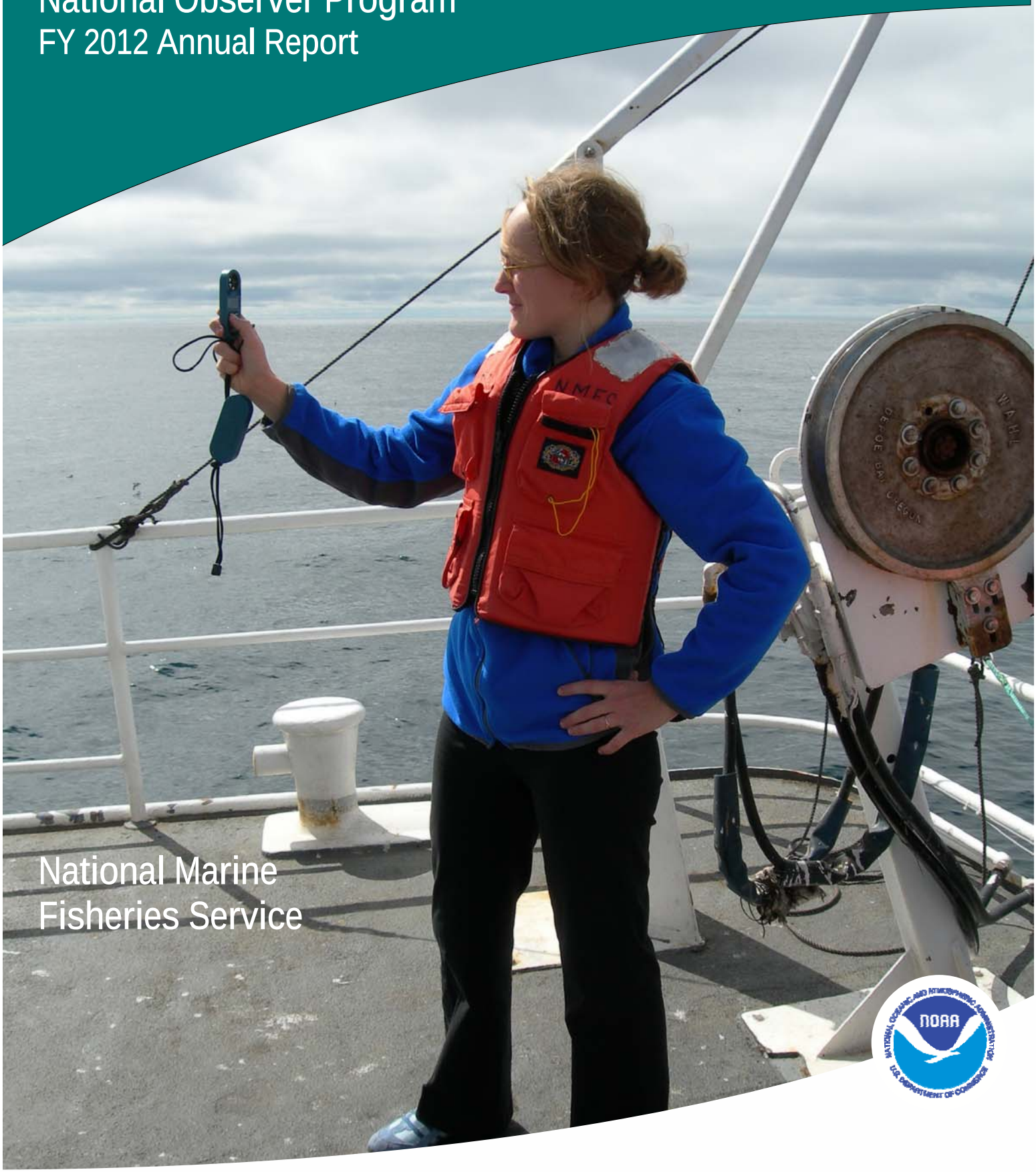
National Observer Program
FY 2012 Annual Report



National Marine Fisheries Service

NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-F/SPO-127

U.S. Department of Commerce | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration | National Marine Fisheries Service

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FY 2012 Annual Report

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U.S. Department of Commerce
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Cover photo: Fisheries observer with the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program.

An online version of this report is available at:

http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/observer-home/reports/nopannualreports/

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Table of Contents

Dedication

On March 10, 2012 the fishing vessel (F/V) Lady Cecilia sank off the coast of Washington with all hands lost, including fisheries observer Chris Langel. The loss was felt throughout the entire observer community, by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and especially the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program where Chris worked. The tragic loss served as an important reminder of the risks fisheries observers and commercial fishermen face while working aboard commercial fishing vessels. The National Observer Program (NOP) would like to dedicate this observer program annual report to the memory of Chris Langel and the crew of the F/V Lady Cecilia.

Executive Summary

During FY 2012, NMFS carried out observer programs in each region, with 974 observers and over 83,000 sea days observed in 47[1] fisheries nationwide. Specific accomplishments by region include the following:

- The North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program observed a total of 40,000 sea days across the groundfish fisheries in Alaska, and an additional 4,880 observers days were achieved monitoring shoreside processing plants. The North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program has 100 percent coverage, or more (i.e., more than one observer per vessel), for vessels over 125 feet in length, which includes the Alaska pollock fishery (the largest U.S. fishery by volume), and 30 percent coverage on vessels 60 to 124 feet in length. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council approved restructuring of the observer program to include new observer coverage on small boats less than 60 feet in length and in the Pacific halibut fishery, funded via industry fees. Implementation of the restructured program is scheduled for 2013.

- The West Coast Groundfish Observer Program observed a total of 11,001 sea days in eight fisheries in 2012, with 9,128 days at sea observed in the West Coast trawl catch share fishery (shoreside and at-sea fleets), and 1,883 days observed in the West Coast non-catch share fisheries. State managed and open access fisheries such as California halibut trawl, nearshore rockfish, pink shrimp, and open access fixed gear fisheries were also observed. Observers recorded haul information, determined the official total catch, sampled hauls for species composition, collected length and age structure data, completed projects related to salmon, and recorded marine mammal and seabird sighting and interaction data. In addition to supporting fisheries management, these data are being used for fish stock and protected species population assessments.

- The Southwest Observer Program observed a total of 339 sea days in the California large-mesh drift gillnet fishery, the Southern California set gillnet fishery, the Southern California small-mesh drift gillnet fishery, and the California-based deep-set pelagic longline fishery to document the incidental take of marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds, target and non-target fish species, and to collect selected biological specimens. The program also began observing a small pilot fishery using deep-set buoy gear to target swordfish during the daytime.

- The Pacific Islands Fisheries Observer Program observed a total of 9,790 sea days in the Hawaii pelagic longline and American Samoa longline fisheries, an increase of 2,071 sea days over the total observed in 2011. The program continued to implement 100 percent observer coverage in the Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery and 20 percent coverage in the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery. The program also observed 965 days in the American Samoa longline fishery. Observers collected data on incidental sea turtle takes and fishing effort, documented interactions of all protected species and recorded species of fish kept and discarded. They also processed selected specimens for life history information.

[1] The number of fisheries observed varies depending on availability of funding, program priorities, and statutory or regulatory requirements.

- The Northeast Fisheries Observer Program observed 16,823 sea days in the Northeast multispecies groundfish fishery, of which 5,412 sea days were in the groundfish common pool, and 6,047 were in the multispecies groundfish sectors. The program also observed 5,364 days in the Atlantic sea scallop dredge fishery, which was funded in large part by industry through a set-aside program. The program continued the third year of an electronic monitoring (EM) system project to evaluate the utility of EM as a means to monitor catch on a real-time basis in the Northeast groundfish sector fleet.

- The Southeast Fisheries Observer Program observed 5,633 sea days in the pelagic longline, reef fish, shrimp trawl, coastal teleost gillnet, and shark fisheries, an increase of 728 days over 2011. The Southeast pelagic longline observer program implemented enhanced observer coverage in the Gulf of Mexico from March through June 2012 to monitor landings and discards of bluefin tuna during the bluefin tuna spawning season. The Shrimp Observer Program expanded coverage to include the shrimp skimmer trawl fishery in the northern Gulf of Mexico to monitor bycatch of sea turtles.

- The NOP began development of an update to the first edition of the National Bycatch Report, submitted and received approval for a Paperwork Reduction Act renewal request to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for all observer data collection forms, and continued planning for the 7th International Observer Monitoring Conference to be held in Viña Del Mar, Chile in 2013. The NOP also helped draft a series of white papers on electronic monitoring.

1. Introduction

Since the early 1970's, observers have collected high quality data on board commercial fishing vessels in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and on the high seas. The NMFS utilizes fishery observers to collect data from U.S. commercial fishing and processing vessels, as well as from some shore-side processing plants. Fisheries observers are trained biological technicians who collect data to support a wide range of conservation and management activities. Today, there are fisheries observer programs in all six NMFS fisheries management regions (Alaska, Northwest, Southwest, Pacific Islands, Northeast, and Southeast).

Regional offices and science centers in each NMFS region are responsible for administering observer programs in their area. Each observer program is authorized by one or more of the following federal mandates: the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), and the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Under the MSA, Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are developed for each federal fishery that requires conservation and management. The MSA provides fishery management councils and the Secretary of Commerce with the authority to require that "one or more observers be carried on board a vessel of the United States engaged in fishing for species that are subject to the plan, for the purpose of collecting data necessary for the conservation and management of the fishery" (16 U.S.C. §1853 (b)(8)).

The MMPA also authorizes the placement of observers on board vessels engaged in Category I[2] and Category II[3] commercial fisheries that frequently or occasionally take[4] marine mammals (50 CFR 229.7(c)). NMFS uses observer data to quantify the impacts of fishing activities on marine mammal populations, record marine mammal sightings, and evaluate the success of bycatch reduction measures.

In 2007, the NMFS Office of Protected Resources finalized a regulation under the ESA that provides NMFS with the authority to place fisheries observers aboard commercial and recreational vessels in state and federal fisheries operating in the territorial seas or EEZ where sea turtle interactions may occur. Observers help determine whether existing measures to reduce sea turtle bycatch are working, or whether new or additional measures are needed to help NMFS address sea turtle bycatch problems. NMFS annually identifies which fisheries are eligible for observer coverage under this requirement. The 2013 annual determination published in the *Federal Register* on December 26, 2012 (77 FR 75999).

Observer coverage may also be recommended or required for federal fisheries as part of an ESA Section 7 biological opinion. Section 7 prohibits federal agencies from carrying out programs (such as authorizing fishery operations) that jeopardize the continued existence of threatened and

[2] *Category I fishery* means a commercial fishery determined by the Assistant Administrator to have frequent incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals (16 U.S.C. 1387).
[3] *Category II fishery* means a commercial fishery determined by the Assistant Administrator to have occasional incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals (16 U.S.C. 1387).
[4] *Take* of a marine mammal is defined as: "to harass, hunt, capture, or kill, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal" (16 U.S.C. 1362).

endangered species. Biological opinions may include terms and conditions that require observer coverage in fisheries where interactions with threatened or endangered species are known to occur.

On a global scale, international agreements (such as the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries) identify the agency's stewardship role in leading collaborative efforts to conserve and protect marine resources. International provisions in the reauthorized MSA also strengthened the U.S. commitment to monitoring and reducing bycatch. These provisions require the Secretary of State to "include statistically reliable monitoring carried out by the United States through observers or dedicated platforms provided by foreign nations of all target and non target fish species, marine mammals, sea turtles, and seabirds entangled or killed by large-scale driftnets used by fishing vessels of foreign nations that are parties to the agreement." The provisions further specify that "the taking of non-target fish species, marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds, and endangered species or other species protected by international agreements to which the U.S. is a party is minimized and does not pose a threat to existing fisheries or the long-term health of living marine resources."

