



the **Mail Buoy**

A publication of the Association for Professional Observers
P.O. Box 933 Eugene, Oregon 97440 (541) 344-5503
E-mail: apo_obs@hotmail.com Website: <http://www.apo-observers.org>



APO BUSINESS;

APO IS REVAMPING ITS MISSION AND MEMBERS

The APO has experienced a lapse of activity for over a year now and we are undergoing some changes in personnel and policy. We have [Big Dreams](#) (wish list below) but for now we will start humbly revamping as there are only two of us now engaged in APO activities. The APO advocates for the integrity of observer programs and the data we collect to support the management of sustainable fisheries. This requires that: observers have a safe and fair working environment, experienced observers are retained, observer rights are preserved, and observers have an organized voice in the fishery management process regarding needed changes. We need volunteers from all observer programs throughout the nation to carry out the APO mission.

The APO's Mission

1. Advocate for Observer Issues. The APO is now expanding to other programs and will continue to promote and strengthen relationships between observers and their contractors, state, federal, and provincial agencies, the scientific community and union representatives.

2. Encourage networking and the exchange of information. The APO helps show pathways for observers to attain positions of leadership within the fisheries, including but not limited to sharing job announcements in Internet observer forums, such as ObserverNet.org.

3. Identify Observer-related problems. The APO identifies issues regarding safety, sampling protocol, hiring and firing, conduct, harassment, retaliation for whistleblowing, and data quality standards. The APO will continue to work with all parties involved, and especially the National Observer Program, to recommend alternatives and to help develop standardized protocols nationwide.

4. Disseminate, via newsletter, information regarding observer, marine conservation, biological, and fisheries management issues. With this newsletter, our goal is to educate members and non-members concerning these issues, and to provide fisheries news and stories. The newsletter also includes references to emerging research and publications relevant to observer programs and those of which are based on observer data.

5. Monitor regulatory amendments, federal register notices, agency managerial protocol, and applicable regulatory acts and plans. We monitor fisheries management changes that could potentially impact observers and the integrity of the nation's observer programs. We advocate for sound marine fisheries and wildlife management policies and for observer data collection in data-deficient fisheries. The APO also encourages increased participation of observers in the fishery management councils and management agencies.

WE NEED TO !!!ORGANIZE!!!

WITH OTHER OBSERVERS AND EXPAND TO OTHER REGIONS: The APO has always been heavily North Pacific-focused but we wish to expand to other programs and to recruit observer volunteers from all regions nationally and internationally to help implement sound observer program policies. Getting grants for paid positions has been complicated by our lack of 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, so we rely on observer dues for project maintenance. Dues barely cover baseline management of the website and newsletter so we need a core of volunteers from each region to assist in carrying out mission tasks. Our ultimate goal is to foster the development of independent APO charters in all regions as well as internationally. Observers are encouraged to take as large or as small a role as they like. We hope to encourage observer involvement and discussions. Following is a list of suggested APO positions we are looking to fill:

1. Observer Liaisons: We will need an observer liaison from each observer program and observer provider to report on contractor policies and, if unionized, coordinate with union representatives. These observers will keep tabs on any union developments and any problems reported to them from other observers employed by their contractor. They will also cooperate with federal, state and provincial agencies which contract with observer providers to report on agency accountability of the contractors- presented in annual reports, ensuring observer providers are meeting quality standards and basic labor laws.

2. Job Resources Coordinator: We need web geeks to post fishery and wildlife job

opportunities weekly on the job board at ObserverNet.org. They will periodically research several biology-based job resource boards and encourage observers and other professionals to send them job announcements so that they may post them in an organized fashion.

3. Writers and Editors for APO newsletter and official letters: We need observers to write letters on observer issues to the *Mail Buoy* and other publications as issues arise. We would also like to provide information on ways to publish in scientific journals. Publications are extremely valuable in career development and keep the scientific inquiry rolling. Though the data is not ours (it's NMFS'), there have been instances when observers have published information based on observer data- lets here about them.

4. Mail Buoy Publisher: We need someone to take responsibility for conducting the final editing and publishing of the Mail Buoy. Depending on your personal computer capabilities, this could be as simple as a word document to something fancier with graphics, illustrations and photos. The major purpose is to get out the news of decisions being made that will impact observers lives and other issues of interest.

