) Reports of the following must be submitted in writing to the Observer Program Office by the observer provider via fax or email address designated by the Observer Program Office within 24 hours after the observer provider becomes aware of the information:

(1) Any information regarding possible observer harassment;

(2) Any information regarding any action prohibited under §679.7(g) or §600.725(o), (t) and (u);

(3) Any concerns about vessel safety or marine casualty under 46 CFR 4.05–1 (a)(1) through (7), or processor safety;

(4) Any observer illness or injury that prevents the observer from completing any of his or her duties described in the observer manual; and

(5) Any information, allegations or reports regarding observer conflict of interest or breach of the standards of behavior described at (h)(2)(i) or (h)(2)(ii) of this section.

(xi) *Replacement of lost or damaged gear.* An observer provider must replace all lost or damaged gear and equipment issued by NMFS to an observer under contract to that provider. All replacements must be in accordance with requirements and procedures identified in writing by the Observer Program Office.

(xii) *Maintain confidentiality of information.* An observer provider must ensure that all records on individual observer performance received from NMFS under the routine use provision of the Privacy Act remain confidential and are not further released to anyone outside the employ of the observer provider company to whom the observer was contracted except with written permission of the observer.

(3) *Limitations on conflict of interest.* Observer providers:

(i) Must not have a direct financial interest, other than the provision of observer services, in a North Pacific fishery managed under an FMP for the waters off the coast of Alaska, including, but not limited to,

(A) Any ownership, mortgage holder, or other secured interest in a vessel, shoreside or floating stationary processor facility involved in the catching, taking, harvesting or processing of fish,

(B) Any business involved with selling supplies or services to any vessel, shoreside or floating stationary processing facility participating in a fishery managed pursuant to an FMP in the waters off the coast of Alaska, or

(C) Any business involved with purchasing raw or processed products from any vessel, shoreside or floating stationary processing facilities participating in a fishery managed pursuant to an FMP in the waters off the coast of Alaska.

(ii) Must assign observers without regard to any preference by representatives of vessels, shoreside processors, or floating stationary processors other than when an observer will be deployed.

(iii) Must not solicit or accept, directly or indirectly, any gratuity, gift, favor, entertainment, loan, or anything of monetary value from anyone who conducts fishing or fish processing activities that are regulated by NMFS, or who has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the official duties of observer providers.

(j) *Observer certification and responsibilities*—(1) *Observer Certification*—(i) *Applicability*. Observer certification authorizes an individual to fulfill duties as specified in writing by the NMFS Observer Program Office while under the employ of a NMFS-permitted observer provider and according to certification endorsements as designated under paragraph (j)(1)(v) of this section.

(ii) *Observer certification official*. The Regional Administrator will designate a NMFS observer certification official who will make decisions for the Observer Program Office on whether to issue or deny observer certification.

(iii) *Certification requirements*. (A) Existing Observers. Observers who completed sampling activities between June 30, 2001, and December 31, 2002, and have not had their certification revoked during or after that time period, will be considered to have met certification requirements under this section. These observers will be issued a new certification prior to their first deployment after December 31, 2002, unless NMFS determines that the observer has not been deployed, or has not performed sampling duties, or has not been debriefed successfully in the preceding 18 months.

(B) *New Observers*. NMFS will certify individuals who:

(1) Are employed by a permitted observer provider company at the time of the issuance of the certification;

(2) Have provided, through their observer provider:

(i) Information identified by NMFS at paragraphs (i)(2)(x)(A)(1)(iii) and (iv) of this section and in writing from the Observer Program; and

(ii) Information identified by NMFS at paragraph (i)(2)(x)(C) of this section regarding the observer candidate's health and physical fitness for the job;

(3) Meet all education and health standards as specified in paragraphs (i)(2)(i)(A) and (i)(2)(x)(C) of this section, respectively;

(4) Have successfully completed a NMFS-approved training as prescribed by the Observer Program.

(i) Successful completion of training by an observer applicant consists of meeting all attendance and conduct standards issued in writing at the start of training; meeting all performance standards issued in writing at the start of training for assignments, tests, and other evaluation tools; and completing all other training requirements established by the Observer Program.

(ii) If a candidate fails training, he or she will be verbally notified of the unsatisfactory status of his or her training on or before the last day of training. Within 10 business days of the verbal notification, the observer candidate will be notified in writing. The written notification will indicate why the candidate failed the training; whether the candidate can retake the training. If a determination is made that the candidate may not pursue further training, notification will be in the form of an IAD denying certification, as specified under paragraph (j)(1)(iv)(A) of this section.