1.1 Program Structure

The NMFS' Office of Science and Technology, NOP provides national level coordination of observer programs. In addition to handling national program administration, budgeting, and planning, the NOP works with the regional observer programs to develop national policy, observer data quality standards, and observer and marine safety instructor training standards. The NOP also provides regional observer programs with a forum to increase collaboration and communication.

Representatives from all regional programs and most NMFS offices participate in the National Observer Program Advisory Team (NOPAT), which serves as an advisory board to the NOP. The NMFS Science Board (composed of the six NMFS science center directors and the director of the Office of Science and Technology, who serves as the Board's chair) reviews NOPAT recommendations, with final decisions made by the Director of the Office of Science and Technology, Chief Science Advisor, and Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, when necessary.

Regional programs are responsible for the day-to-day operation of fishery observer programs. Program scientists determine the appropriate sampling protocols and necessary observer coverage levels for each fishery. In general, regional programs work with private contracting companies to recruit and deploy observers. In some cases, the fishing industry contracts directly with a private contracting company to provide observer coverage. The North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program, for example, is funded primarily by the fishing industry, which pays observer salaries, travel costs, and insurance. The NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center administers this program and receives the data for near real-time management of the groundfish fishery. These data are also made available by the program to industry members.

Regardless of an observer program's funding structure, NMFS provides all new observers with training in species identification, sampling methods, and safety. Following a fishing trip,

observers are debriefed, and the trip's data are quality checked by NMFS before being entered into a database system and made available to regional fisheries biologists.

1.2 Use of Observer Data in Fisheries Management

The information compiled by observer programs supports the management and conservation of fisheries, protected resources, and ecosystems throughout the U.S. Observer data are also increasingly relied upon to monitor compliance with fisheries regulations. Information collected by fisheries observers is used for a wide range of assessment and monitoring purposes, including the following examples.

- In some fisheries, the amount of a specific fish species that can be caught is specified by a total allowable catch (TAC) level. Observer data are used to project total catches for these species and to monitor the level of fishing activity so that the TAC is not exceeded.

- For each managed fishery or stock, the MSA requires development of an Annual Catch Limit (ACL). The ACL is an annual numerical catch target that is set below the overfishing level to ensure that overfishing will not occur. Setting an ACL for a stock requires scientific data on catch and bycatch, which has resulted in increased observer days at sea across the country.

- Catch share programs rely on observer data to monitor catch, landings, and discards. In many cases these fisheries require enhanced observer coverage to document vessel-specific, or sector-level quotas. Managers and fishermen rely on observer data to ensure that vessels or sectors do not exceed their authorized quota of target or discard species.

- For many fisheries, estimates of fishing mortality and/or protected species interaction rates based on observer data are used for monitoring fishery performance and developing stock assessments. Biological samples collected by observers are also essential inputs into the stock assessment processes (e.g., genetic data are used for species or stock identification purposes).

- For stocks that are overfished and in a rebuilding plan, such as New England groundfish, preseason target catch numbers are provided to the management team. When the fishing season ends, observer data are evaluated to determine total mortality and correspondingly adjust the next season's targets.

- The MMPA requires that levels of fishery-related serious injury and mortalities of marine mammals be monitored by observers and reported in the annual marine mammal stock assessment reports and used to appropriately classify commercial fisheries according to their levels of incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals in the annual MMPA List of Fisheries (16 U.S.C. 1387).

- Observer data on marine mammal bycatch are used by Marine Mammal Take Reduction Teams (TRTs) when developing federally-mandated Take Reduction Plans (TRPs) to assist in the recovery or prevent the depletion of certain strategic marine mammal stocks.

- Observer data are used by industry in innovative bycatch avoidance programs such as salmon bycatch monitoring in Alaska.

- Observer data are used by policy makers and Fishery Management Councils in numerous analyses to support their decision making processes.

- Under ESA section 7 consultations, observer programs may be required or recommended to ensure anticipated take levels of threatened or endangered species (e.g., sea turtles, Atlantic sturgeon, etc.) are not exceeded in federal fisheries.

1.3 Funding History for Observer Programs

NMFS has deployed fishery observers to collect catch and bycatch data on foreign and U.S. commercial fishing and processing vessels operating in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and on the high seas since the early 1970's. The NOP was formed in 1999 to provide better coordination regionally and nationally among the observer programs. Prior to 1998, the majority of funding for regional observer programs was provided through indirect sources such as Congressional allocations supporting fisheries management and protected species conservation and recovery, or were funded by industry. Beginning in 1990, industry funds were also used to support the domestic observer program in Alaska; the amount of that industry funding has increased over time as mandatory coverage requirements have increased.

In 1999, the first Congressional funds were directly appropriated for observer program budget lines, and the NOP was established to coordinate U.S. observer program activities. The number of fisheries observed has increased as available funding provided the means to develop observer programs for new or experimental fisheries while maintaining established monitoring programs (Figure 1).

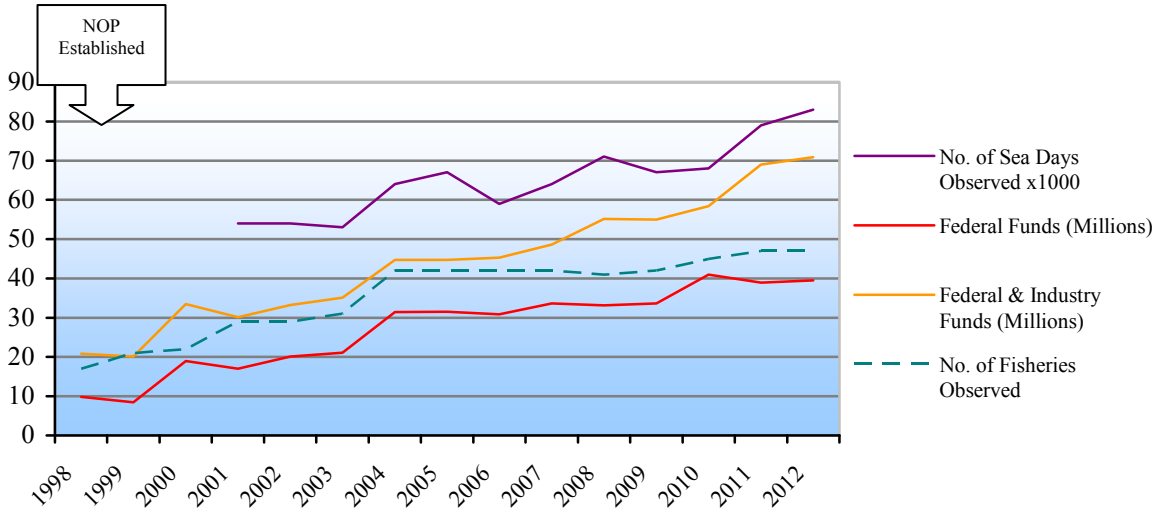

Figure 1. Overview of U.S. observer program funding (not adjusted for inflation), number of observed fisheries, and number of sea days observed from 1998-2012. Federal funds are from the Observer/Training line and do not include catch share funds or other sources of federal funding. For a more detailed budget see Appendix A.

2. FY 2012 Budget Summary

In FY 2012, total funding from all sources (including industry funding) for federal fisheries observer programs was $69 million for observer coverage and program infrastructure (Table 1). This funding enabled regional observer programs to provide coverage for 83,599 days at sea in 47 fisheries (Appendix A provides a detailed breakdown of funding and observer coverage levels by program). The industry-provided portion of total funding in FY 2012 was $16 million. Industry funds were used to support observer coverage of fishing vessels in the West Coast groundfish trawl rationalization program, Atlantic sea scallop, and Alaska groundfish fisheries.

The majority of funding for observer programs comes from congressional appropriations. In FY 2012, congressional funding from all funding lines including the $39.6 million from the observer budget line, totaled $54.9 million. In addition to direct budget lines, observer programs may receive funding from federal appropriations supporting programs under the MSA, MMPA, and ESA.

Regional and National Observer Program activities are funded through a number of dedicated Congressional budget lines. Prior to 2012, the Reducing Bycatch line was split between the Office of Science and Technology for observer activities and the Office of Sustainable Fisheries for bycatch technology research. In FY 2012 Congress directed NMFS to make $2,500,000 of the Reducing Bycatch line available for competitive grants to non-Federal researchers working with U.S. fishermen on the development of improved fishing practices and innovative gear technologies. This decreased available Reducing Bycatch funds for observer programs from approximately $1.8 million to $471,321 annually.

Table 1. Federal appropriations supporting observer programs, FY 2012

A portion is allocated to the NOP and each regional program (See Appendix A).

Observer Budget Line Items	Line Total
National Observer Program	$9,064,642
Reducing Bycatch	$471,321
West Coast Observers	$5,037,228
North Pacific Marine Resource Observers	$5,771,685
Hawaii Longline Observer Program	$5,346,830
New England Groundfish Court-Ordered Observers	$8,672,440
East Coast Observers	$354,375
Atlantic Coast Observers	$3,498,072
South Atlantic/ Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Observers	$1,831,571
Total Other Congressional Funding**	14,872,189
Total Congressional Funding (all sources)	$54,920,353
Total Industry Funding	$18,840,304
TOTAL OBSERVER FUNDING	$73,760,657

**includes Catch Shares funding ($12,732,000), MMPA ($1,351,689), Fisheries Research ($728,500), and Marine Fisheries Initiative ($60,000).

3. FY 2012 National Observer Program Activities

3.1 National Highlights

In addition to coordinating activities among the six regional observer programs, the National Observer Program accomplished the following milestones:

- Held two NOPAT meetings to discuss observer program issues and ensure national consistency across regional programs.

- Published the FY 2011 NOP Annual Report as NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-F/SPO-123.

- Completed an internal web-based National Bycatch Report database for uploading bycatch estimates for all fish, sea turtle, marine mammal, seabird, and invertebrate species by fishery, as well as fishery landings data that will be used to determine fishery and species bycatch ratios. This task was accomplished with support from the Office of Science and Technology's Science Information Division (ST6).

- Served on the Steering Committee and continued planning for the International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference to be held in 2013.

- Prepared and received approval of OMB Paperwork Reduction Act renewal request 0648-0593 for all observer program data collection forms.

- Assisted with the development of several white papers on Electronic Monitoring and Electronic Reporting.

- Redesigned the NOP webpage http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st4/nop/

National Observer Program Advisory Committee

The NOPAT met twice in 2012 to discuss observer program activities, priorities, and funding. The NOPAT comprises representatives from each regional observer program and headquarters office including General Counsel for Fisheries, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Office of Science and Technology, Office of Protected Resources, Office of Law Enforcement, and the U.S. Coast Guard. The NOPAT identifies and addresses issues of national concern, establishes priorities for observer programs, resolves funding issues, and shares information and success stories aimed at improving observer data collection and program implementation nationwide.

Discussion topics included the FY12 observer program budget, program priorities, the electronic monitoring strategic planning process, observer and vessel safety, standards for observer medical/physical condition, and other topics.