5. Working Group Coordinators and Moderators: Although we presently have several topics in mind, please e-mail us with a list of discussion topics that interest you and that you think may be of interest to observers throughout the country and even around the globe. We will then select 10 topics from this list (possibly combining some topics) and proceed to set up on-line working groups with elected observer moderators for each of these topics. The moderators will be responsible for reporting on these discussions in a concise and fair manner. The reports will be published in the bi-monthly Mail Buoy and presented to appropriate fisheries management personnel.

6. Council Representatives: We need observers to monitor fishery management changes at the council level that could impact observers and the data we collect. When possible, they will attend Council meetings, Observer Advisory Committee meetings, and other fisheries-related forums. Many of these meetings are open to the public and ones that are not could have observer representation simply by asking the board members (Although, sometimes... it may not be that easy).

7. Sustainable Fisheries Representative: We need a core of observers from each region to research fisheries that are operating unsustainably, fisheries with deficient observer data, and observer programs with severe data quality problems. The representatives will monitor and report on progress of these fisheries and programs. (International representation is highly recommended for this).

8. Harassment and Safety Representatives: We need observers from each region to follow harassment and safety issues within the jurisdiction of your region. This will include keeping track of observer complaints about safety and harassment, monitoring and reporting on progress made in investigations, monitoring and reporting on observer program safety training protocols and equipment, and coordinating with the Coast Guard and NMFS Enforcement (and equivalents, internationally) on problem vessels.

9. Whistleblower Representative: We need observers who will coordinate with the Safety and Harassment Representative and the Observer Liaisons depending on the whistleblowing activity. The APO would like to encourage progress through established channels but when these are exhausted or do not feel safe, the APO would like to serve as an organized voice for problem areas expressed to us by observers. We will provide information on lessons learned from past cases involving whistleblowers regarding ways to prevent retaliation and coordinate with other organizations such as Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics (FSEE), and the Government Accountability Project (GAP).

10. Web-Guru: We need to revamp our website to be back on track with current issues and resources. The web managers will edit our website on a quarterly basis and coordinate incoming reports from various regions so that we can get the word out!

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES:

“Nine sperm whales have gathered to form a ‘rosette’, their heads pointing to the center, their bodies radiating out like the spokes of a wheel. The reason for this defensive formation quickly becomes apparent: three or four adult killer whales are rapidly circling just outside the rosette.

“Killer whales hunt in packs like wolves, and this group may have spent decades together honing the cooperative skills necessary to bring down large prey. This morning they seem intent on breaking up the rosette and isolating individuals. During one of their sorties, a sperm whale is pulled away from the rosette and immediately set on by four or five attackers. We can see several black and white shapes beneath the water, the group is charging the sperm whales from both sides. Twisting their bodies and violently shaking their heads like hungry sharks, the killer whales try to wrench off mouthfuls of what must be very tough flesh. The tempo of the attack picks up, as though the killer whales sense they are gaining the advantage. The sperm whale cannot survive this punishment for long.

“Then to our astonishment, two sperm whales leave the rosette formation and approach their isolated companion. One on each side, the two begin to herd the severely injured whale back to the rosette. For a time, the killer whales redirect their attack to the escorts, then retreat once again. We see this same heroic scenario several times: one or two members of the rosette invite attack on themselves in an effort to bring one of their own back into the formation.”

(from: *Sperm Whales* by Hal Whitehead)

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMS:

******Observers, please submit descriptions/observer stories from any observer program that you believe to be under-represented or not represented at all***

WHO ARE UNITED STATES FISHERIES OBSERVERS?

Who is a Qualified Observer? What are the rights of Observers? What is sufficient job and safety training for observers? Are Observers- biologists, professionals, technicians, enforcement agents, ex-fisherman, college grads, high-school grads... laborers? These are questions you will get quite different answers to, depending on the Region you are working in and the interest of the party answering you. To be blunt, there is no clear and concise definition of who United States Fisheries Observers are because, quite simply, we can be considered all of the above definitions and more. Of course, diversity in the workforce can be a great thing and is quite realistic when dealing with numerous fisheries with varying objectives... but hopefully diversity is not attained at the sacrifice of what all observer programs have as one of their main objectives- collecting and maintaining high-quality fisheries and scientific data.