(5) Have not been decertified under paragraph (j)(3) of this section.

(iv) *Agency determinations on observer certification—(A) Denial of a certification.* The NMFS observer certification official will issue a written IAD denying observer certification when the observer certification official determines that a candidate has unresolvable deficiencies in meeting the requirements for certification as specified in paragraph (j)(1)(iii) of this section. The IAD will identify the reasons certification was denied and what requirements were deficient.

(B) *Appeals.* A candidate who receives an IAD that denies his or her certification may appeal pursuant to §679.43 of this part. A candidate who appeals the IAD will not be issued an interim observer certification and will not receive a certification unless the final resolution of that appeal is in the candidate's favor.

(C) *Issuance of an observer certification.* An observer certification will be issued upon determination by the observer certification official that the candidate has successfully met all requirements for certification as specified in paragraph (j)(1)(iii) of this section.

(v) *Endorsements.* The following endorsements must be obtained, in addition to observer certification, in order for an observer to deploy as indicated.

(A) *Certification training endorsement.* A certification training endorsement signifies the successful completion of the training course required to obtain this endorsement. A

certification training endorsement is required for any deployment as an observer in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands groundfish fisheries and the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries and will be granted with the initial issuance of an observer certification. This endorsement expires when the observer has not been deployed and performed sampling duties as required by the Observer Program Office for a period of time, specified by the Observer Program, after his or her most recent debriefing. Renewal can be obtained by the observer successfully completing certification training once more. Observers will be notified of any changes to the endorsement expiration period prior to that change taking place. Observers who have been issued certificates under paragraph (j)(1)(iii)(A) of this section will be issued a new certification training endorsement upon issuance of their observer certification prior to their first deployment after December 31, 2002.

(B) *Annual general endorsements.* Each observer must obtain an annual general endorsement to their certification prior to his or her first deployment within any calendar year subsequent to a year in which a certification training endorsement is obtained. To obtain an annual general endorsement, an observer must successfully complete the annual briefing, as specified by the Observer Program. All briefing attendance, performance, and conduct standards required by the Observer Program must be met.

(C) *Deployment endorsements.* Each observer who has completed an initial deployment after certification or annual briefing must receive a deployment endorsement to their certification prior to any subsequent deployments for the remainder of that year. An observer may obtain a deployment endorsement by successfully completing all pre-cruise briefing requirements. The type of briefing the observer must attend and successfully complete will be specified in writing by the Observer Program during the observer's most recent debriefing.

(D) *Level 2 endorsements.* A certified observer may obtain a Level 2 endorsement to their certification. A Level 2 endorsement is required for purposes of performing observer duties aboard vessels or stationary floating processors or at shoreside processors participating in the CDQ or AFA fisheries as prescribed in paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section. A Level 2 endorsement to an observer's certification may be obtained by meeting the following requirements:

(1) Be a prior observer in the groundfish fisheries off Alaska who has completed at least 60 days of observer data collection;

(2) Receive an evaluation by NMFS for his or her most recent deployment that indicated that the observer's performance met Observer Program expectations for that deployment;

(3) Successfully complete a NMFS-approved Level 2 observer training as prescribed by the Observer Program; and

(4) Comply with all of the other requirements of this section.

(E) An observer who has achieved a Level 2 endorsement to their observer certification as specified in paragraph (j)(1)(v) (D) of this section may additionally receive a Level 2 “lead” observer endorsement by meeting the following requirements:

(1) A Level 2 “lead” observer on a catcher/processor using trawl gear or a mothership must have completed two observer cruises (contracts) and sampled at least 100 hauls on a catcher/processor using trawl gear or on a mothership.

(2) A Level 2 “lead” observer on a catcher vessel using trawl gear must have completed two observer cruises (contracts) and sampled at least 50 hauls on a catcher vessel using trawl gear.

(3) A Level 2 “lead” observer on a vessel using nontrawl gear must have completed two observer cruises (contracts) of at least 10 days each and sampled at least 60 sets on a vessel using nontrawl gear.

(vi) *Expiration of a certification.* The observer certification will expire on December 31, 2007.

