

June 3, 2002

MCR Improvements  
Hawaii Longline Observer Program  
Pacific Islands Area Office

The MCR evaluated the Hawaii Longline Program when it was an in-house program. The program is now a contracted program. Therefore, some of the recommendations do not apply to the contracted program. However, our current procedures are explained in these instances.

A1. The SWR will support the NOP's efforts to establish secure, stable and predictable funding for implementing SWR observer programs by providing an outline with the observer program budgetary requirements, based on data collection needs and priorities, on an annual basis to the NOP and the office of Protected Resources.

Adequate funds have been received since 2000 to support the Hawaii Observer Program. We have been working with Head quarters to secure base funding for future years.

B1.

1. Request an increase to the dollar limit on observer program managers' credit cards to ensure that inventories of gear and equipment are maintained.

The contractor is responsible for all purchasing and maintaining of observer gear. This is covered under the contract.

2. Require regular maintenance of the immersion suits by all SWR observer programs.

This is the responsibility of the contractor and is covered in the contract. The contractor is required to inspect gear and make appropriate repairs and/or purchases.

3. Longbeach storage.

Not applicable.

C1. Implement the Commerce Opportunities On-line automated vacancy announcement system for future in-house observer program positions to decrease the amount of time required to hire new observers.

All observers are hired through the contractor.

C2.

1. Maintain minimum requirements in the SWR that includes work experience directly related to the position or at least four years of education above high school leading to a bachelor's degree from a four-year accredited college or university with a major study in the biological sciences.

Minimum qualifications are maintained including work experience directly related to observer positions or at least four years of education above high school leading to a bachelor's degree from a four-year accredited college or university with a major study in the biological sciences. These minimum requirements are the same for the contractor.

D1.

1. Continue modifying training curriculums to include any changes to data collection requirements, program policies, laws or regulations.

New training manuals and observer field manuals and observer related materials are modified for each training class to include changes to data collection requirements, observer program policies, laws or regulations. These materials are continually updated as changes occur.

2. Review the observer evaluations after each training and review the observer evaluations from the previous training class before each new training to incorporate the recommendations for improvement in the presentations.

Training critiques are used for all training classes. These are reviewed by program staff to evaluate recommendations and implement changes for future training classes.

3. Develop an anonymous observer questionnaire that would be completed after an observer's first trip to evaluate how effective observer training was at preparing them to perform their duties at sea.

An observer questionnaire was developed and implemented prior to MCR recommendation. This questionnaire is presently being modified to reflect issues identified in the MCR. In addition, a training critique is given to observers to fill out at the completion of their first trip. A training critique is also given to each observer to fill out at the completion of training.

D2.

1. Increase the number of fish pictures used in observer training so there is at least one representative photograph for each species.

This has been accomplished. Currently we have observers take photos of fish at sea (especially rare species) so we can continually improve and update our photos used for training. To further improve fish identification, observer trainees are taken to the fish auction to view actual specimens to improve field identification skills.

2. Modify and improve the fish identification, TDAs, and safety-at-sea portions of the training as necessary.

See fish identification in D2-1. TDA's are continually updated for each class to include recent protocol changes and to include more variety of situations at sea. We also focus on

areas that are reported as needing improvement by the debriefing staff. Safety-at-sea has been expanded and improved to include more participation with USCG Safety personnel. This includes: USCG distress radio receiving operators, Marine safety training videos, increased the number of Personal Floatation Devices styles used in pool training, added emergency signaling equipment (signal mirrors, additional radio practice). This is in addition to immersion suit practice in the water, life raft boarding and deployment, hypothermia and cold water survival skills lecture (7 steps to survival etc...), EPIRB demonstration and testing, PFD help and huddle positions, Medical emergencies video, Red Cross CPR and First Aid Training and certification, fire prevention and control video, emergency radio reporting and procedures, Safety at sea and vessel operations lecture and video (deck safety), vessel stability video, AMSEA Video (sea emergencies), Hands on practice (dewatering pump, flares, fire extinguishers, vessel walk through (safety inspection)).

3. Before a scheduled observer training class, request returning observers from a vessel assignment to bring back whole specimens of fish that can be used in training.

Observers bring back small swordfish for sample training, some small sharks, and a few other various species (tunas, crestfish). In addition, Observers are taken on field trips to the fish auction.

D3.

None

E1.

1. Require gillnet observers to complete vessel safety examinations and maintain the information from safety checks in an accessible location such as a vessel log.

Not applicable. We do not have gillnet observers in Hawaii. However, the logistics coordinator (the contractor) conducts a vessel safety examination with the observer and the vessel operator at each observer placement meeting. The safety examination is recorded on the vessel placement sheet. These are kept on file in the individual trip folders with the data from the trip.