National Bycatch Report Update

In November 2011, the NOP initiated the process of reconvening the National Bycatch Report (NBR) Steering Committee and NBR Regional Teams responsible for developing an update to the First Edition of the NBR that published in September 2011. The NBR Steering Committee, which met in February of 2012 in Silver Spring, MD includes bycatch experts from each of the NMFS regional offices and/or science centers and headquarters offices. The NBR Steering Committee is responsible for developing updated bycatch estimates for all federally managed species and fisheries with the first online update to be completed in 2013 and the next comprehensive report due in 2017.

A web-based NBR database has been developed by the NOP and NMFS ST's Science Information Division to facilitate the submission and processing of regional bycatch data. Regional bycatch estimates by fishery for fish, sea turtle, marine mammal, seabird, and invertebrate species, as well as fishery landings data will be uploaded by the regions. The database will be used to track progress in completing biennial bycatch updates. The NBR Database will also be used to generate bycatch summary reports for all fish, sea turtle, marine mammal, seabird, and invertebrate species. The NOP will maintain the NBR database and, in conjunction with the Steering Committee, be responsible for making changes to the list of fisheries and species in the database.

7th International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference (IFOMC)

The NOP continued planning efforts for the next IFOMC to be held April 8-12, 2013 in Viña Del Mar, Chile. The IFOMC Steering Committee, led by Chairman Oscar Guzmán Fernández, continued to meet monthly to discuss the agenda, special sessions, and themes for the conference. The Instituto de Fomento Pesquero is the host agency in Chile helping to organize the Conference. The Conference mission is to improve fishery monitoring programs worldwide through sharing of practices and development of new methods of data collection and analysis. The Conference is also intended to provide a forum for dialog among observers, scientists, managers, and policy makers who rely upon the data collected by observers. Additional information on registration, session themes, abstract submission, and conference lodging is available at www.IFOMC.com.

Session Themes:

- How to balance cost effectiveness of data quality in fisheries monitoring programs?
- Can industry data be used for monitoring rights-based fisheries, seafood traceability and/or fisheries certification?
- What are the future trends in fisheries monitoring programs?
- How do programs observe and monitor artisanal fisheries?
- How best to monitor recreational and pay-for-hire (charter) fisheries?
- Reducing risk in a high risk job.
- How to determine and reduce bias in monitoring programs?
- Fisheries law enforcement roles in domestic and international waters.
- What are the future trends of transshipment observer programs?

- How can fishery monitoring programs support an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management?

The NOP plans to provide travel support for at least one observer from each region selected through a competitive process based on a review of the abstracts submitted.

Paperwork Reduction Act Renewal

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Paperwork Reduction Act approval (0648-0593) for observer program data collections expired on September 30, 2012. On March 26, 2012 the NOP published a *Federal Register* notice (77 FR 17458) announcing NMFS' intent to renew the observer data collections and requested comments on the data collection, burden estimate, and ways to minimize the burden. Following the 60-day public comment period, the complete PRA renewal package was submitted to OMB, including a supporting statement with all current and new forms, final burden estimates, and response to comments. The information collection was approved for three years (expiration date 11/30/2015), during which time NOAA will work with OMB to develop a Generic Information Collection for the NMFS's fisheries observer programs.

Electronic Monitoring White Papers

The Electronic Monitoring Committee continued work on a white paper on the current status of electronic monitoring projects in U.S. fisheries, including lessons learned from previous pilot projects, and an analysis of costs. The NOP also provided assistance in development of several white papers on electronic monitoring to provide an in-depth examination of the issue.

Figure 2. Video monitoring equipment shows crew activity from several different cameras on board a trawler in the Northeast electronic monitoring pilot study.

The agency is currently engaged in a strategic planning effort to consider challenges and opportunities associated with the adoption of electronic technologies in fishery-dependent data collection programs, most notably the use of electronic monitoring (EM) using video cameras and electronic reporting (ER) using e-logbooks. The papers are intended to support NMFS' goal of developing a strategic approach to a cost-effective and sustainable fisheries monitoring programs, and ultimately to provide operational guidelines and best practices for implementation of electronic monitoring.

Concurrent with development of the white papers and a strategic plan for development of EM in U.S. fisheries, several observer programs are working on EM pilot projects to test the feasibility of video cameras to collect catch, discard, and fishing effort data aboard commercial vessels. These include the Northwest (at-sea hake), Alaska (halibut and sablefish), Northeast

(multispecies groundfish) and Southeast (reef fish fishery). Observer programs will continue to play an important role in development of any EM strategy and operational guidelines.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests

The NOP received a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request (2012-00249) from Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) for all records pertaining to evaluations, incidents or other files on a fishery observer in the Southeast Region. NOAA denied PEER's fee waiver request and PEER subsequently challenged the decision in the U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia. The complaint was filed on Aug 3, 2012, and has not yet been resolved.

In a letter dated June 15, 2012 the Department of Commerce Office of General Counsel (DOC OGC) upheld NMFS' denial of a FOIA request filed by Frank Fogg, Manager, O'Hara Corporation for 2008 observer debriefing reports for three O'Hara Corporation vessels that fished in the North Pacific Groundfish Fishery. At the request of DOC OGC, the NOP compiled a report on debriefing procedures for each of the observer programs (available upon request).

Each regional program also responds to FOIA requests that are specific to their region. For example, in 2012 the Northeast Fishery Observer Program received a FOIA request (2012-00314) for all visual records, including photographic records of marine mammal interactions and incidental takes created on or after January 2005 in state-managed fisheries, by fisheries observers in the Northeast Fishery Observer Program. A second FOIA (2012-00313) requested the same information with regard to sea turtles.

Marine Safety Instructor Training

The National Observer Program contracted Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA) to conduct a Marine Safety Instructor Training certification and refresher course for twenty fisheries observer safety trainers July 10-15, 2012. National standards require refresher training every two years for all Marine Safety Instructors who provide observer training. The topics included preparing for at-sea emergencies; small boat safety, cold water near drowning; hypothermia; cold water survival; at-sea survival, maintenance and use of safety equipment, (e.g. life raft, Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon, survival suits, personal flotation devices), and procedures and drills (e.g. pool and open water drills, fire fighting, pyrotechnics, dewatering, and man overboard drills). To complete the training, trainees are required to complete 16 of 18 practical safety skills. There have been several emergency situations where observers used the skills acquired in these important training sessions.

In 2012 the NOP also sponsored regional cross-training of Marine Safety Instructors, in which instructors from one observer program participated in safety training in another region. The goal of the program is to enhance individual marine safety instructor's skills, to provide exposure to different instruction techniques, and to facilitate the exchange of information and training techniques among various observer programs.

3.2 International Activities

The following activities were funded outside of the NOP and NOPAT through support from the Office of International Affairs, the World Bank, the State Department, and the Republic of Korea.

1st Korea International Observer Conference, Busan South Korea

NOP staff attended the 1st Korea International Observer Conference on December 6-7, 2012 in Busan, South Korea. The Korea Fisheries Association, Institute for International Fisheries Cooperation hosted the conference with support from the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MFAFF). The goal of the conference was to discuss ways to improve the Korean observer program based on experiences in other countries and/or programs (U.S., Canada, Australia, and CCAMLR). Chris Rilling, manager of the NOP, gave a presentation on U.S. observer programs and participated in a panel discussion led by Dr. Chang Ik Zhang, Fellow at the Korean Academy of Science and Technology and Professor at Pukyong National University. The discussion focused on developing national standards for Korean fisheries observers, improving job security and pay, and improving data quality. The conference included a site visit to the Busan International Fish Market and the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute. The conference was the 1st international event on observer programs hosted by Korea. Soojeong Lee, the Observer Program Manager with the Institute for International Fisheries Cooperation will be visiting the Pacific Islands Regional observer program (PIROP) in Honolulu, HI, and plans a followup visit to NMFS headquarters in Silver Spring in 2013.

Capacity Building – West Africa

Gabon

The United States provided a three week-long fisheries observer training class in Libreville, Gabon, (November 7-22, 2011) for 30 fisheries observers. This training was conducted in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wildlife Fund, University of Exeter, the Darwin Project, and Gabon Direction Gernerale des Peche et de l'Aquaculture. Observers were trained on a wide variety of topics, including species identification of fish, sharks, marine mammals and sea turtles; data collection for target and bycatch species; vessel information; vessel sightings; and documenting compliance. Observers were also trained on matters relating to daily radio procedures and protocols, working on board vessels (including nautical terms and navigation), safety at sea, working in and with different cultures, and techniques for at-sea survival. Students were also able to practice data collection on board a leased shrimp trawler and to observe the fishing operation (Figure 3).

The United States also developed a database to house the information collected by observers. The database is very similar to the one implemented in Liberia through U.S. capacity building efforts with only slight modifications. The U.S. recently translated the database and the associated manual from English to French. In 2013 it is anticipated that a U.S. instructor will travel to Gabon to provide training to the database managers and administrators.

Figure 3. Observers receive training prior to deploying aboard commercial fishing vessels in Gabon**.**

Liberia

In February (February 13-17) and March 2012 (March 21-24), U.S. trainers provided a five day course on how to collect data from tuna purse seine and longline vessels. The training occurred in Monrovia, Liberia, in collaboration with the World Bank's West Africa Regional Fisheries Program (WARFP). It was given to 55 previously trained fisheries observers and fish inspectors. The course included survey information, data collection, and stock assessment concepts. The students also underwent a review of the duties of an observer, fish identification and management actions on shrimp and groundfish operations, and deployment.

During the past year, the United States has worked to develop and provide documentation for a database to store all information collected by observers as well as including key management information such as vessel registration and other features. Upon completion of the database, the United States returned to Liberia April 21-30 to conduct database training for 12 Liberian database administrators, observers, and managers. This training was conducted in collaboration with Liberia's Bureau of National Fisheries (BNF) and the World Bank's WARFP. The database training covered a wide variety of topics including a review of the observer forms that matched the database entry screen, development of quality control checks, developing reports, changing lookup table values, and overall system maintenance and operation. To further the capacity building efforts in Liberia, it is anticipated that the United States will send two trainers to provide further training on database management and analysis of the observer information.

Other international activities supported by regional observer programs are included in the next section.

4. Regional Observer Program Activities

Observer programs are administered by NMFS Regional Offices and Science Centers around the country (Figure 4). The funding received by each program is used to operate existing programs, develop observer programs for new or experimental fisheries, and to perform outreach to industry members and the public. Research priorities and observer coverage levels are determined by the regional programs. Coverage levels are influenced by available funding, the number of active participants in the fishery, fishing conditions, management needs, and program goals. For some fisheries, certain mandated coverage or FMP goals must be met. The following sections summarize the FY 2012 achievements of NMFS regional observer programs.

Visit the
National Observer Program at:
www.st.nmfs.gov/st4/nop/index.html
for an interactive map of U.S. fisheries observer programs.

