

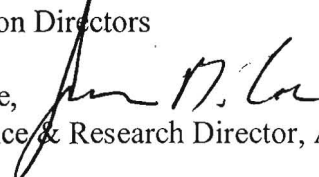


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

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**AUG 22 2007**

MEMORANDUM FOR: AFSC Division Directors

FROM: James M. Coe,   
Deputy Science & Research Director, Alaska Region

SUBJECT: Confidentiality Guidelines for Observer Information

I am implementing the recommendation of the committee charged with developing guidelines for aggregating observer information applicable to stock assessments being prepared this year. Note that their initial recommendation was slightly modified to address staff comments. These guidelines should now be followed by all users of observer information when presenting that information to the public or any non-authorized user. Please distribute these guidelines to your respective staff and contractors who have access to observer information. You should also consider these guidelines in your internal review processes to ensure they are being followed.

The committee distinguished between three types of observer information and developed different aggregation guidelines for each:

Type 1 - Observer Catch, Bycatch and Effort Information (including total catch, catch composition, and discard):

Aggregate data in space and time, remove any unique vessel or processor identifiers, and apply a disclosure limitation rule of three (the rule of three). The rule of three means: each aggregation must contain data from three or more vessels, and those aggregations with less than three vessels will be suppressed or, where appropriate, aggregated up to a higher spatial or temporal scale. All presentations of aggregations should identify whether they were screened for confidentiality and identify the quantity of information suppressed.

Type 2- Observer Biological Samples (including length frequency, otoliths, maturity samples, individual weights, etc.):

Aggregate data in space and time, and remove any unique vessel or processor identifiers. Minimum space aggregations are NMFS statistical areas (see attached), and the minimum time scale is a 3 consecutive month period (for example, a calendar quarter). The rule of three would not be applied to these data as long as the aggregation scale is equal to or greater than the minimum.

Type 3 - Observer Catch Distribution Information (large scale plotting of catch spatial patterns):

Aggregate and map annual catch and bycatch quantities or effort by species in 20x20 kilometer cells on a Regional (Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, Gulf of Alaska) scale. The



rule of three would not be applied to a map of this type. However, if maps for separate strata such as gear type or season are produced, the rule of three should be applied, i.e., the entire map should have data from at least three vessels. Any other presentation should follow the guidance for data type 1, applying the rule of three to each spatial cell.

There are a number of issues that remain with finer scale use of Observer information and a second committee has been formed to address them.

Attachments: PDF files (2) of the NMFS statistical areas for the GOA and BSAI

cc: John Boreman  
John Stein  
Tom Meyer  
Mike Sigler  
✓ Lisa DesFosse  
Jennifer Mondragon