As an United States Fisheries Observer experienced in several different regions and fisheries across the US, I have noticed some incredible differences and redundancies in how observers are: defined, hired and fired, trained, held accountable, treated, and retained... or not. Although, it has been one of the hottest topics at all the last three International Fisheries Observer Conferences, "Standardization" is still a sore subject with some fisheries management personnel around the US today. I understand the perspective that managers don't wish to have to lower their own program's standards to meet those of another. But, I don't think any of us would like to do that. The other main argument against standardization is a good one- varying goals. For instance, two fisheries may seem identical from afar, but have different objectives, special interests, Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), and Biological Opinions guiding them. But still, I would make an educated guess that at least three out of the first five objectives/observer priorities of all major US Observer Programs are very close to identical with only the species names and jargon changing.

At the most recent Observer Conference in Australia, I presented a case study comparing the Tuna/Swordfish directed Longline Fisheries of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC; Miami, Florida) and The Pacific Islands Regional Observer Program (PIORP; Honolulu, Hawaii) because I've trained in both and have worked as an observer and (up until recently) a debriefer in the Pacific Islands Region. The objectives are hauntingly similar, and the majority of the data collected is exactly the same (only some data elements may be defined slightly differently or have different parameters governing them). Both programs even use the same Oracle database to store their data. Yet, not one of the identical fish species observed in the respective fisheries have the same species codes, and the data are collected and reported in literally different spots on the respective forms and databases. I understand, from my experience, that many regional fisheries management personnel just don't have the time or resources to work towards meeting

national goals when they are overloaded with regional tasks. Standardizing national observer data is simply not the highest of priorities for them. But, I strongly believe that it should be... for somebody. And, it is.

The third Objective of the National Observer Program (NOP) is to: “Develop and support national standards and policies to create high quality, cost effective, efficient, and productive observer programs.” “National Standards”- has been chipped into within the last several years. For instance, standardized observer safety training and standardized observer rights were priority discussion topics at the US/Canada Observer Workshop in Newfoundland, Canada back in June 2000. Soon after, the NOP initiated all regional observer trainers to be trained by the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA). Many saw this as a tremendous step in the right direction. I especially thought it a great move since I had experienced drastic differences in Observer safety training from region to region before this step was taken. Also at the Newfoundland conference: The *Observer Bill of Rights* was facilitated in a break-out session by Teresa Turk (now of the NOP), Kim Dietrich, Vicki Cornish, and over 50 observers and NMFS staff from around the US and Canada. After one evening of preparation, we (Teresa, Kim, Rueben Beazley (an Eastern Canada Observer), Scott Buchanan (a Western Canada Observer), and myself) presented the *Observer Bill of Rights* which sprung a three-hour discussion in the main room. I have seen some of these *Rights* fought for since by both the NOP, APO, and by some select regional fisheries personnel strewn about. But, many of these Rights aren’t even touched upon in some programs and are minimally accounted for in others.

For example, under the first paragraph of *The Observer Bill of Rights* document (*The 2nd Biennial US/Canada Workshop*, <www.fisheriesobserverconference.com>): “Transferability of observer credit for purposes of financial compensation from one program to another” is an Observer Right. I believe this to be very important because many observers like to move around from region to region (fishery to fishery) at their discretion. Shouldn’t Observer experience = observer experience? Yeh... but it doesn’t. I, for instance, won’t receive any credit (monetarily) for observing in any other fisheries of the US besides the North Pacific when I do get deployed this coming month in Alaska. This seems crazy... right? Well, how can we expect observer experience in one region to be exactly comparable in another when the definition of an observer changes from one region to the next? It may seem quite obvious what observers have to gain by being properly defined and by having their basic rights protected, but what do Fisheries Management personnel and Fisheries Management as a whole have to gain by establishing clear, basic observer program standards?

1. More easily shared information from region to region, especially when regarding management of a fishery catching highly migratory species like tuna, swordfish, turtles, marine mammals, seabirds, etc.
2. Cooperative observer trainings (translating to more “cost effective, efficient, and productive observer programs,” as stated in the NOP objectives).
3. A higher degree of scientific data quality and respect for observers (because there are fewer holes in United States Fisheries Observer

- Program as a whole), and
4. More easily defended legal suits because of #3.

