



November 3, 2010

Northeast Fisheries At-sea Monitor Program Policies

Monitor Performance Monitoring, Review, Probation and Decertification

Monitoring Data Quality:

The Northeast Fisheries At-sea Monitoring Program (ASM) holds monthly Data Quality (DQ) meetings to review all aspects of the programs data quality. One of the key elements of these meetings is for the Data Quality Lead, Data Editors and various Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB) staff to discuss performance of individual monitors. Editors summarize monitor data quality, including submission errors, communications, timeliness, and following sampling guidelines. Their feedback is presented to the Data Quality Lead for review and discussion.

Pre-Probation:

If the Data Quality Lead finds that there are significant issues with the performance and/or data submitted by a monitor, s/he will provide to the Area Leads (Northeast, Mid-Atlantic and Groundfish) and the Branch Chief a written record of the issues and recommend that the individual be monitored for pre-probation. Reasons for pre-probation could include: poor data collection, not understanding nor adhering to ASM protocols, and not contacting their editor in a timely manner. The Data Quality Lead will refer their findings in writing (e-mail) to the Branch Chief who will then submit the memo in writing (e-mail or letter) to the ASM Contract COTR to ensure that the Program Manager, Area Coordinator(s), and the monitor are notified of the issues and concerns. Additionally, the Data Quality Lead will be the first to inform the monitor, by phone or in person, that they have been placed on pre-probation and explain their pre-probation plan to them. At this time, the monitor will discontinue trips until they are notified by the Data Quality Lead. Additionally, the monitor will be required to attend an in-person debriefing at Falmouth Technology Park or an alternative agreed upon location. The monitor may be required to take two or more pre-probationary trips. After each trip, the monitor will have to wait to continue to take anymore trips until they have been debriefed by their editor. The Data Quality lead will send an e-mail to the Program Manager and the Area Coordinator when the monitor is approved to continue. If there is no discernable improvement in the monitor's performance within the first two trips after they have been notified of their pre-probationary status, probation will be recommended. The monitor's pre-probationary trips will not be coded as training trips in the database. The two pre-probationary trips should take place within 2 months after the monitor has been informed of their pre-probationary status. Situations that cannot meet these criteria can be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Probation:

If probation is recommended, the Data Quality Lead will provide a written memo to the Area Leads (Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Groundfish) and the Branch Chief explaining why the

monitor has been recommended for probation. The Branch Chief will be notified who will then in turn, notify the ASM Contract COTR, the Program Manager, and the monitor of their decision of the probationary action, in writing.

An emergency probationary may be invoked at anytime if there was reason to believe some egregious violation of procedures or protocols had been committed. This action will be carried out by the Branch Chief following discussions with Area Leads, and Data Quality Lead. The Branch Chief will notify the Monitor Contract COTR, the Program Manager, and the monitor of their decision in writing. Typically this is a short term probation pending an investigation as to the nature of the offense and may result in decertification and/or criminal charges.

Once the Program Manager is made aware that the monitor will be placed on probation, the Data Quality Lead will contact the monitor to inform him/her of the decision. Once notified that s/he is on probation the monitor shall cease conducting trips and a debriefing at Falmouth Technology Park, or other agreed upon location, will be scheduled. Prior to this meeting, a performance plan will be developed that will summarize the major issues the monitor must improve upon before the end of their probationary status. It will also entail what types of trips (i.e., gear types and trip duration) the monitor should go on. After the debriefing, three trips will be planned. Each individual trip must be completely reviewed and approved before the monitor deploys on successive trips. If these three trips are deemed acceptable, the monitor may continue taking trips in the standard manner. If the trips are deemed unacceptable or other errors have occurred the monitor may be kept on probationary status for a longer period of time or may be decertified.

Decertification:

If there is no discernable improvement in the monitor's performance during the three probationary trips, the monitor will be decertified by the Branch Chief. Decertification will be communicated by written notification to the ASM Contract COTR, the Program Manager, and the monitor. Once the Program Manager is made aware that the monitor will be decertified, the Data Quality Lead will contact the monitor to inform him/her of the decision.

A monitor will be decertified, regardless if they have been on probation or not, who fail to abide by the established standards of conduct and conflict of interest, or whose performance is determined to be unsatisfactory.

A monitor will automatically be decertified for failure to conform to the Standards of Conduct signed during the At-sea monitor training. A monitor will be decertified if they falsify data. Falsification is defined as: *The act of deliberately or knowingly fabricating data collected during observed fishing trips, this includes intentional recording of inaccurate data, intentional omission or deletion of data, intentional plagiarism, or, in general, the selective alteration of data.* The decertification procedure is subject to appeal in writing from the monitor to the Branch Chief. The Branch Chief's determination of decertification is final. Decertification will disqualify a monitor from re-applying for work with the Northeast Fisheries At-sea Monitoring Program and/or Northeast Fisheries Observer Program.

Expiration of Certification:

If an individual has not completed an observed trip as a certified monitor in the Northeast Fisheries At-sea Monitoring Program over a one-year period, their certification will expire. To become recertified, the monitor must successfully complete the next available At-sea Monitoring Recertification training conducted at Falmouth Technology Park.

Leave of Absence:

If a monitor goes on a Leave of Absence (LOA) they must notify the ASM COTR of the following information:

- Name of observer
- Expected start time of LOA
- Estimated duration of LOA

If the monitor is going on an LOA for a month or more the contractor must collect the NMFS issued gear and Common Access Card (CAC) from the monitor. They can either store the gear in their own facility or send to the FSB in Falmouth, MA. If the monitor is expected to be gone for more than 6 months or the provider is unsure if the monitor will be coming back to the program, they must complete an in-house exit interview that should be scheduled with the ASM COTR. If that's the case, the gear and CAC will be returned to NMFS and stored until the monitor returns from their LOA. Finally, for all monitors who are leaving for over a month, they will be required to call into their editor before they deploy on a trip for a debriefing.