2. Include an inspection of a vessel at the docks, if possible, in the observer-training curriculum.

A safety inspection is currently conducted for each training class on an actual fishing vessel at the docks.

3. Remind vessel owners and operators at skipper workshops of their obligation to ensure that their vessel meets the USCG safety requirements.

The Hawaii Observer Program does not hold skipper workshops. However, every vessel is inspected each time an observer is placed, to ensure they are in compliance with NMFS safety requirements and have a current USCG safety examination sticker.

4. Provide observer with a vessel safety checklist for them to complete.

The logistics coordinator (the contractor) conducts a vessel safety examination with the observer and the vessel operator at each observer placement meeting.

5. Ensure training staff review safety regulations in training and that observers are provided a copy of them. Include copy in the field manual.

Observers are given a synopsis of the Federal Requirements for Commercial Fishing industry Vessels (issued by the USCG) during the vessel safety examination during training. A USCG Safety officer also goes over and explains the requirements in the pamphlet to the observers. These requirements are too extensive to include in the observer manual. The NMFS Observer Health and Safety Regulations (50 CFR 600.725 and 600.746) are in the manual as they apply to observer placements and safety. These regulations as they appear in the CFR will be added to the appendix of the Observer Manual.

6. Develop procedure for addressing and resolving observer safety concerns.

During debriefings observers are interviewed about safety concerns during their trip. Observers can review previous questionnaires filled out by previous observers that went onboard the vessel. NMFS Enforcement and/or USCG are contacted as needed to address safety concerns.

7. Establish and maintain vessel profiles that identify health and safety conditions on all vessels participating in the fisheries.

We have created and are maintaining a vessel file that includes a copy of observer questionnaires for all observers completing trips onboard the vessel. There are plans to include information concerning health and safety in these files as news occurs. Sources may include USCG, and the media.

8. Work with USCG to identify and document any additional factors that may contribute to unsafe conditions for observers.

Procedures are under development for this item.

9. Clarify the language and the policy in the observer field manual and during observer training of the procedure an observer follows to determine the safety or adequacy of a vessel and that an observer's job will not be endangered if he or she refuses to board a vessel because of health or safety concerns.

It is printed in the manual “ Observers do not chose vessel assignments, however observers have the right to refuse deployment on a vessel they perceive as unsafe.” The observer is accompanied by the Logistics Coordinator (contractor) during vessel safety

meetings and placement meetings. Any deficiencies in safety equipment must be fixed before the vessel is allowed to depart with the observer.

E2.

1. Ensure that observers are debriefed after each trip for possible health and safety concerns.

Observers fill out a questionnaire and are interviewed by a debriefer concerning safety and health, and enforcement issues such as harassment, and interference.

2. Have NMFS Enforcement participate in the observer training to teach the observers how to complete an affidavit if requested by NMFS management or enforcement.

NMFS Enforcement informs the class that the observers will write their statements from their documentation that is done at sea and the importance to include as much detail as possible. Case history examples are also included in TDA's to give the observer practical experience in documentation during training. This material has also been added to some of the tests.

F1.

1. Review procedures in the observer field manual on at-sea injuries and update as necessary.

In the manual it states, that the observers are to document the incidents at sea and report the injury to the vessel operator. Observers are also instructed this during training. We will add to the Observer Manual that the observer must also inform the debriefer and their employer of any injuries upon returning from sea.

2. Provide workers' compensation information to observers during observer training.

The contractor informs the observers of their insurance coverage during the hiring process and again during training. Insurance coverage includes workers comp, temporary disability insurance, marine insurance, and personnel health insurance. The contractor will inform observers of the option to file a claim under the Federal Employees Compensation Act if injured or disabled.

3. Request Department of Labor to review, and possibly modify the basis for calculating FECA compensation provided to injured observers so it reflects their at-sea pay.

In house observers are no longer used. This is the responsibility of the contractor. However, a former observer was sent to speak to the National Observer Conference on Observer Insurance. We are also working in conjunction with the NOP on observer insurance issues.

4. Explore the possibility of obtaining professional liability insurance coverage to cover observers if permanently disabled while at sea.

This is the responsibility of the contractor. The contract observers are covered for permanent disability under the workers comp insurance.

G1.

None

G2.

None

G3.

None

H1.

1. Observer Field Manuals will be made available to various users and other interested parties through the internet.

Not at this time. However, we are working on making the manual available through the internet in the future.

H2.

None

H3.

None

H4.

1. Update the section of the observer manual that discusses completing a pre-cruise safety check.

These requirements are explained in the NMFS Observer Health and Safety Regulations (50 CFR 600.725 and 600.746), which will be included in the Observer Manual.

H5.

None