So again... who are United States Fisheries Observers? NOAA Fisheries management personnel and the Department of Labor (DOL) are currently negotiating answers to this very question (but are primarily concerned with their own interests). I strongly believe that we (as observers) need to be a part of this very important step, and that the *Observer Bill of Rights* and basic observer program standards need to be integral tactics in defining us. Observers live a life of ambiguity when we can't even tell a friend who we work for without naming three agencies, a contractor, and a union... and still we can only be speaking for ourselves, one region at a time, one fishery at a time.

-Keith Davis

REGIONAL UPDATES:

****Observers, please submit descriptions/observer stories from any observer program that you believe to be under-represented or not represented at all.*

NORTH PACIFIC:

OBSERVER ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

The Observer Advisory Committee (OAC) of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) met May 12-13, 2005 in Seattle, Washington. The OAC was provided with updates on the status of the Federal Observer Compensation Act (FOCA) and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) as it pertains to observers working in Alaska. The primary focus of the meeting was to review the preliminary draft analysis to revise the funding and deployment mechanism of the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP).

FOCA Update:

The Federal Observer Compensation Act is proposed legislation intended to reduce the costs for observer insurance, limit vessel liability in negligence claims, and provide a more comprehensive program for compensating observers for work related injury or illness. No significant changes have been made to the substance of the bill since 2003 while it goes through an internal agency review. The National Observer Program (NOP) has initiated a contract to analyze the financial impact of implementing FOCA.

FLSA Update:

Dr. Bill Karp, Director of NPGOP, gave an update of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) issues related to compensation and status of fisheries observers. At the center of this issue is the applicability of overtime pay for observers as defined by the FLSA.

In November 2003, a memo from Dr. William Hogarth, Director of NOAA Fisheries, maintained that fisheries observers working under a direct contract with the agency are

classified as *Biological Technicians* rather than *Professional Biologists*, as determined by the Department of Labor (DOL). These observers are eligible for overtime compensation under the FLSA. The question of observer status was initiated by an agency funded program in Hawaii, but has implications for a restructured NPGOP.

Dr. Karp reported that a review of FLSA applicability and exemptions for NPGOP requires a formal request from the Dept. of Commerce to the Dept. of Labor, and is estimated to take about six months. This request has not yet been drafted by NOAA and DOC.

North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program Restructuring:

An overview of the preliminary draft analysis was provided to the committee for review. Under the system proposed in the analysis, NMFS would contract directly with observer providers for observer coverage, funded by a broad-based user fee and/or direct Federal subsidy. Vessels and processors not covered under the new program would continue to operate under the existing program (whereby vessels contract directly with observer providers). The alternatives for the new program vary with regard to scope (i.e., which fleets or sectors are included in the new program and which remain in the current pay-as-you-go program). The action alternatives range from including all Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish vessels to a comprehensive alternative that would include all vessels and processors fishing groundfish or halibut in Federal waters around Alaska.

Currently, observer coverage levels in the groundfish program are based on vessel length. A new observer program would likely allow more flexibility for NMFS to determine observer coverage based on data needs. A four-tier system has been proposed that will establish clear and uniform criteria for determining what observer coverage is required in each fishery. The intent is that all fishery sectors included under the new program would be placed in one of four tiers at final action, and a change from one tier to another would require a subsequent amendment and rulemaking process.

Since the May OAC meeting, the NPFMC has reorganized the alternatives for NPGOP restructuring in order to carry out a proper analysis. The Council simplified the alternatives to those that are feasible. The approved list of alternatives is:

- Alt 1: No Action (existing program expires December 31, 2007)
- Alt 2: Permanent rollover of the existing program with no change to the service delivery model
- Alt 3: New ex-vessel value fee program for GOA groundfish (vessels and processors) and all halibut vessels. Rollover of the existing program in the BSAI
- Alt 4: New ex-vessel value fee program for all tier 3 and 4 fisheries (less than 100% coverage) in GOA and BSAI. This option would rollover the existing program for all Tier 1 and 2 fisheries (100% or greater coverage) in GOA and BSAI.
- Alt 5: New fee program for all fisheries. Tier 3 and 4 (less than 100% coverage) would be funded by an ex-vessel value fee program. Tiers 1 and 2 (100% or greater coverage) would be funded by a daily observer fee.

The Council also requested further analysis of observer insurance issues and modification of the cost tables used to determine fishery revenues. The Council has noted the difficulty of adequately evaluating each alternative without a final determination of observer status, compensation, and overtime pay.

The OAC will meet again prior to the February 2006 Council initial review of and final action on the analysis.