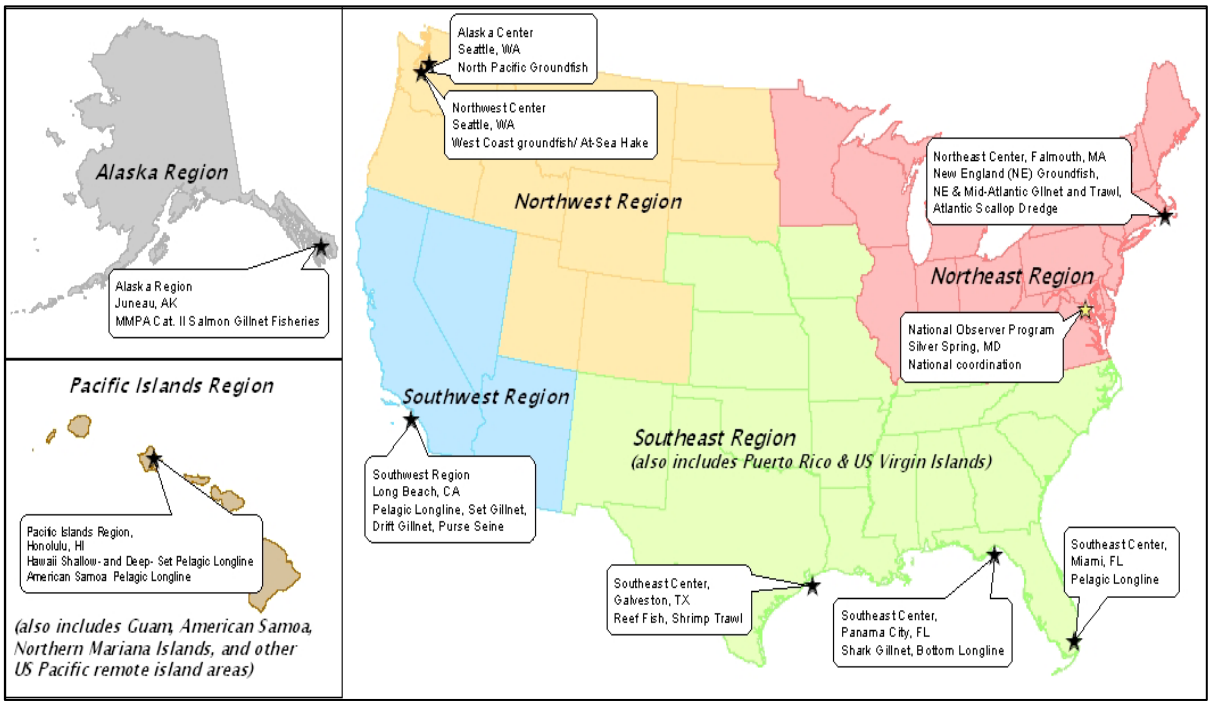

Figure 4. U.S. commercial fishery observer programs are located in each of six NMFS Regions (Northeast, Southeast, Alaska, Northwest, Southwest, and Pacific Islands) in either a NMFS Regional Office, or a Science Center.

4.1 Alaska

North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP)

In FY 2012, the NMFS allocated $8,595,186 in observer program funds to the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), and the fishing industry contributed approximately $16 million for observer salaries, insurance, and travel expenses (see Appendix A for details). Some of the federal funds were used to provide start-up funding for the restructured observer program in 2013 (see Observer Program Restructuring below). The NPGOP observed 40,000 days at sea and 4,800 days in shoreside processing plants, with approximately 450 observers. The 450 NPGOP observers were trained, briefed, and equipped for deployment to vessels and processing facilities operating in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries, and collected data onboard 264 vessels and at 20 processing facilities.

In September, the AFSC was host to the semi-annual NOPAT meeting. A highlight of the meeting was the first in-person meeting of the Safety Committee, a sub-committee of the NOPAT. This subcommittee is made up of regional staff appointed by the NOPAT to ensure consistency in safety standards among the different observer programs and to address priorities as directed by the NOPAT. Information covered during this subcommittee meeting was summarized and presented to the NOPAT during their meeting. In addition to regional observer program updates, the meeting touched on vessel safety improvements, electronic monitoring, catch share program updates and the 7th International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference, which will be held in Chile in April 2013.

Observer Program Restructuring

On November 21, 2012 NMFS published a final rule (77 FR 70062) implementing a restructured observer program that will include observer coverage on vessels less than 60 feet in length and the commercial halibut sector. Coverage levels will no longer be based on vessel length and processing volume; rather, NMFS will have the flexibility to decide when and where to deploy observers based on a scientifically defensible sampling design. The design of the new program will serve to reduce sources of bias that currently jeopardize the statistical reliability of catch and bycatch data collected by the observer program. Beginning January 1, 2013, all vessels and processors in the groundfish and halibut fisheries off Alaska are placed into one of two observer coverage categories established in regulation: the partial (<100%) coverage category and the full (≥100%) coverage category. Vessels and processors in the full observer coverage category are required to have at least one observer at all times. These vessels and processors will retain the current funding and observer deployment system, and will continue to contract directly with observer provider companies and pay the full cost of their own observer coverage.

Full Coverage (≥100%)

- Catcher/processors (with limited exceptions noted below).
- Motherships.
- Catcher vessels while participating in:

- American Fisheries Act (AFA) or Community Development Quota (CDQ) pollock fisheries.
- CDQ groundfish fisheries (except: sablefish; and pot or jig gear catcher vessels).
- Central Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Rockfish Program fisheries.
- Inshore processors when receiving or processing Bering Sea pollock.

Partial Coverage (<100%)

- Catcher vessels designated on a Federal Fisheries Permit when directed fishing for groundfish in federally managed or parallel fisheries, except those in the full coverage category.
- Catcher vessels when fishing for halibut individual fishing quota (IFQ) or CDQ.
- Catcher vessels when fishing for sablefish IFQ or fixed gear sablefish CDQ.
- Catcher/processors with a maximum daily production of 1 mt.
- Catcher/processors meeting criteria above for one time election of coverage category.
- Shoreside or stationary floating processors, except those in the full coverage category.

Vessels and processors in the partial observer coverage category are not required to have an observer at all times. These vessels and processors will have a new funding and deployment system and will pay a 1.25% landings fee for their observer coverage based on the ex-vessel value of their groundfish and halibut landings. The fee for each landing will be split between vessel owners and processors, with processors remitting the fee liability to NMFS through an annual billing. The NMFS is providing start-up funding for the first year of the new program. The fees collected from industry will fund the program in subsequent years.

For more information on the observer program restructuring, visit the websites:
http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/Quarterly/ond2010/tocFMA.htm
http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/newsreleases/2012/observers112012.htm

Implementation of a restructured observer program in Alaska will allow NMFS to close out the final outstanding recommendation from a 2004 OIG Report - *NMFS Observer Programs Should Improve Data Quality, Performance Monitoring, and Outreach Efforts.* Specifically, recommendation number nine from the report stated that "NOAA should work with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to establish requirements for an observer program that includes a vessel selection process that produces random sampling of the fishery." The restructured observer program will allow NMFS to contract with observer providers and determine when and where observers are deployed, based on a scientifically sound sampling design, thus satisfying this recommendation.

Electronic Monitoring Pilot Study

The final rule implementing a restructured observer program includes an option for vessels to carry EM equipment to help NMFS collect data. The final rule did not require EM since NMFS has not yet developed performance standards or technical specifications for EM. However, as part of the restructured observer program, NMFS is developing EM technologies to collect catch, discard, and fishing effort data aboard commercial vessels. The goal is to evaluate the utility of

EM to monitor catch in the sablefish and halibut fleet for vessels between 40 feet and 57.5 feet in overall length. The project will commence April 1, 2013 on volunteer vessels. To account for differences in geographical location and fishing activity, EM will be deployed on participating vessels based out of Sitka, Petersburg, Homer, and Kodiak. Data obtained from EM will be compared to other catch data, such as observer data and vessel landing reports (fish tickets). NMFS will continue to work to develop an EM program that is supported by performance standards and regulations over the longer term. For more information visit the Alaska Region webpage: http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/observers/

Amendment 93- Chinook Salmon Bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska Pollock Fishery

On July 20, 2012 NMFS published a final rule (77 FR 42629) to implement Amendment 93 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska. The regulations apply exclusively to the directed pollock trawl fisheries in the Central and Western Reporting Areas of the Gulf of Alaska. Amendment 93 establishes separate prohibited species catch (PSC) or bycatch cap limits in the Central and Western GOA for Chinook salmon and requires closure of the directed pollock fishery if the applicable limit is reached. For more information on Amendment 93, visit the website:
http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/bycatch/default.htm

NPGOP Coral Identification Pilot Project

In early 2012 a pilot project funded by the NMFS Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program was initiated to investigate the feasibility of training observers in the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP) to identify corals in the field beyond the currently specified level of "coral unidentified." A field guide to 24 taxa of corals known from the North Pacific and Bering Sea was generated for testing. This guide included photos of each coral taxon, as well as a brief description of the general morphology and distinguishing characteristics, and was printed on waterproof paper for use in the field. During their pre-deployment briefing, returning observers (who had completed as least one previous contract) were presented a brief lecture introducing them to the use of the guide, and were invited to examine dried specimens of all taxa presented in the guide. Observers were instructed to use the guide to identify any coral specimens encountered during their deployment to the most specific taxonomic level possible, and to label the specimen with their best identification and retain it for confirmation. They were also given a questionnaire on which to provide feedback about the field guide, training, and the taxa they encountered. During the 2012 training year (December 2011-October 2012) a total of 122 observers received the coral identification training during 14 separate briefing sessions. The goal of the program is to have enough information by the end of 2013 to assess the costs and benefits of a program-wide coral identification policy.

Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program (AMMOP)

The AMMOP, which is headquartered in Juneau, Alaska received $450,000 in funding used to deploy 13 observers in the Southeast Alaska gillnet fishery. The MMPA requires monitoring certain commercial fisheries to obtain statistically reliable estimates of incidental marine mammal serious injury and mortality. The AMMOP monitors marine mammal incidental take levels in Alaska state fisheries. Of the fourteen MMPA Category II fisheries managed by the

State of Alaska, eight have been observed by the AMMOP since its establishment in 1990. These eight fisheries include the Prince William Sound drift and set gillnet fisheries (1990-91), the Alaska Peninsula drift gillnet fishery (1990), the Cook Inlet drift and set gillnet fisheries (1999-2000), the Kodiak set gillnet fishery (2002 and 2005), and the Yakutat set gillnet fishery (2007-2009). Data collected during these rotational observation periods are used in marine mammal stock assessments to estimate annual serious injury and mortality and to categorize fisheries in the annual MMPA List of Fisheries.

In 2012, the AMMOP observed 387 days at sea in the Southeast Alaska drift gillnet fishery. Because of the large geographic range of the fishery, the first two years of observer coverage will focus on Alaska Department of Fish and Game Management Districts 6 and 8. These two districts are being observed simultaneously due to their proximity to one another. The remaining three management areas (Districts 1, 11, and 15) will be observed individually for two year periods beginning in 2014. Thus, the total time frame expected for observing this fishery will be eight years. A new sampling design has been developed to increase efficiency of data collection and reduce cost. Data collected from this fishery will be important relative to concerns over humpback whale and harbor porpoise takes.

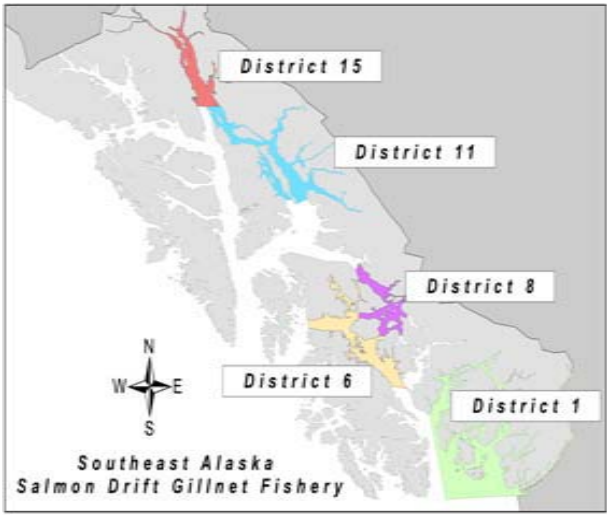

Figure 5. Map of Southeast Alaska gillnet fishery areas scheduled for observation beginning in 2012-2013.