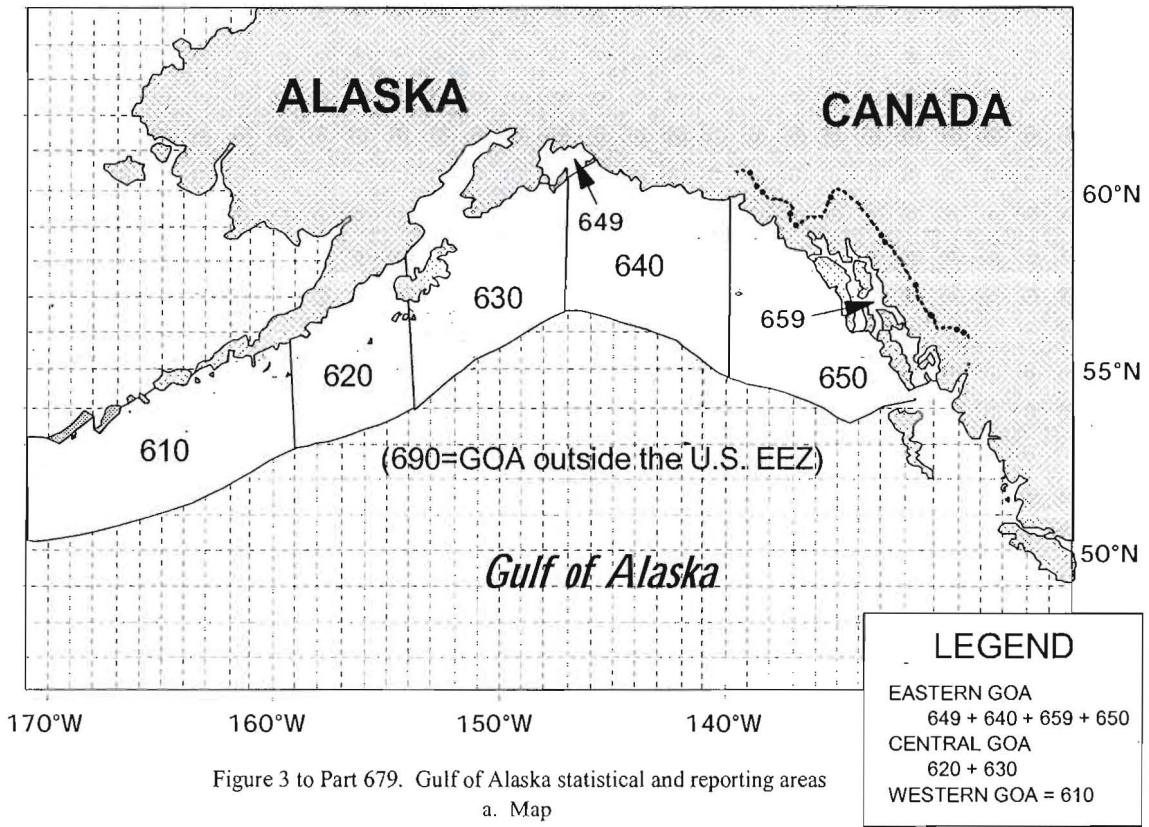


Figure 3 to Part 679. Gulf of Alaska statistical and reporting areas  
a. Map

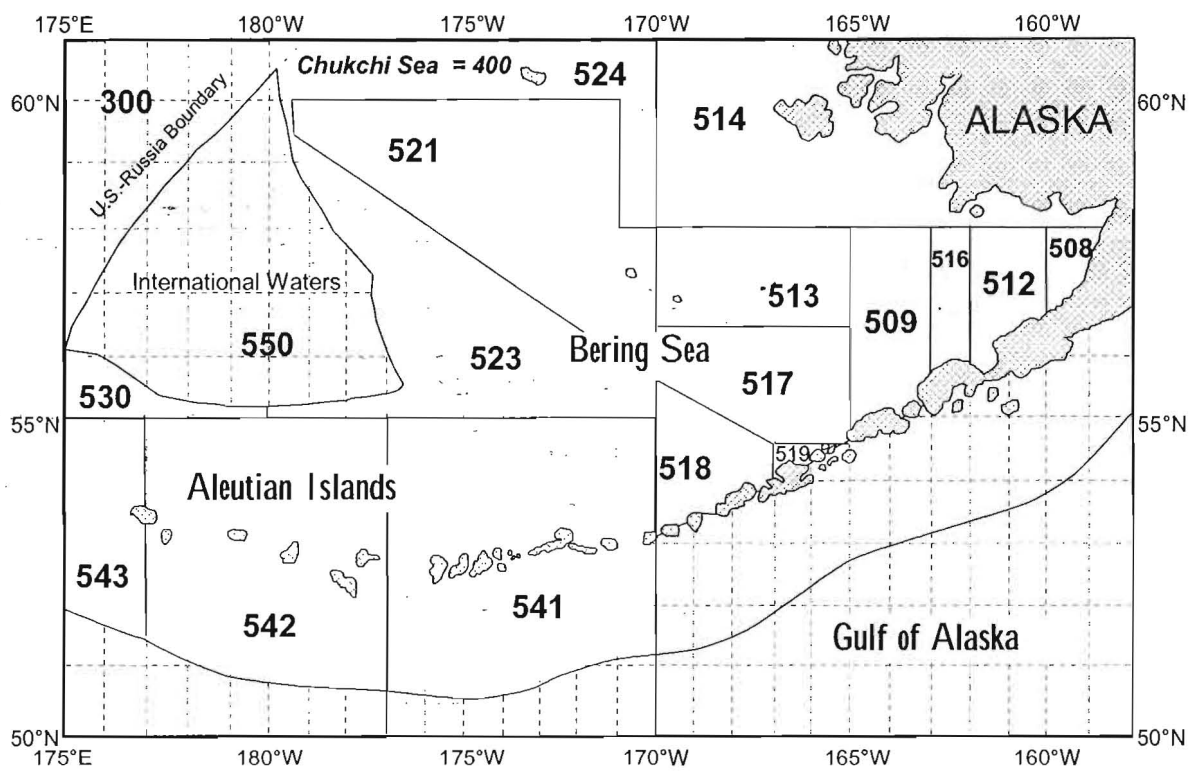


Figure 1 to Part 679--Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands statistical and reporting Areas  
a. Map