The current program expiration is December 31, 2007. Final action to extend the current program (status quo) would be necessary by April 2007, but final action on a restructured program would likely be necessary by April 2006 for implementation by January 1, 2008.

- *Peter Risse*

****Excerpts reprinted (with Pete's permission) from the Summer 2005 OTC Quarterly www.uaf.edu/otc****

NMFS AND INDUSTRY PUT BIG PRESSURE ON POLICY MAKERS TO CHANGE OBSERVER PAY

The Observer Advisory Committee (OAC) from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) met in May this year and the only observer representative present was the Union Representative, Tracey Mayhew (Thanks Tracey!) While we were gone, NMFS and Industry talked about us and are trying to decide just how to key us observers out. Are we "Professionals" or are we "Biological Technicians"? The North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP) would like to call us Professionals. For your information, people, they're not trying to flatter us with an elevated status. No, the NPGOP are trying to make it easier to decertify us when we get out of line and Industry is trying to save money (Letter from James Balsiger, NMFS to Stephanie Madsen, North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 22 Jan 2004; NPFMC 2004).

Going all the way back to the original observer program in the tuna-porpoise days started in the early 70's until 1999 (when observers were federal employees), observers were hired as "Biological Technicians". NMFS in all observer programs have treated observers as Biological Technicians due to the original OPM decision that Fisheries Observers were technicians and that our duties fit the criteria of a technician. On 13 November 2003, NMFS released a memo stating that, "...the duties and responsibilities of fisheries observers involve adhering to routine sampling protocols that are planned and managed by professional employers. Fisheries observers perform these duties unsupervised, but all work is carefully reviewed for completeness and accuracy by professional biologists... Therefore, NMFS maintains the position that fisheries observers are biological technicians and therefore eligible for overtime compensation under the

Service Contract Act (SCA), the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and other acts stipulating wages and benefits for contracted service employees, as appropriate...”

However, the SCA and FLSA jurisdiction only extends to US territorial waters. But NMFS can take precedence and decided that it would be an enormous burden on the federal government to track vessels for the purpose of determining observer wages. They took the position that, “The wage rate that the Department of Labor (DOL) determines is appropriate for each specific locality should be applied to contracted fisheries observers whether they are working inside or outside of US territorial waters in order to provide a fair, simple and consistent application of the SCA/FLSA” (Letter to the Office of General Counsel from William Hogarth, NMFS, 13 November 2003).

At issue is the looming deadline in 2007 for the NPGOP to change the Service Delivery Model to a program that provides more control for NMFS to place observers where needed, instead of vessels being able to determine where and when observers monitor their fishing, as is the case under the current “pay-as-you-go” Service Delivery Model. Under the current system, vessels under 125 feet are given an overall goal of a certain percentage that is based arbitrarily on vessel length (vessels over 125 feet have 100% coverage). They pay for observer coverage when they need to satisfy the coverage percentage.

Under a direct contract with NMFS (instead of with the vessels), the Observer Provider would be required to adhere to certain labor and other laws. Earlier that year (31 March 2003), the DOL issued a proposed rule in the Federal Register (Vol. 68, No. 61, pg. 15559) to revise the existing wage determinations and definitions of duties, which haven’t been updated since 1975 and were determined to be confusing and difficult for employers to classify employees. Under these proposed rules, those who make more than 1700.00 per month and who “...perform office or non-manual work requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science...” would be called “Professionals” vs. “Biological Technicians”. This would mean that Fisheries Observers definitely fall in the category of “Biological Technician”.

“Professionals” are salaried and exempt from any overtime or fringe benefits and this is the category in which NPGOP and Industry would like to place us, claiming that we deserve the title (an ironic twist). The DOL proposed rule fell dead in its tracks when it reached Congress. Turns out someone in Alaska had something to do with that: “Earlier versions of the same omnibus spending bill that contained the crab rationalization program also contained a provision that would have prevented the DOL from issuing new overtime pay regulations. However, this provision was stripped from the omnibus spending bill before passage, meaning that the DOL is free to issue new regulations governing the overtime provisions of the FLSA” (NPFMC, 24 Mar 2004).

Now, and more critically, there are versions of the reauthorization of the Magnuson Stevens Act that contain a provision to change NPGOP observer status to “Professional”, making it fisheries policy, which would be more difficult to change in the future. Industry wants to keep their cost as low as possible and in the process undermine observers’ pay status.