Due to the small size of gillnet vessels, observers were not placed onboard fishing vessels but rather collected data from alternative platforms, i.e. independent work boats operated by trained captains. Data collected included information about fishing operations and gear, catch and bycatch (including fish, invertebrates, mammals, and birds) and weather. Examples of gear information recorded included net length, twine material, mesh size, and marine mammal deterrent devices (e.g., pingers or acoustic harassment devices) used. Fishing data collected included fishing effort, net location, set and soak times, picking or hauling time, and catch data (the numbers of animals caught by species and condition). Observers recorded the species, number, and behavior of marine mammals in the immediate fishing area, and noted all entanglements. Observers may have collected data before and after hauls, as well as while gear was being hauled or picked.

For complete information on data collected please see the Observer Manual on the following website: http:// www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/observers/ammopmanual.pdf

4.2. Northwest

In FY 2012 the Northwest Regional observer programs (West Coast Trawl Catch Share, West Coast Groundfish (WCGOP) and At-Sea Hake (ASHOP)) received $10,565,489 in funding (Appendix A gives details). A total of 11,011 days at sea was observed in Northwest Regional

fisheries, on par with the number of sea days observed in FY 2011. Fisheries observed in FY 2012 included the West Coast trawl catch share fisheries (including at-sea hake), West Coast limited entry fixed gear groundfish fisheries, and state-managed and open-access fisheries. Yearly observer data reports and summary analyses for many of these fisheries are available on the Northwest Fisheries Science Center's Observer Program webpage: http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/fram/observer/index.cfm

West Coast Trawl Catch Share Program

The Northwest Region implemented the trawl rationalization program beginning January 11, 2011, which required significant new observer coverage. Under the trawl rationalization program, the total allowable catch in the fishery is divided into shares that are controlled by fishermen. These shares, which represent the number of pounds available to catch, can be caught at the vessel's convenience throughout the season. The catch share program is intended to increase the fishery's net economic benefits, create individual economic stability for participants, provide full utilization of the trawl sector groundfish allocation, consider environmental impacts, and achieve individual accountability of catch and bycatch.

The new trawl catch share program requires 100% at-sea observer coverage, as all catch of Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) species must be accounted for, as well as the discard of prohibited species such as salmon, crab and Pacific halibut. The observer data is used to account for any IFQ discards which, in combination with landings data, enables fishermen to track their individual quotas and allows managers to monitor the progress of the fishery. All catch (including both retained and discarded) was independently monitored from its catch at sea to its landing on shore, and tallied after each trip throughout the year. This enabled the fishery to be managed on an individual vessel basis, rather than solely via fleet-wide measures.

Catch Share observers are deployed on:

- All vessels participating in the Shore-based Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program, including hake and non-hake groundfish trawl and non-trawl vessels
- All motherships participating in the at-sea hake fishery
- All mothership catcher-vessels participating in the at-sea hake fishery
- All catcher-processors participating in the at-sea hake fishery

In FY 2012 federal funds paid for approximately 90% of the vessel costs for observer coverage in the West Coast Trawl Catch Share Fishery. The industry share of costs for the catch share fisheries was expected to increase to 50% in FY 2012 and 90% in FY 2013, however NMFS maintained support for catch share monitoring costs at a level similar to FY 2011 in FY 2012. During 2012, working with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, NMFS reimbursed the industry for 90 percent of its daily costs. Approximately, 7,500 observer days were invoiced, leading to total federal reimbursements of about $2.6 million. (These figures do not include the federal reimbursement costs of the compliance monitors in the processing plants, who verify that the fish tickets for trawl catch share offloads are done accurately. Almost all of the catch monitors are observers who follow the fish off the boat into the plant. These funds are in addition to the funds described in Appendix A.)

West Coast Non-Trawl Catch Share Fisheries

Non-Catch Share observers are deployed in fisheries/sectors:

- Limited Entry Sablefish Endorsed Fixed Gear
- Limited Entry Non-Sablefish Endorsed Fixed Gear
- Open Access Nearshore Fixed Gear (Oregon and California)
- Open Access Fixed Gear (Washington, Oregon, California)
- Open Access California Halibut Trawl (California)
- Open Access Pink Shrimp Trawl (Washington, Oregon, and California)

In FY12 federal funds paid for 100% of the cost of observer coverage in the non-catch share fisheries. Coverage rates and total species catch for all sectors and years can be found at: http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/fram/observer/sector_products.cfm

Electronic Monitoring Feasibility Project

Working with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC), NMFS funded a project aimed at demonstrating the feasibility of using EM for compliance monitoring on selected commercial fishing vessels as an alternative to human observers. Recognizing the importance of identifying and implementing ways to reduce costs associated with the program in a timely manner, an EM feasibility plan has been developed to demonstrate the feasibility of using EM (cameras) for catch compliance monitoring on different components of the trawl fleet and to look at how an integrated EM program (cameras plus electronic logbooks) could support catch accounting requirements in the future. The goals of the feasibility study are as follows.

Short Term Goals:

1. Compare EM to the observer data to determine confidence levels.
2. Set up EM review and camera install and maintenance infrastructure.
3. Solve issues as they arise through a collaborative group process (includes fishermen, managers, and enforcement personnel).

Long Term Goals

1. Maintain the biological integrity of the fishery.
2. Save money for fishermen and the agency (and ultimately taxpayers and consumers).
3. Insure confidence in the landing and discard data.
4. Integrate cameras with electronic logbooks.
5. Look for opportunities to supplement stock assessment information.

The PSMFC is overseeing the EM feasibility project that will focus on field testing on three segments of the fisheries: whiting (shoreside and mothership), trawl vessels using fixed gear to harvest IFQ species, and bottom-trawl vessels fishing seaward of the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA). Since current observer requirements remain in effect, there is an opportunity to compare observer data to EM information on every trip. For more information visit: http://www.psmfc.org/psmfc_link/2012-psmfc-annual-meeting

Biological Opinion for West Coast Groundfish

In March 2012 NMFS issued an ESA section 7 consultation Biological Opinion on the West Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. The Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPMs) include new requirements for observer data collection and reporting for green sturgeon and Steller sea lions. For more information see the West Coast Groundfish BiOP.

4.3. Southwest

The Southwest Region receives the majority of its observer programs funds through the National Observer Program budget line. In FY 2012 the Southwest Observer Program received $775,552 in federal funding and observed a total of 339 sea days with six observers in the California large-mesh drift gillnet, the Southern California set gillnet, the Southern California small-mesh drift gillnet, and the California deep-set pelagic longline fisheries. The observer program also recently began observing a small test fishery using deep-set buoy gear to target swordfish during the daytime. Target observer coverage rates ranged from 10 to 100%, depending on the fishery. Trips in these fisheries typically last from 1 to 30 days. The Southwest Fisheries Science Center uses observer data to estimate incidental take of marine mammals in preparation of the annual Stock Assessment Reports and to document the incidental take of sea turtles, seabirds, and target and non-target fish species.

A summary of observer program reports for the drift gillnet fishery are posted online at: http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/psd/codgftac.htm.

Highly Migratory Species (HMS)

In April 2012 NMFS initiated rulemaking to propose modifications to the HMS FMP pre-trip notification regulations codified at 50 CFR 660.712(f). The regulations currently require longline vessel operators to notify NMFS 24 hours prior to departing on a fishing trip. This notification requirement is in place to give NMFS time to place observers on longline vessels. NMFS proposed to modify this requirement to a 72 hour notice in order to have adequate time for observer placement. The rulemaking proposes to modify the HMS FMP observer regulations codified at 50 CFR 660.719. Currently, only longline vessel operators have a pre-trip notification requirement. NMFS will propose to require pre-trip notifications for all other gear types covered by the HMS FMP. This would allow for adequate time to place observers on HMS vessels and help NMFS attain observer coverage level goals. Adequate pre-trip notification would also help vessel operators avoid the inconvenience of having to remain in port for an extended period while waiting for an observer to arrive at the vessel. Pre-trip notifications would be required for each gear upon annual notice by the agency, so only observed fisheries would be required to give pre-trip notification to NMFS or its designated observer service provider each year.

Lawsuit over California Large-Mesh Drift Gillnet Fishery

On September 6, 2012 NMFS received a 60-day notice of intent to sue over management of the California large-mesh drift gillnet fishery for alleged lack of compliance with the ESA and MMPA. Among other things, the litigants requested NMFS to implement interim measures that

increase observer coverage to 100% and to close the fishery after the take of one leatherback turtle or one sperm whale.

4.4 Pacific Islands

The Pacific Islands Regional Observer Program (PIROP) received $6,409,133 in funding to support observer coverage. Regulations require 20% observer coverage in the Hawaii pelagic longline deep-set tuna fishery and 100% coverage in the Hawaii pelagic longline shallow-set swordfish fishery. Observer coverage was also provided in the American Samoa pelagic longline fishery for 965 sea days. The program observed a total of 9,790 sea days across all three fisheries in FY 2012, an increase of 2,071 sea days over FY 2011 levels.

Reports from the Pacific Islands Region Observer Program are available online at: http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/OBS/obs_qrtrly_annual_rprts.html.

Sea Turtle Interactions

Regulations governing the Hawaii-based shallow-set pelagic longline fishery include annual limits on the numbers of interactions that occur between fishing vessels and sea turtles. There are two calendar-year limits: 26 leatherback sea turtles, and 34 loggerhead sea turtles. If either limit is determined to have been reached, the Hawaii-based shallow-set longline fishery is immediately closed. When closed, Hawaii longline vessels are prohibited from shallow-set fishing north of the Equator for the remainder of the calendar year. Sea turtle interactions are monitored by observers, placed aboard every shallow-set longline fishing trip.

On November 5, 2012 NMFS revised the limits for leatherback turtles from 16 to 26, and for loggerhead turtles from 17 to 34. At the end of calendar year 2012, the shallow-set longline fishery had reported seven interactions with leatherback sea turtles, and six interactions with loggerhead sea turtles. For more information visit: http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD_turtleint.html

Hawaii Deep-Set Longline Fishery Swordfish Retention

On July 26, 2012 NMFS published a final rule (77 FR 43721) to revise the limits on the number of swordfish that fishermen may possess or land during a Hawaii-based deep-set longline-fishing trip north of the Equator. The new limits are as follows:

- With a NMFS observer on board, there is no limit on swordfish landed or possessed on a trip, regardless of the type of hook used.
- With no NMFS observer on board, the limit is 25 swordfish landed or possessed on a trip, if the vessel uses only circle hooks.
- With no NMFS observer on board, and if the vessel uses any hooks other than circle hooks, the limit is 10 swordfish landed or possessed on a trip.

American Samoa Longline Fishery

On August 24, 2011 NMFS published a final rule (76 FR 52888) implementing gear modifications to reduce sea turtle interactions in the American Samoa longline fishery. The rule requires a specific gear configuration for pelagic longline fishing for vessels based in American Samoa, as well as other U.S. longline vessels longer than 40 ft (12.2 m), while fishing south of the Equator in the Pacific Ocean. The requirements include minimum float line and branch line lengths, number of hooks between floats, and distances between floats and adjacent hooks. The rule also limits the number of swordfish taken. The regulations are intended to ensure that longline hooks are set at depths of 100 meters or deeper to reduce interactions between longline fishing and Pacific green sea turtles. One of the primary responsibilities of the observer program is to document protected species interactions. Observers will therefore be vital in determining the effectiveness of the new regulations.

