



NOAA FISHERIES

Industry Funded Scallop Program



Scallop Observer Duties: What to expect during an observed trip

(Observers should provide this sheet to the captain at the beginning of an observed trip.)

Industry Funded Scallop Observers shall perform the following duties, at a minimum:

- Conduct a pre-trip safety check.
- Communicate with vessel personnel about observer duties and data collection.
- Ask the captain and/or owner of the vessel for some economic information, such as trip costs (price of fuel, ice, etc.), dealer, and VTR number.
- Collect information on fishing gear, including but not limited to dredge frame type and size, presence or absence of turtle chains, twine top/codend mesh measurements, measurements of bag ring sizes; and obtain photographs of each dredge frame and chain mat used.
- Collect tow-by-tow information, such as depth, water temperature, wave height, and location and time when fishing begins and ends.
- Record all kept and discarded catch on observed hauls and obtain species, weight, and reason kept or discarded.
- Record shell heights for both kept and discarded scallops every other observed haul; obtain shucked meat weight, and volume of meats for one crew filled basket of kept scallops per on-watch period.
- Complete an off-watch log with the captain's assistance for hauls when observer is not on effort out on deck, to include number of hauls not observed, locations, average number of bushels/weight of kept scallops caught.
- (Depending on the watch schedule) the observer should switch watches halfway through the trip to ensure proper data collection, and should be respectful of the crew's off-watch time.
- Conduct detailed biological sampling at a minimum of once per watch period by collecting otoliths, spines, scales, etc.
- Collect detailed information, biological samples, measurements, and photographs of any interaction with a protected species, such as sea turtles, porpoise, dolphins, whales, and birds (also called incidental takes).

Observers should bring the following, along with other scientific gear:

C.P.R. Card, personal identification, and proof of insurance, immersion suit and Personal Floatation Device, appropriate clothing, length frequency board for finfish and scallops, volumetric measuring cup for scallop meats, spring or motion-calibrated platform scales, thermometer, calipers and tape measure, buckets and/or baskets to sample, and work-issued cameras, logs, manuals, and field guides.

Observers should not:

- Provide advice about fishing regulations.
- Accept any gifts or direct payment in any form from the vessel operator, owner, or crew.
- Participate in commercial fishing activities during the trip, such as shucking scallops, or standing wheel watch.
- Hinder or slow fishing operations unless necessary to obtain critical discard or incidental take information.
- Use personal recording devices, such as camcorders, cameras, cell phones, and diaries.
- Use the vessel's communication equipment for personal purposes.
- Discuss the observed trip with anyone other than program staff.
- Handle the EPIRB in any manner, including removing housing.

The Captain's legal responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Ensure the vessel has a current U.S. Coast Guard Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Examination decal and other essential non-expired safety devices, provide the observer with a safety orientation, and maintain a wheel watch throughout the trip.
- Cooperate with the observer in the performance of the observer's duties including assisting the observer in obtaining EPIRB expiration dates mandatory for the Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist, allowing the observer to access navigation equipment as necessary to perform observer duties, and providing true vessel locations by latitude and longitude upon request by the observer.
- Provide the observer with VTR Serial Numbers and VMS Fishing Activity Codes if requested.
- Notify the observer when commercial fishing operations are to begin and end.
- Provide the observer with living quarters, meals, and amenities comparable to a crew member.
- Allow the observer access to areas of the vessel and gear necessary to conduct their duties.
- Bring aboard marine mammals, sea turtles and sea birds that were killed during fishing operations if requested by the observer.
- Provide refrigerated storage space for observer-collected specimens within reason.

It is illegal for Captains and Crew to:

- Assault, harass or sexually harass, intimidate or attempt to influence observers.
- Interfere with or impede observer duties.
- Ask observers to stand watch or help with fishing operations.
- Fish without an observer or official waiver once selected by the NMFS Industry Funded Scallop Observer Program.

At the completion of a trip, Observers should provide the Captain with the following:

- Data Release Form to request a photocopy of the observer's trip logs.
- Fishermen's Comment Card with pre-paid postage.