(2) *Standards of observer conduct—(i) Limitations on conflict of interest.* (A) Observers:

(1) Must not have a direct financial interest, other than the provision of observer services, in a North Pacific fishery managed pursuant to an FMP for the waters off the coast of Alaska, including, but not limited to,

(i) Any ownership, mortgage holder, or other secured interest in a vessel, shoreside or floating stationary processor facility involved in the catching, taking, harvesting or processing of fish,

(ii) Any business involved with selling supplies or services to any vessel, shoreside or floating stationary processing facility participating in a fishery managed pursuant to an FMP in the waters off the coast of Alaska, or

(iii) Any business involved with purchasing raw or processed products from any vessel, shoreside or floating stationary processing facilities participating in a fishery managed pursuant to an FMP in the waters off the coast of Alaska.

(2) May not solicit or accept, directly or indirectly, any gratuity, gift, favor, entertainment, loan, or anything of monetary value from anyone who either conducts activities that are regulated by NMFS or has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the observers' official duties.

(3) May not serve as observers on any vessel or at any shoreside or floating stationary processing facility owned or operated by a person who previously employed the observers.

(4) May not solicit or accept employment as a crew member or an employee of a vessel, shoreside processor, or stationary floating processor in a North Pacific fishery while employed by an observer provider.

(B) Provisions for remuneration of observers under this section do not constitute a conflict of interest.

(ii) *Standards of Behavior.* Observers must avoid any behavior that could adversely affect the confidence of the public in the integrity of the Observer Program or of the government, including but not limited to the following:

(A) Observers must perform their assigned duties as described in the Observer Manual or other written instructions from the Observer Program Office.

(B) Observers must accurately record their sampling data, write complete reports, and report accurately any observations of suspected violations of regulations relevant to conservation of marine resources or their environment.

(C) Observers must not disclose collected data and observations made on board the vessel or in the processing facility to any person except the owner or operator of the observed vessel or processing facility, an authorized officer, or NMFS.

(D) Observers must refrain from engaging in any illegal actions or any other activities that would reflect negatively on their image as professional scientists, on other observers, or on the Observer Program as a whole. This includes, but is not limited to:

(1) Violating the drug and alcohol policy established by and available from the Observer Program;

(2) Engaging in the use, possession, or distribution of illegal drugs; or

(3) Engaging in physical sexual contact with personnel of the vessel or processing facility to which the observer is assigned, or with any vessel or processing plant personnel who may be substantially affected by the performance or non-performance of the observer's official duties.

(3) *Suspension and Decertification*—(i) *Suspension and decertification review official.* The Regional Administrator will establish an observer suspension and decertification review official(s), who will have the authority to review observer certifications and issue initial administrative determinations of observer certification suspension and/or decertification.

(ii) *Causes for suspension or decertification.* The suspension/decertification official may initiate suspension or decertification proceedings against an observer:

(A) When it is alleged that the observer has committed any acts or omissions of any of the following:

(1) Failed to satisfactorily perform the duties of observers as specified in writing by the NMFS Observer Program; or

(2) Failed to abide by the standards of conduct for observers as prescribed under paragraph (j)(2) of this section;

(B) Upon conviction of a crime or upon entry of a civil judgement for:

(1) Commission of fraud or other violation in connection with obtaining or attempting to obtain certification, or in performing the duties as specified in writing by the NMFS Observer Program;

(2) Commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property;

(3) Commission of any other offense indicating a lack of integrity or honesty that seriously and directly affects the fitness of observers.

(iii) *Issuance of initial administrative determination.* Upon determination that suspension or decertification is warranted under paragraph (j)(3)(ii) of this section, the suspension/decertification official will issue a written IAD to the observer via certified mail at the observer's most current address provided to NMFS under §679.43(e). The IAD will identify whether a certification is suspended or revoked and will identify the specific reasons for the action taken. If the IAD issues a suspension for an observer certification, the terms of the suspension will be specified. Suspension or decertification can be made effective upon issuance of the IAD in cases of willfulness or those cases in which public health, interest, or safety require such actions. In such cases, the suspension/decertification official will state in the IAD that suspension or decertification is effective at time of issuance and the reason for the action.

(iv) *Appeals.* A certified observer who receives an IAD that suspends or revokes his or her observer certification may appeal pursuant to §679.43.

(k) *Release of observer data to the public—(1) Summary of weekly data.* The following information collected by observers for each catcher processor and catcher vessel during any weekly reporting period may be made available to the public:

(i) Vessel name and Federal permit number.

(ii) Number of chinook salmon and “other salmon” observed.

(iii) The ratio of total round weight of halibut or Pacific herring to the total round weight of groundfish in sampled catch.