False Killer Whale Take Reduction

On November 29, 2012 NMFS issued a final False Killer Whale Take Reduction Plan (TRP) consisting of regulatory and non-regulatory measures to reduce mortalities and serious injuries of false killer whales in Hawaii-based longline fisheries. Regulatory measures include gear requirements, longline prohibited areas (e.g., a Main Hawaiian Islands Longline Fishing Prohibited area), training and certification in marine mammal handling and release, captains' supervision of marine mammal handling and release, and posting of NMFS-approved placards on longline vessels. The TRP also prioritizes research needs and data collection programs.

The Take Reduction Team relied heavily on analyses of observer program data. The Team noted that specific information that is not currently collected would be useful to support future Team deliberations and to further understand and identify patterns of marine mammal bycatch. The Team recommended that NMFS modify the observer data forms to collect additional information, and also recommended changes to observer training and observer protocol during and after marine mammal interactions. NMFS is implementing the recommended changes, as possible, through appropriate changes to the data collection forms, observer protocol, and/or observer training, but notes that some of the recommendations are already being implemented through existing data forms, protocol, and training.

International Activities and Capacity Building

John Kelly, the PIROP Manager, chaired the 2012 Regional Observer Coordinators Workshop meeting in Tonga. The theme of the meeting was Debriefing: Maintaining The Momentum and Improving The Processes.

Joe Arceneaux, PIROP trainer, attended a fisheries panel meeting of the NOAA-Republic of Korea Joint Project Agreement (ROK JPA) in Busan, Korea May 2012. Mr. Arceneaux provided information on the status of the Korean Purse-seine Mackerel Fishery Observer Program. Staff also developed a syllabus for training debriefers and trainers for the Korean Purse-Seine Observer Program. It was modified from the syllabus used in the Jakarta Training of Trainers workshop.

Coral Triangle Initiative

The PIROP assisted USAID on a project in the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) with the development and training of an Indonesian observer program. The PIROP also provided material for the CTI Marine Protected Area managers training course held May 2012. The materials included a presentation on how protected species can affect fisheries management decisions.

The PIROP provided input on topics for the new WCPFC Regional Observer Program (ROP) Technical Working Group. Some of the issues include higher observer wages, improved payment mechanisms, implement clear observer credentials (ID badges), and minimum safety standards for vessel safety checks.

Three PIROP staff held a "training of trainers" workshop in Jakarta, Indonesia that included staff from the two fisheries colleges, Sekolah Tinggi Perikanan and Akademi Perikanan Sorong. A PIROP trainer also traveled to Suva, Fiji to train 13 observers on sea turtle and marine mammal identification and sea turtle de-hooking.

4.5 Northeast

In FY 2012 the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) received a total of $18,770,792 in program funding, including $2.6 million in industry funding for the Atlantic sea scallop industry-funded observer program. A total of 16,823 sea days was observed through six monitoring programs, an increase of 1,774 sea days over FY 2011. Fisheries observed included the New England groundfish trawl and sink gillnet fisheries, Mid-Atlantic coastal gillnet fisheries, New England and Mid-Atlantic small mesh trawl fisheries, Mid-Atlantic *Illex* squid trawl, New England and Mid-Atlantic large mesh trawl fisheries, and the Atlantic sea scallop dredge fishery (Appendix A provides details). The New England Fishery Management Council's Multispecies FMP includes mandatory observer coverage requirements for several fisheries; the NEFOP provides this coverage in addition to collecting data on gear performance and characteristics and monitoring experimental fisheries. Reports from the NEFOP are posted at: www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/fishsamp/fsb/.

Northeast Multispecies Groundfish Monitoring

The Northeast entered the third year of sector management in the Northeast multispecies groundfish fishery. Observer coverage rates in the sector managed fisheries remained at approximately 25%, achieved through a combination of at-sea monitoring (17%) and NEFOP observer coverage (8%). The industry was scheduled to begin paying for monitoring costs in the sector-managed fishery beginning in 2012, however economic information indicated that fishermen were not yet able to assume at-sea monitoring costs. As a result, NMFS continued to fund the cost of at-sea monitoring for New England groundfish fisheries through April 30, 2013, the end of the 2012 fishing year. The industry is scheduled to begin paying for monitoring costs in the sector-managed fishery beginning in 2013, with NOAA potentially contributing up to 50% of the cost through the Catch Shares funding line, depending on final appropriations.

Bluefin Tuna Purse Seine Fishery

The U.S. bluefin tuna purse seine fishery in New England has been inactive for several years, but there is currently one active vessel (5 permitted vessels) operating out of New Bedford, MA. Since the fleet was last active, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) has adopted a binding recommendation (2010-10) for a minimum of 5% observer coverage of fishing effort in the tuna purse seine fishery. Observers are required to record and report total target catch and by-catch (including sharks, sea turtles, marine mammals, and seabirds), size composition, disposition status (i.e., retained, discarded dead, released alive), and the collection of biological samples for life history studies (e.g., gonads, otoliths, spines, scales); and fishing operation information, including:

- area of catch by latitude and longitude;
- fishing effort information (e.g., number of sets, number of hooks, etc.);
- date of each fishing operation, including, as appropriate, the start and stop times of the fishing activity.

NEFOP is temporarily providing observer coverage in this fishery.

Electronic Monitoring System Study

The NEFOP continued with the second year of a pilot EM system to test the applicability of video technology to collect catch and fishing effort data aboard commercial fishing vessels. The goal of the study is to evaluate the utility of EM as a means to monitor catch on a real-time basis in the Northeast groundfish sector fleet. Participating vessels were located in a variety of ports in New England to account for differences in fishing activity in multiple geographic ranges and effectively assess the applicability of EM in sector-based management.

The Northeast identified several issues during first year of the pilot study and is continuing to evaluate the use of EM as a cost-saving measure as the industry prepares to fund at-sea monitoring in 2013. At the end of the first phase, NMFS determined that in its current use, EM could not be used as an alternative to at-sea monitoring, because the system could not yet provide weights of fish by species and could not effectively distinguish species of flounder and hake (nearly 70% of the Annual Catch Entitlement species). NEFOP continued with the second year of the project in an attempt to rectify the issues of species identification and weights prior to the 2013 fishing year.

During the second phase of the pilot study, there are nine participating vessels, which represent the three major gear types in the Northeast region (trawl, gillnet, longline). Data collection and troubleshooting procedures remain the same, but the goals of the study have expanded to address the shortcomings found during the first year:

- Obtain fish weight with a known accuracy and precision to estimate catch weights;
- Develop methods to increase species identification with an emphasis on flounder and hake species;
- Improve data quality of sensor and video and reduce data gaps.

The latest reports on the EM study can be obtained from the NEFOP webpage: http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/fsb/ems/

Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM)

In 2008 Oceana filed a lawsuit against NMFS challenging the SBRM methodology used to track bycatch in Northeast fisheries. The district court rejected Oceana's statutory claims, however Oceana appealed to the U.S. District Court of D.C. The court found that the agency had not established a lawful SBRM, because it still had discretion to allocate observers at a level less than the minimum needed to achieve 30% Coefficient of Variation (CV), if faced with external constraints such as budget shortfalls. The U.S. District Court ordered the SBRM Amendment to be vacated; and remanded the case to NMFS for further proceedings consistent with the opinion of the Court of Appeals. The NMFS Northeast Regional Office is in the process of amending the SBRM.

Deep-Sea Coral and Sponge Identification Training

The current NEFOP curriculum does not include any deep-sea coral and sponge species identification. A pilot project funded in 2012 by the NMFS Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program will develop lesson plans, training aides, and field guides to include deep-sea coral and sponge identification. These materials will be distributed to all current NEFOP Observers and At-Sea Monitors. Deep-sea coral identification will be incorporated into the training curriculum for all future certification trainings. The project team will then investigate new sampling/recording methodology for corals (e.g., photographic) and review the current recording of coral/sponge presence. Additionally, the NEFOP Species Verification Program, a training and data quality program, will be used to offer an excellent tracking method for correct deep-sea coral and sponge identification. The project team is particularly interested in helping the redfish fishery document any coral bycatch, as redfish have been observed to co-occur with deep-sea corals in the Gulf of Maine.

4.6. Southeast

In FY 2012 Southeast Regional observer programs were allocated $7,970,637, and a total of 3,520 sea days was observed by the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico shrimp otter trawl (including expanded coverage in the skimmer trawl fishery); Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean pelagic longline (including enhanced coverage during the bluefin tuna spawning season); Gulf of Mexico reef fish; shark gillnet and shark bottom longline observer programs (Appendix A provides details). This is an increase of 728 sea days compared to FY 2011.

Shrimp Skimmer Trawl Fishery

The Shrimp Observer Program expanded coverage in 2012 to include the shrimp skimmer trawl fishery in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Beginning in May 2012, observers were placed on randomly selected, state-licensed vessels to monitor sea turtle interactions. Due to elevated strandings in 2010 and 2011, NMFS proposed to withdraw the alternative tow time restriction and require all skimmer trawls, pusher-head trawls, and wing nets (butterfly trawls) rigged for

fishing to use turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in their nets (77 FR 27411, May 10, 2012). The expanded observer coverage is intended to provide data needed to develop final management recommendations. For more information visit:
http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2012/20120509_teds.html

Enhanced Bluefin Tuna Observer Coverage

In 2012 the Pelagic Observer Program (POP) used available funding to achieve ~50% observer coverage level in the Gulf of Mexico Enhanced Coverage campaign during the bluefin tuna spawning season from April through June, 2012. The coverage was expected to produce CV of approximately 20% for bluefin tuna discard estimates (see NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-SEFSC-588). The enhanced coverage will allow NMFS to continue collecting data regarding spatial and temporal patterns of BFT bycatch, biological samples from landed fish or dead discards, and satellite tagging of yellowfin catch and bluefin tuna bycatch.

A regulation requiring the use of weak hooks was implemented in 2011 after several years of enhanced observer coverage in the Gulf of Mexico pelagic longline fishery as part of a study to examine the effectiveness of weak hooks. Weak hooks have a reduced tensile strength and are designed to release larger fish, such as bluefin tuna, while retaining target species like yellowfin tuna, swordfish, and dolphin fish. Bluefin tuna population levels are at historically low levels and the Gulf of Mexico is the only known bluefin tuna spawning area for the western Atlantic stock of bluefin tuna. Enhanced observer coverage is planned to continue to monitor the effectiveness of the new requirements.

Southeast Coastal Gillnet Observer Coverage

The Southeast coastal gillnet observer program began expanded observer coverage for the Gulf of Mexico in September 2012. A total of 70 sea days is targeted for primarily small gillnet vessels in the mullet fishery operating in state waters of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The observers will primarily be deployed to estimate the impact of this fishery on marine mammals and sea turtles.

Electronic Reporting Pilot Project

Funding was awarded for a pilot program to develop at-sea electronic reporting functionality using tablet computers and a data entry application in the gillnet observer program. Conversion of databases to centrally stored, online-based systems will expedite data collection, collation, and extraction. The Southeast Gillnet Observer Program (formerly Shark Drift Gillnet) has completed migration from local data storage to Oracle-based databases centrally located on the SEFSC-Miami servers, which will facilitate access for at-sea reporting. The bottom longline program at Panama City Laboratory is in the process of migrating data storage to a similar system.

