



the
Mail Buoy

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OBSERVER NEWS

APO Activities

**International Fisheries Observer Conference –
The Observer Perspective**

The objective of the International Fisheries Observer Conference was to bring together a broad representation from the international fisheries observer community to address some of the key issues common to observer programs. The conference provided a platform for facilitated discussion of the role of observer programs as management, compliance, and scientific programs, and the current applications, limitations, and future uses of observers at sea.

This issue of the Mail Buoy is dedicated to the observers who presented and the forty observers who attended the Conference in New Orleans, November 18-21, 2002. Observers represented ~20% of the conference attendees. This would not have been possible without significant financial assistance from several sources. We (APO & the observers) would like to thank the following entities for supporting observers to attend the Conference:

The **National Observer Program**, NMFS (Vicki Cornish, Dennis Hansford, Margaret Toner) waived registration fees for more than observers, subsidized housing for ~3, provided food per diem to Keith Davis, Carrie Horton, and Mark Wormington and subsidized travel for Gillian Stoker, Aaron Mibus, and Lorraine McDonald.

SeaWatch provided travel for Reuben Beazley.

Javitech/TechSea supported 2 logistics coordinators and 2 observers –Richard Goreham and Bruce Wade. Javitech co-financed the 4 participants with the support from the entire observer core that contributed to the fund.

Teamsters Local 855 fully funded David Benson and Wayne DeGruchy and provided meal per diem for Reuben Beazley.

The **Northeast Fisheries Science Center Fishery Observer Program** (David Potter, Mike Tork) funded Paul O'Donnel, Kristin Ealy, and Michael Beattie.

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APO Officer Elections for 2003

The officers of APO include a President, a Vice-President(s), Secretary and a Treasurer. Any two (2) or more offices may be held by the same person except the offices of President and Secretary. Starting in 2003, the officers of APO will be elected annually by the Observer Members (yes, you have to pay your dues to vote and you can send the dues with your ballot). Each officer shall serve at the pleasure of the Observer Members. Each officer shall hold office until his successor shall have been duly elected. The "official" duties of the officers as well as the APO's goals/objectives are within our bylaws (<http://www.apo-observers.org/bylaws.pdf>). A list of duties and short biographies of each of the candidates are posted on our website.

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The **Southeast Pelagic Longline Observer Program** (Cheryl Brown, Dennis Lee) supported Georg Hinteregger, Sandy Allen, Stanley Alba, Pat Bellew, Juan Levesque, Ryan Brown, Josh Sheldon and Matt Maiello.

The **Hawaii Longline Observer Program** (John Kelly, Kevin Busscher) supported Jon Priest.

Saltwater, Inc. (Anne Vanderhoeven, Randy Munro) fully funded Anne Weckback, Lesley Jantz, Julie Belliveau, and Colleen Duifhuis.

The **North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program** fully funded Phil Moore.

The **Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program** (Amy Van Atten) fully funded Amy Cox, Bruce Lambert and Kerry Waco to attend the conference.

The **West Coast Groundfish Observer Program** (Jonathan Cusick) funded Jen Eichelberger, David Pearl and Jon McVeigh.

The **California/Oregon Drift Gillnet Observer Program** (Don Petersen) funded Ed McLaughlin.

The **APO** funded Tracey Mayhew and Suzanne Romain and assisted with registration costs for Lorna Cameron. Thank you to Bill Monheimer & Dennis Moore for their extra donations to the APO for allowing us to partially assist observers to attend.

The APO would also like to thank Jon Cusick, Kristen Moynihan, Jen Eichelberger and Kerry Waco for sharing their rooms with observers. This greatly reduced the cost for observers to attend.

Mark Wormington & Lorna Cameron funded themselves to attend.

I apologize if I've missed anyone who helped support observer involvement.

OBSERVER PRESENTATIONS

Observers participated in several of the panels: Anne Weckback gave an incredibly touching plenary speech; Reuben Beazley and Suzanne Romain were on the panel titled, **What Is Meant by Observer Support, and Why Is It Important?**; Gillian Stoker spoke on the panel regarding **How contractor performance should be measured?**; Tracey Mayhew participated in the discussion of **How Should Observers Be Selected and Trained?**; and Gillian Stoker and Suzanne Romain were on the panel, **Is the Risk of Deploying Observers Worth the Data Collected?** Transcripts from a few of the presentations follow:

Can There Be National Coordination and Consistency For Observer Support?