(iv) The ratio of number of king crab or *C. bairdi* Tanner crab to the total round weight of groundfish in sampled hauls.

(v) The number of observed trawl hauls or fixed gear sets.

(vi) The number of trawl hauls that were basket sampled.

(vii) The total weight of basket samples taken from sampled trawl hauls.

(2) *Haul-specific data.* (i) The information listed in paragraphs (k)(2)(i) (A) through (M) of this section and collected by observers from observed hauls on board vessels using trawl gear to participate in a directed fishery for groundfish other than rockfish, Greenland turbot, or Atka mackerel may be made available to the public:

(A) Date.

(B) Time of day gear is deployed.

(C) Latitude and longitude at beginning of haul.

(D) Bottom depth.

(E) Fishing depth of trawl.

(F) The ratio of the number of chinook salmon to the total round weight of groundfish.

(G) The ratio of the number of other salmon to the total round weight of groundfish.

(H) The ratio of total round weight of halibut to the total round weight of groundfish.

(I) The ratio of total round weight of herring to the total round weight of groundfish.

(J) The ratio of the number of king crab to the total round weight of groundfish.

(K) The ratio of the number of *C. bairdi* Tanner crab to the total round weight of groundfish.

(L) Sea surface temperature (where available).

(M) Sea temperature at fishing depth of trawl (where available).

(ii) The identity of the vessels from which the data in paragraph (k)(2)(i) of this section are collected will not be released.

(3) *Competitive harm.* In exceptional circumstances, the owners and operators of vessels may provide to the Regional Administrator written justification at the time observer data

are submitted, or within a reasonable time thereafter, that disclosure of the information listed in paragraphs (k) (1) and (2) of this section could reasonably be expected to cause substantial competitive harm. The determination whether to disclose the information will be made pursuant to [15 CFR 4.7](#).

[61 FR 56431, Nov. 1, 1996, as amended at 61 FR 63761, Dec. 2, 1996; 61 FR 65989, Dec. 16, 1996; 62 FR 60182, Nov. 7, 1997; 62 FR 63891, Dec. 3, 1997; 62 FR 67760, Dec. 30, 1997; 63 FR 11168, Mar. 6, 1998; 63 FR 30409, June 4, 1998; 63 FR 69025, Dec. 15, 1998; 64 FR 20215, Apr. 26, 1999; 65 FR 69485, Nov. 17, 2000; 65 FR 80383, Dec. 21, 2000; 67 FR 4148, Jan. 28, 2002; [67 FR 72611](#), Dec. 6, 2002; 68 FR 719, Jan. 7, 2003]

Effective Date Note:

At 67 FR 79733, Dec. 30, 2002, §679.50 was amended by revising the section heading and paragraph (c)(4)(i), removing paragraph (c)(6), and adding paragraphs (c)(5) and (d)(5), effective Jan. 29, 2003, through Dec. 31, 2007.

SEC. 402. INFORMATION COLLECTION⁷ 16 U.S.C. 1881a

(b) CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION.--

(1) Any information submitted to the Secretary by any person in compliance with any requirement under this Act shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed, except--

(A) to Federal employees and Council employees who are responsible for fishery management plan development and monitoring;

(B) to State or Marine Fisheries Commission employees pursuant to an agreement with the Secretary that prevents public disclosure of the identity or business of any person;

(C) when required by court order;

(D) when such information is used to verify catch under an individual fishing quota program;

(E) that observer information collected in fisheries under the authority of the North Pacific Council may be released to the public as specified in a fishery management plan or regulation for weekly summary bycatch information identified by vessel, and for haul-specific bycatch information without vessel identification; or

(F) when the Secretary has obtained written authorization from the person submitting such information to release such information to persons for reasons not otherwise provided for in this subsection, and such release does not violate other requirements of this Act.

(2) The Secretary shall, by regulation, prescribe such procedures as may be necessary to preserve the confidentiality of information submitted in compliance with any requirement or regulation under this Act, except that the Secretary may release or make public any such information in any aggregate or summary form which does not directly or indirectly disclose the identity or business of any person who submits such information. Nothing in this subsection shall be interpreted or construed to prevent the use for conservation and management purposes by the Secretary, or with the approval of the Secretary, the Council, of any information submitted in compliance with any requirement or regulation under this Act or the use, release, or publication of bycatch information pursuant to paragraph (1)(E).