Reports from the shark gillnet and shark bottom longline observer program are posted on NMFS Panama City Laboratory's webpage:
Southeast Gillnet: http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/labs/panama/ob/gillnet.htm

Bottom Longline: http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/labs/panama/ob/bottomlineobserver.htm
Reports from the Pelagic Observer Program are posted on: http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/pop.jsp.
The Galveston laboratory's publications (shrimp trawl and reef fish observer programs) can be found at
http://galveston.ssp.nmfs.gov/research/fisherymanagement/index.html#observer_program

5. Other Developments Related to Observer Programs

The following section is a new addition to the NOP Annual Report and will focus on other developments related to observer programs that are not included in the regional observer program activities or other sections of the report. During the semi-annual NOPAT meetings members report on activities that are related to or may impact observer programs. This section describes these issues in more detail.

5.1 Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2012

The Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2012 (H.R. 2838 was signed by the President on December 13, authorizing $8.6 billion in fiscal year 2013 and $8.7 billion in fiscal year 2014 for the activities of the Coast Guard. The new bill §305(a) changes the requirement to obtain a dockside examination from at least once every two years to at least once every five years for vessels not subject to observer coverage.

As of October 16, 2012 commercial fishing vessel dockside safety examinations became mandatory for all commercial fishing vessels operating beyond 3 nautical miles of the baseline of the U.S. territorial sea. This examination requirement was one of several new mandates established by the *Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010.* While this requirement remains in effect, the new bill (H.R. 2838) changes the requirement to obtain a dockside examination from once every two years to once every five years. The USCG recently issued a notice indicating that the 2-year examination requirement remains in effect for all vessels subject to observer coverage.

5.2 ESA Annual Determination

Under the ESA NMFS has the responsibility to implement programs to conserve marine species listed as endangered or threatened. In 2007 NMFS issued a regulation to establish procedures to annually identify fisheries in which the agency intends to place observers (72 FR 43176, August 3, 2007). These regulations specify that NMFS may place observers on U.S. fishing vessels, recreational or commercial, state or federal, operating in U.S. territorial waters, the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ), or on the high seas, or on vessels that are otherwise subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S.

The NMFS Office of Protected Resources (F/PR) published a notice on January 5, 2012 that NMFS was not including additional fisheries on the 2012 Annual Determination (AD) due to a lack of resources to implement new or expand existing observer programs to focus on sea turtles (50 CFR 222.402(a)(4)). Fisheries identified in the 2010 AD remain on the AD and are therefore required to carry observers upon NMFS' request until 2014. For more information visit
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/turtles/observers.htm

6. Looking Ahead: Goals and Priorities for FY 2013

Observer program priorities in FY 2013 include monitoring fisheries in each of the regions to meet statutory and regulatory requirements under the MSA, MMPA, and ESA for observer coverage in U.S. commercial fisheries, while also addressing critical science and management needs for catch and discard estimates as well as stock assessments. A secondary priority is to expand observer coverage into fisheries with bycatch concerns, as identified in the National Bycatch Report (NBR), the ESA Annual Determination, the MMPA List of Fisheries, and in fisheries with little or no observer coverage. Given the likelihood of further reductions in funding in FY 2013, NMFS' highest priority will be addressing existing mandatory requirements.

Funding for observer programs[5] reached a peak of $41 million in FY 2010 but declined to $38.9 million in FY 2012. The President's FY 2013 budget includes an increase of $4.2 million for observer programs, directed at providing observer coverage in existing and emerging catch share fisheries but it is unknown if this will be enacted. Catch share programs will continue to require significant effort on the part of observer programs, particularly in the Northwest, Northeast, Southeast, and Alaska. Observer programs will continue to seek appropriate ways to lower costs for observers and at-sea monitors, including alternatives such as electronic monitoring.

The first edition of the NBR, published in September 2011, identified many opportunities, challenges, and gaps in observer coverage that should to be addressed by observer programs. Chief among these were maintaining and expanding existing observer programs and implementing new observer programs in fisheries with bycatch concerns. The NBR estimated the total number of additional sea days needed to address these gaps at 66,653, nearly double the current number of sea days observed annually. Closing this gap is a high priority for NOAA, with benefits including improved stock assessments and improved collection of catch and bycatch information. Increasing the number of fisheries observed and the total number of observed days at sea would decrease the gaps in knowledge where bycatch may be occurring, but is not documented, and would enable NOAA to better manage many of the economically valuable fisheries in the United States while minimizing risks to protected and non-target species.

Finally, the agency is currently engaged in a strategic planning effort to consider challenges and opportunities associated with the adoption of electronic technologies in fishery-dependent data collection programs, most notably the use of electronic monitoring (EM) using video cameras and electronic reporting (ER) using e-logbooks. The goal is to achieve a more cost-effective and sustainable approach to fishery-dependent data collection and in doing so, align the approach with the range of current and emerging technologies. The outcome would inform the development of monitoring programs for catch share or non-catch share fisheries.

Several observer programs are actively engaged in EM pilot projects to test the feasibility of video monitoring for collection of data aboard commercial fishing vessels. EM technologies offer an alternative means to collect fishery-dependent data onboard vessels where space is

[5] Direct appropriations for observer programs under the Observer budget line; does not include other congressional appropriations. See Appendix A.

limited and/or safety is a concern. However, a number of operational issues must be resolved before EM can be integrated into a comprehensive monitoring program. As identified in several of the pilot projects, these issues include the ability to accurately identify species, estimate weights of discarded fish, and reduce the length of time required to review video and extract all requisite information. Addressing these and other operational issues related to the implementation of EM are a priority for the coming year.

Finally, given the nation's fiscal problems, NOAA along with other federal agencies, will most likely be facing declining budgets in FY 2013 and beyond. The challenge for observer programs is how to balance increasing monitoring demands with decreasing federal funds. The search for options to reduce the cost of observer coverage has taken on new urgency, and alternatives such as EM and cost-sharing with industry are key areas actively under development. While some observer programs have relied on industry funding for many years, several other observer programs have begun to transition to industry funding in recent years. This has proven to be a challenge in fisheries where profit margins are slim or non-existent. Finding the right balance of cost-effectiveness, cost-sharing with industry and using all necessary and available tools to meet monitoring and observing requirements will be a high priority for the future.

APPENDIX A: NMFS Fisheries Observer Programs Funded in FY 2012
ALASKA

Fisheries Observed	Fleet Size	Authority to Place Observers	Season of Operation	Funding Amount	Funding Source	Program Duration	Target % Coverage	Actual % Coverage	Target Sea Days	Actual Sea Days	Number of Observers
PACIFIC OCEAN											
North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115-0070											
Program Manager: Martin Loefflad, 206-526-4195, martin.loefflad@noaa.gov, website: http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/observers/											
Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Trawl, Longline and Pot Fisheries	264 vessels / 20 shore plants	MSFCMA (50 CFR 679.50)	year-round	$1,325,518	National Observer Program	1973 - present	100% vessels >125 ft.; 30% vessels 60-124 ft.; 30% or 100% shore plants	100% vessels >125 ft.; 30% vessels 60-124 ft.; 30% or 100% shore plants	Defined by regulation (35,000)	40,000*	450
				$67,332	Reducing Bycatch						
				$5,752,336	Obs/Trn-North Pacific Marine Resource Observers/ North Pacific Observer Program[1]						
				$16,000,000	Industry Funding						
				$1,000,000	National Catch Share Program						
Data to assess the current actual coverage in the 30% fleet are not available, and compliance with the requirement has been an enforcement function. The North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program uses observer days rather than observer sea days, because the coverage regulations require observers to be stationed at shoreside plants as well as on vessels. *Does not include 4,800 shore plant coverage days, bringing the total number of coverage days to 44,800 [1]Portion of budget line used to support management activities.											
Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program, Alaska Regional Office, P. O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668											
Program Manager: Bridget Mansfield, 907-586-7642, bridget.mansfield@noaa.gov, website: http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/observers/mmop.htm											
Southeast Alaska drift gillnet fishery	480 permits	MMPA (50 CFR 229)	May - Oct	$450,000	Marine Mammal Observers	0	0	0	0	387	13
TOTAL ALASKA REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (CONGRESSIONAL): $8,595,186											
TOTAL ALASKA REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (INDUSTRY): $16,000,000											
TOTAL ALASKA REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (ALL SOURCES): $24,595,186											

NORTHWEST

Fisheries Observed	Fleet Size	Authority to Place Observers	Season of Operation	Funding Amount	Funding Source	Program Duration	Target % Coverage	Actual % Coverage	Target Sea Days	Actual Sea Days	Number of Observers
West Coast Groundfish Observer Program, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, 2725 Montlake Blvd East, Seattle, WA 98112-2097											
Program Manager: Jon McVeigh, 206-302-2423, jon.mcveigh@noaa.gov website: http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/fram/observer/											
West Coast Trawl Catch Shares (shoreside and at-sea fleets)	154	MSFCMA (50 CFR 660)	Shoreside: year-round; at-sea May - Dec	$4,924,000	National Catch Share Program[2]	Jan 2011 - present (Note: includes historical fisheries LE Trawl 2001 - 2010 and At-Sea Hake 1975 - 2010)	100%	100%	Defined by regulation (100% coverage, shoreside 1 observer; at-sea 2 observers)	Shoreside: 7,454 At-Sea: 1,674	119
				$800,000	Obs/Trn-West Coast Observers (NWR)						
				$67,331	Reducing Bycatch						
				$262,556	National Observer Program						
					Industry Funding						
West Coast Groundfish Non-Catch Share Fisheries (Limited Entry Fixed Gear, Open Access fisheries including state managed fisheries)	LE: 179 trawl, 190 longline, 30 trap permits, OA: approx 1,000	MSFCMA (50 CFR 660)	year-round	$438,674	National Observer Program	2001 - present	LE: 10-20% OA: <1-10%	LE: 15-25% OA: 1-8%	LE: 800 OA: 700	1,883	40
				$4,072,928	Obs/Trn-West Coast Observers						

[2] A portion of these funds were used for reimbursement of vessels.