So why should the NPGOP and the NMFS Alaska Region take the same position? Most likely, because they believe it is the only way they would get Industry to swallow the needed changes to a new Service Delivery Model. Complaints raised this year by NMFS about the “pay as you go” system included the lengthy appeal process necessary when attempting to decertify observers. Apparently the process of decertification of observers was previously done illegally by NPGOP and now observers can continue to work through the appeal process, which can take up to almost a year. This means that NMFS may be forced to throw out data. However, these are rare events.

There are more important reasons to change the current system, which was never intended to be a permanent solution to monitor Alaska’s fisheries and it expires in 2007. For over 10 years, the OAC/NPFMC process has killed any progress toward the needed changes to turn this program into a real program, where the observer provider is directly contracted with the federal government. The main killing point in the Council process was a potential increase in observer costs to fund the program. Another track-stopper was that it would be an equitable fee for all vessels, where the price would be based on how much you fish. This could be a problem for a company that owns 45% of the offshore Pollock and has vessels requiring two observers.

What isn’t talked about so much anymore is that sticky **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**, between our boss (the Observer Provider/Contractor) and our boss’ clients, (the vessel owners and operators). The Council has always denied that there’s a conflict of interest but observers see it regularly and feel its effects. Observer Providers want to keep their contract with the vessels, NMFS doesn’t do an annual review of Observer Provider practices anymore and the Observer Providers compete with each other for the same vessels.

How this impacts Fisheries Observers varies from Contractor to Contractor. For instance, what happens if, in the course of doing your job as an independent professional data collecting machine, the vessel operator doesn’t like what you observe and decides to get rid of you..EASY! They just call the contractor, claim you are a problem observer, and your contractor pulls you off the boat. You’re not paying your boss’ bills—the boat is and they can easily take their business elsewhere. There’s no explanation, no NMFS enforcement coming down to the boat to hear your side of the story. Of course, NMFS “has their hands tied” so they can’t get involved. Even if there were a violation, the vessel could finish the entire season with an “easy-going observer” replacement, as determined by the contractor, and possibly get a whole year or two of fishing before NMFS gets around to issuing the vessel a business expense..er..I mean fine. . And, you could possibly be out of a job the next season. Would this influence your sampling decisions on your next boat if you

do get hired back??? Would you tend to be a little more complacent??? Would you do your job?

So please don't try to bait us with these phony nebulous titles that disappear when we leave the program. We've contacted our Union and Congressional representatives to make them aware of our concerns. Observers in this program are Biological Technicians and always have been. We think it's wrong that Industry is attempting to save money on the backs of observers. We also think it's wrong that nobody is talking anymore about the conflict of interest between Industry and Observer Providers. We need to change the Service Delivery Model so that NMFS can have greater control over observer placement.

—*Liz Mitchell*

NEWS FROM THE BOARD:

NEW OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED

We need at least one additional (preferably more) Board member and all new elected officers- a board member can also be an officer. Duties are as follows:

Board of Directors: The Board of Directors (BOD) is in charge of the officer activities and APO activities. It is a 3 year term and involves annual meetings, either in person or by teleconference. We will hold other meetings throughout the year as necessary and all APO activities, official letters and projects will be discussed and published on the website.

President: You will be the principal Executive Officer of the APO. You'll coordinate meetings with members, the APO officers, and Board of Directors via the internet, teleconference or in person. You'll edit, publish, and sign APO documents and official APO letters and provide a submission to each of the quarterly Mail Buoy newsletters.

Vice-president: This person acts as a replacement in the absence of the President and contributes to other tasks where needed.

Secretary: You will keep minutes of the BOD meetings, oversee our activities in accordance with our bylaws, be the custodian of the APO records, keep a record of all memberships and keep us on target during meetings.

Treasurer: Kim Dietrich will continue to be treasurer for the APO for now, but if anyone is interested, please contact us. This position includes keeping track of receipts, bank accounts and APO financial affairs. We will post annually our financial statements on our website. This person should have some experience with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status and non-profit organization laws- experience with writing grant proposals would be a plus. The treasurer may also be asked to recruit members and collect member dues.

***** *The next projected Board meeting will be held towards the end of this year. Other***

Board members will be selected and officers will be elected at this time, so please submit a letter of interest (or your nomination) for a board member or an officer before November 1st, 2005.