104-297

SEC. 403. OBSERVERS⁷ 16 U.S.C. 1881b

(a) GUIDELINES FOR CARRYING OBSERVERS.--Within one year after the date of enactment of the Sustainable Fisheries Act, the Secretary shall promulgate regulations, after notice and opportunity for public comment, for fishing vessels that carry observers. The regulations shall include guidelines for determining--

(1) when a vessel is not required to carry an observer on board because the facilities of such vessel for the quartering of an observer, or for carrying out observer functions, are so inadequate or unsafe that the health or safety of the observer or the safe operation of the vessel would be jeopardized; and

(2) actions which vessel owners or operators may reasonably be required to take to render such facilities adequate and safe.

(b) TRAINING.--The Secretary, in cooperation with the appropriate States and the National Sea Grant College Program, shall--

(1) establish programs to ensure that each observer receives adequate training in collecting and analyzing the information necessary for the conservation and management purposes of the fishery to which such observer is assigned;

(2) require that an observer demonstrate competence in fisheries science and statistical analysis at a level sufficient to enable such person to fulfill the responsibilities of the position;

(3) ensure that an observer has received adequate training in basic vessel safety; and

(4) make use of university and any appropriate private nonprofit organization training facilities and resources, where possible, in carrying out this subsection.

(c) OBSERVER STATUS.--An observer on a vessel and under contract to carry out responsibilities under this Act or the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) shall be deemed to be a Federal employee for the purpose of compensation under the Federal Employee Compensation Act (5 U.S.C. 8101 et seq.).

Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20230; telephone: (202) 482-4793 or (202) 482-2209, respectively.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background Information

On September 28, 2005, the U.S. Department of Commerce (“the Department”) published a notice of initiation of the administrative reviews of the countervailing duty orders on corrosion-resistant carbon steel flat products from France and the Republic of Korea covering the period of review January 1, 2004, through December 31, 2004. See *Initiation of Antidumping and Countervailing Duty Administrative Reviews and Requests for Revocation in Part*, 70 FR 56631 (September 28, 2005). The preliminary results are currently due no later than May 3, 2006.

Extension of Time Limit for Preliminary Results

Section 751(a)(3)(A) of the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended (“the Act”), requires the Department to make a preliminary determination within 245 days after the last day of the anniversary month of an order or finding for which a review is requested. Section 751(a)(3)(A) of the Act further states that if it is not practicable to complete the review within the time period specified, the administering authority may extend the 245-day period to issue its preliminary results by up to 120 days.

We determine that completion of the preliminary results of these reviews within the 245-day period is not practicable for the following reason. These reviews are extraordinarily complicated because there are 17 programs being examined in the review covering France and 16 programs being examined in the review covering the Republic of Korea. Given the number of programs, which need to be thoroughly analyzed by the Department, and in accordance with section 751(a)(3)(A) of the Act, we are extending the time period for issuing the preliminary results of reviews by 120 days. Therefore, the preliminary results are now due no later than August 31, 2006. The final results continue to be due 120 days after publication of the preliminary results.

This notice is issued and published in accordance with sections 751(a)(3)(A) and 777(i)(1) of the Act.

Dated: April 11, 2006.

Stephen J. Claeys,

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Import Administration.

[FR Doc. E6-5692 Filed 4-14-06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-DS-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program Vessel/Plant Operator's Comment Form

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before June 16, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Diana Hynek, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6625, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at dHynek@doc.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Jerald D. Berger, 206-526-4193 or jerry.berger@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP) is managed by the Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC). NPGOP observers serve aboard commercial fishing vessels in Alaskan waters and at processing plants in Alaska as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

NMFS AFSC requests information from vessel or plant operators who have had NPGOP observers on their vessels or at their plants. This information would be collected on a voluntary basis as a qualitative survey to provide NMFS with direct feedback on observer

performance. This information, upon receipt, will ensure higher data quality, provide feedback on observer performance, and offer a direct line of communication from vessel/plant operators to the NPGOP management.

II. Method of Collection

Paper survey to be submitted to the NPGOP at the AFSC via U.S. mail or facsimile transmission of paper forms. The survey will also be available on the Internet.

III. Data

OMB Number: None.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Regular submission.

Affected Public: Not-for-profit institutions; and business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 300.

Estimated Time Per Response: 15 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 75 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$30.

IV. Request for Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden (including hours and cost) of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval of this information collection; they also will become a matter of public record.

Dated: April 11, 2006.

Gwellnar Banks,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

[FR Doc. E6-5627 Filed 4-14-06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P