TOTAL NORTHWEST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (CONGRESSIONAL): $10,565,489

TOTAL NORTHWEST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (INDUSTRY): $247,604

TOTAL NORTHWEST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (ALL SOURCES): $10,813,093

SOUTHWEST

Fisheries Observed	Fleet Size	Authority to Place Observers	Season of Operation	Funding Amount	Funding Source	Program Duration	Target % Coverage	Actual % Coverage	Target Sea Days	Actual Sea Days	Number of Observers
Southwest Region Observer Program, Southwest Regional Office, 501 West Ocean Blvd, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213											
Program Manager: Lyle Enriquez, 562-980-4025, lyle.enriquez@noaa.gov, website: http://swr.ucsd.edu/hcd/fishobs.htm											
California Large-Mesh Drift Gillnet Fishery	35 vessels	MMPA (50 CFR 229), MSFCMA (50 CFR 660)	Aug - Jan	$237,729	National Observer Program	1990 - present	20%	TBD	150	150	6
California Deep-Set Pelagic Longline Fishery	1 vessel	MSFCMA (50 CFR 660)	Nov - May	$67,331	Reducing Bycatch	2001 - present	100%	100%	120	103	
				$90,008	National Observer Program						
Southern California Set Gillnet Fishery	40 vessels	MMPA (50 CFR 229), ESA (50 CFR 222)	Jan - Dec	$166,690	National Observer Program	1990 - 1994, 2007, 2010 - 2012	10%	TBD	150	81	
Southern California Small-Mesh Drift Gillnet Fishery	20 vessels	MMPA (50 CFR 229), ESA (50 CFR 222)	Jun - Sep	$35,774	National Observer Program	2002 - 2005, 2010 - 2012	20%	TBD	30	5	
Deep-Set Buoy Gear Fishery	1 Vessel		Jun - Sep	$3,020	National Observer Program	2012	NA	NA	NA	3	
SWC Data Management and Bycatch Estimates	NA	NA	year-round	$175,000	National Observer Program	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
TOTAL SOUTHWEST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (CONGRESSIONAL): $775,552											
TOTAL SOUTHWEST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (INDUSTRY): NA											
TOTAL SOUTHWEST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (ALL SOURCES): $775,552											

PACIFIC

Fisheries Observed	Fleet Size	Authority to Place Observers	Season of Operation	Funding Amount	Funding Source	Program Duration	Target % Coverage	Actual % Coverage	Target Sea Days	Actual Sea Days	Number of Observers
Hawaii Fisheries Observer Program, Pacific Islands Regional Office, 1601 Kapiolani Blvd, Honolulu, HI 96814-4700											
Program Manager: John Kelly, 808-973-2935, john.d.kelly@noaa.gov, website: http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/pir/index.htm											
Hawaii Pelagic Longline Fishery	164 vessels with permits (112 active)	MSFCMA (50 CFR 665), MMPA (50 CFR 229)	year-round	$5,309,724	Obs/Trn-Hawaii Longline Observers	1994 - present	20% Tuna	20%	6,110	6,212	50
							100% swordfish	100%	2,970	2,613	
American Samoa Pelagic Longline fishery	30	MSFCMA (50 CFR 665) in Jan. 2005	year-round	$678,856	National Observer Program	2005-present	20%	20%	1,204	965	
Program support for the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission	NA	NA	year-round	$67,332	Reducing Bycatch	2008	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Support for PIRO Observer Data Dissemination/Access Activities	NA	NA	year-round	$353,221	National Observer Program	2007 - present	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
TOTAL PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (CONGRESSIONAL): $6,409,133											
TOTAL PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (INDUSTRY): NA											
TOTAL PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (ALL SOURCES): $6,409,133											

NORTHEAST

Fisheries Observed	Fleet Size	Authority to Place Observers	Season of Operation	Funding Amount	Funding Source	Program Duration	Target % Coverage	Actual % Coverage	Target Sea Days	Actual Sea Days	Number of Observers
Northeast Fisheries Observer Program, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543-1097											
Program Manager: Amy Van Atten, 508-495-2266, amy.van.atten@noaa.gov, website: http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/fsb/											
New England Groundfish Trawl and Sink Gillnet Fisheries (also shrimp trawl, bottom longline/tub, herring mid-water pair trawl, whiting trawl)	1,052 trawl vessels and 474 gillnet vessels and 46 longline	MSFCMA (50 CFR 648); MMPA (50 CFR 229)	year-round	$8,395,856	Obs/Trn-New England Groundfish	1990 - present	30% coefficient of variation on bycatch species; 30% for groundfish common pool; 25% for groundfish sectors; 20% herring	Coverage targets are close	Targets are set by SBRM (April through March), based on CV and adjusted for funding availability and/or resource set-aside	5,412	207
				$3,551,507	National Observer Program						
				$4,350,000	National Catch Share Program					6,047	
				$856,689	Marine Mammal Observers						
Mid-Atlantic Coastal Gillnet Fishery (includes monkfish, dogfish, and several state fisheries)	>670 vessels	MMPA (50 CFR 229)	year-round	$45,000	Marine Mammal Observers	1994 - present	30% coefficient of variation on bycatch species (SBRM)	<8%	see above	included in groundfish (1232)	included in groundfish
NE and Mid-Atlantic Small Mesh Trawl Fisheries (squid, mackerel, butterfish)	719 permits	MMPA (50 CFR 229); MSFCMA (50 CFR 648)	year-round	$1,504,408	Atlantic Coast Observers	2001 - present	30% coefficient of variation on bycatch species (SBRM)	<8%	see above	included in groundfish (948)	included in groundfish

Mid-Atlantic Illex Squid Trawl Fishery	76 permits	MSFCMA (50 CFR 648); MMPA (50 CFR 229)	year-round			2004 - present	30% coefficient of variation on bycatch species (SBRM)	<5%	see above	included in groundfish (24)	included in groundfish
Atlantic Sea Scallop Dredge Fishery	233 vessels	MSFCMA (50 CFR 648)	year-round	$ 2,592,700	Industry Funding	1999 - present	2-13% depending on permit type, area fished, and turtle takes	Coverage targets are close	see above	3,577	included in groundfish
				$67,332	Reducing Bycatch						
NE and Mid-Atlantic Large Mesh Trawl Fisheries (summer flounder, bluefish, monkfish, dogfish)	>1,000	MSFCMA (50 CFR 648)	year-round		Included in Atl. Coast Observers and Groundfish	1998 - present	30% coefficient of variation on bycatch species (SBRM)	<5%	see above	included in groundfish (1648)	included in groundfish
TOTAL NORTHEAST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (CONGRESSIONAL): $18,770,792											
TOTAL NORTHEAST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (INDUSTRY): $2,592,700											
TOTAL NORTHEAST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (ALL SOURCES): $ 21,363,492											

SOUTHEAST

Fisheries Observed	Fleet Size	Authority to Place Observers	Season of Operation	Funding Amount	Funding Source	Program Duration	Target % Coverage	Actual % Coverage	Target Sea Days	Actual Sea Days	Number of Observers
Southeast Fisheries Observer Programs - Programs are managed in separate laboratories as indicated below.											
Southeast Shrimp Trawl Observer Program, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Galveston Laboratory, 4700 Avenue U, Galveston, TX 77551-5997											
Program Manager: Elizabeth Scott-Denton, 409-766-3571, elizabeth.scott-denton@noaa.gov, website:http://galveston.ssp.nmfs.gov/galv/research/management.htm#observer_program											
Southeastern Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Otter Trawl Fisheries (including rock shrimp)	approx. 1,467 (GOM) and 534 (SA) USCG federally permitted vessels, unknown number of state vessels, ~106 rock shrimp vessels	Voluntary through July 2007; Mandatory - July 2007 MSFCMA (50 CFR 622)	year-round	$1,802,511	Obs/Trn-South Atlantic and Gulf Shrimp Observers	1992 - present	2%	2%	1,500	1,518	44
				$239,211	Obs/Trn-Atlantic Coast Observers						
Atlantic Pelagic Longline Observer Program, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, 75 Virginia Beach Dr, Miami, FL 33149-1003											
Program Manager: Kenneth Keene, 305-361-4275, kenneth.keene@noaa.gov, website: http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/											
Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Pelagic Longline Fishery	70-80 active vessels	MSFCMA (50 CFR 635); MMPA (50 CFR 229); ATCA	year-round	$1,197,418	Obs/Trn-Atlantic Coast Observers	1992 - present	8% by vessel sets	~10%	620 sets	1,465	12
				$354,375	Obs/Trn - East Coast Observers						
				$728,500	Atlantic Bluefin Tuna						

Southeast Shark Driftnet Observer Program & Shark Bottom Longline Observer Program, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Panama City Laboratory, 3500 Delwood Beach Rd, Panama City, FL 32408											
Program Manager: Dr. John Carlson, 850-234-6541, john.carlson@noaa.gov, website: www.wefscpanamalab.noaa.gov/shark/observersBLL.htm											
Southeast Shark and Coastal Teleost Gillnet Fishery	Directed Shark Permits: 216 Indirect Shark Permits: 262	MMPA (50 CFR 229); MSFCMA (50 CFR 635)	year-round	$363,728	Obs/Trn-Atlantic Coast Observers	1998 - present	100% shark strike, 38% shark drift, 5% shark and teleost sink net	100% shark strike, 38% shark drift, 5% shark and teleost sink net	100% shark strike, 38% shark drift, 5% shark and teleost sink net	204	6
Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Directed Large Coastal Shark Bottom Longline Fishery	Directed Shark Permits: 216 Indirect Shark Permits: 262 Reeffish Longline Exemption Permits: 65	MSFCMA (50 CFR 635)	Year-round-Open until quota is filled	$176,775	National Observer Program	1994 - present	100% sandbar shark research fishery; 4-6% non-sandbar shark fishery	100% sandbar shark research fishery; 4-6% non-sandbar shark fishery	100% sandbar shark research fishery; 4-6% non-sandbar shark fishery; 8-10% Reeffish Longline	shark research fishery: 273; non research fishery: 16; reeffish: 83 (total 372)	16
				$358,000	National Catch Share Program						
Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Fishery Observer Program, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Galveston Laboratory, 4700 Avenue U, Galveston, TX 77551											
Program Manager: Elizabeth Scott-Denton, 409-766-3507, elizabeth.scott-denton@noaa.gov											
Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Fishery - All gear types	Approx. 831 permitted USCG documented vessels	mandatory	year-round	$67,331	Reducing Bycatch	2006 - present	2%	1%	455	323	44 (included in shrimp fishery)
				$522,788	National Observer Program						
Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Fishery - Vertical Line Emphasis	Approx. 831 permitted USCG documented vessels	mandatory	year-round	$2,100,000	National Catch Share Program	August 2011 - present	5%	8%	999	1,751	9

Gulf of Mexico Purse Seine (Menhaden) Observer Program, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Galveston Laboratory, 4700 Avenue U, Galveston, TX 77551											
Program Manager: Elizabeth Scott-Denton, 409-766-3507, elizabeth.scott-denton@noaa.gov											
Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Fishery	Approx. 41 permitted USCG documented vessels	MMPA (50 CFR 229)	April - November	$60,000	Marine Mammals	2011	~1%	~1%	50		2
TOTAL SOUTHEAST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (CONGRESSIONAL): $7,970,637											
TOTAL SOUTHEAST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (INDUSTRY): NA											
TOTAL SOUTHEAST REGION OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING (ALL SOURCES): $7,970,637											

National Observer Program, Office of Science and Technology, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910											
Manager: Chris Rilling, 301-713-2363, chris.rilling@noaa.gov, website: http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/nop											
Science & Technology	NA	NA	NA	$67,332	Reducing Bycatch	1999-Present	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Science & Technology	NA	NA	NA	$57,782	Atl Coast Observers	1999-Present	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Science & Technology	NA	NA	NA	$567,968	National Observer Program	1999-Present	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
HQ Observers	NA	NA	NA	$1,140,482	HQ Observers	1999-Present	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

TOTAL OBSERVER PROGRAM FUNDING*	**$39,576,843**	
Total Reducing Bycatch	**$471,321**	
Total National Observer Program**	**$9,064,642**	
TOTAL OTHER CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING	**$14,872,189**	
TOTAL INDUSTRY FUNDING	**$18,840,304**	
TOTAL CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING***	**$54,920,353**	
TOTAL OBSERVER FUNDING - ALL FUNDING SOURCES	**$73,760,657**	**Totals may not sum due to rounding**

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF SEA DAYS TARGETED - Does not include programs that target permits, sets, or trips instead of sea days	**65,000**	
ACTUAL NUMBER OF SEA DAYS OBSERVED -includes days deployed for electronic monitoring, does not include programs that target permits, sets, or trips instead of sea days.		**82,196**

TOTAL NUMBER OF OBSERVERS - Does not include deployments for electronic monitoring	**974**

*Includes National Observer Program funds.

** Shown here separately for clarity and consistency with previous reports.

***Sum of total observer program funding, reducing bycatch, and other congressional funding.

Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
Rebecca Blank

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