BOARD MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS

Keith Davis: Keith has worked off and on as an observer for several years and has roamed around through many regions, covering numerous fisheries (North Pacific (Groundfish, Crab), South East (Pelagic Longlining), North Atlantic (Scallops), and the Pacific Islands (Pelagic Longlining) throughout the United States. He has also participated in the last three International Observer Conferences. By joining the APO, Keith hopes to continue to help build a national and international network of observers helping observers.

Liz Mitchell: Liz has worked for the NPGOP intermittently since 1983 when non-US vessels were still fishing in Alaskan waters. She has also worked for other observer programs in the Pacific Ocean (north and south), as well as marine mammal and seabird observing in the Eastern Tropical Pacific and the South Atlantic. Liz has been involved with the APO since 1996 and hopes that the APO will evolve through increased Observer involvement. Through her continuing work with the APO, Liz wishes to improve the integrity of our nation's observer programs and to help give Observers an *organized* voice in the fisheries management process.

Kim Dietrich: Many people have had the pleasure to work with Kim as an observer and an observer advocate, and some have even had the honor to help her with the APO's dealings since it's inception almost 10 years ago. Kim, along with another fellow observer (Teresa Turk) took the bull by the horns in 1996-97 by organizing NPGOP observers to join a Union, helping improve data quality and safety standards stemming from existing poor working conditions. In 1997 (though the majority of observers voted to unionize) contractors would not negotiate and observers were prepared to go on strike. At the 11th hour... just before a major Pollock season was about to start, contractors finally agreed to negotiate and observers had a signed contract. We have Kim and Teresa Turk to thank for helping make observers' lives in the North Pacific so much better. Teresa has since moved on to DC to work for the National Observer Program (and we're quite lucky to have her there). Kim has since worked quite diligently, fighting for Observers basic rights and has always been the consistent driving force behind the APO. Although Kim recently attended a three-week NPGOP Observer "re"-training class in Seattle, WA (June 2005), she did so in order to pursue endeavors as a full-time researcher. Kim presently continues to be the APO's Treasurer, but wishes to pass on the APO torch and center her energy as a scientist. Thanks Kim- for all of your incredible ground work and for what you've done for observers. We'll miss you dearly- all observers will miss you dearly... whether they know it or not!

WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU!

You can actively participate in the APO by: e-mailing us with any problems, concerns, or ideas; by writing articles or letters to the editor for the Mail Buoy; by alerting us of any job announcements or upcoming research; by becoming involved in the on-line working groups, or by occupying one or several of these suggested APO positions. Please, e-mail us at: apo_obs@hotmail.com (APO), emitch@efn.org (Liz Mitchell); or keith@apo-observers.org (Keith Davis). You can expect an answer within 3 weeks when we're both at sea or within a day or two if we're in between boats.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

* None yet, but we encourage them. With each submission, please be sure to include a detailed profile with your name, title, experience, and contact info.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND WEBSITES

APO General E-mail	apo_obs@hotmail.com
APO website	www.apo-observers.org
Keith Davis (APO Board member)	keith@apo-observers.org
Liz Mitchell (APO Board member)	(541) 344-5503 e-emitch@efn.org
Kim Dietrich (APO Treasurer)	dietrichk@quest.net
Mark Wormington	siberio@hotmail.com
Observernet Forums	www.observernet.org
David Wagenheim (ObserverNet.org)	davewagenheim@hotmail.com
Jonathan Wong (ObserverNet.org)	jon.wong@observernet.org
NP Observer Advisory Committee	(907) 257-2770
Tracey Mayhew (Observer Union Rep.)	tmayhew@seafarers.org
National Observer Program	www.st.nmfs.gov/st4/nop
AMSEA (Marine Safety Instruction)	www.amsea.org
NOAA jobs	www.jobs.doc.gov
International Observer Conferences	www.fisheriesobserverconference.com
North Pacific Fishery Management Council	(907) 271-2809 http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc
NP Groundfish Observer Program	www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/observers/default.htm
Pacific FMC:	http://www.pcouncil.org

APO T-SHIRTS are available. Size options: L or XL. Color options: Black, but others can be ordered. The price is \$15 (sales tax included).

***** Mail Buoy submissions for the next newsletter are due by the end of August 2005.**