By Suzanne Romain

The quality of support provided to employees is strongly linked to employee performance, retention/attrition and overall job satisfaction. In US Observer Programs, the employer support and management responsibilities that are traditionally provided by one employer are split between multiple entities with differing goals. This has led to inconsistent and inadequate support for fisheries observers. Industry is charged with providing a safe, sanitary, and adequate work environment for observers such that they can complete program data collection objectives. The Observer Programs provide training, evaluations of work, hiring and firing, and a portion of the equipment necessary to collect the data. Contractors provide compensation for experience level, hours worked, some job-related expenses, travel, and some provide partial compensation for health insurance. They also provide workers compensation and liability insurance, pay employee taxes, and do hiring and firing. Having these support services split has created a situation where the right hand doesn't always know what the left hand is doing, nobody is responsible for knowing what both hands are up to, and as a result, some services have fallen through the proverbial cracks. Additionally, the differing goals of the fishing industry, the observer programs and the contractors create conflict between these entities in identifying support standards, the entity responsible for meeting support standards, and how support standards should be met. National coordination and consistency for observer support would require an efficient data exchange between the multiple entities providing the support, in addition to basic standards for workplace safety, training and compensation.

Beyond the most basic employee needs of an adequate worksite, training and compensation, the job of observing has some atypical support needs. The compliance monitoring data that observers collect and the collection procedures can create a conflict between observers and vessel personnel, in addition to some conflict or perceived conflict with observers between both the observer program and contractors. Observer data collections can result in fines for the vessels, closure of the fisheries, or legal actions. Observers may also refuse a vessel in response to safety concerns, putting their contractor in the position of providing a replacement before the vessel can resume fishing. This puts a lot of pressure on the individual observer making the decision. Observers can consult with numerous NMFS employees throughout a cruise, document incidents in many different places, and have very different experience levels, all of which can lead to confusion about expectations and sometimes conflict. The experience of an observer is in some cases compensated for by the contractors, but for the most part there is no formal connection between the quality of data an individual collects and their compensation, opportunity for advancement, credibility, or training and debriefing needs. Observers resolve conflicts on the vessel, with contractors and observer programs throughout the cruise periods, yet this information is not organized into one database and hence the effectiveness of associated support services is difficult to assess and address. Individual observers

need to know how to document conflicts, who to notify in these situations, and what results to expect from these actions.

Observer programs have recognized the need for multidisciplinary training and certification standards due to the range of data observers collect and unique situations they encounter in their work. Professional communication, documentation protocols, and conflict management skills are necessary to collect biological, compliance and safety related data. The scope of entities and individuals affected by how well an observer does their job is significant. These multiple data users need to clearly define their data needs so that observer programs can develop appropriate training standards. To best support observers a national entity is needed to facilitate basic support standards for safety, compensation, and training and to address the atypical needs of the job. The good news is that a national entity does exist and is facilitating the coordination of the multiple regional entities that are working to address these needs.

The National Observer Program (NOP) provides a clearinghouse of information as well as financial and legislative support needed to address the complex issues facing observer programs and observers-they can see both “hands” at the same time and are not cuffed to either. Foundation building projects developed by the NOP include an assessment of recruitment and retention procedures utilized in U.S. observer programs, an assessment of safety issues and appropriate safety training standards for observers, and an assessment of insurance issues and options associated with observers. The organization of the information about observer support issues at a national level allows for an accurate assessment of the consistency and quality of observer support services. This will also help identify what kinds of data need to be shared with whom to insure responsive support.

Non-profit organizations like the Association for Professional Observers (APO) and Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA), and contractors like QuanTech provide research support to the NOP in these projects. In the Alaska region, many observers are members of a union that has in part addressed the issue of compensation. The APO has also provided research, education and representation to observers in this region and is currently working to expand its support to observers nationally. One of our objectives is to promote a system of consistent and coordinated response for fisheries observers, which will benefit observers and observer programs as well as improve data quality and the management of US fisheries. Overall, it seems we have the resources to develop national standards for workplace safety, compensation and training - and address the unique needs of observers. These standards are the foundation for a common language and an efficient data exchange between entities that provide observer support. The nation’s fisheries managers are increasingly looking to observer data to meet mandated data needs, insuring proper support for this in-demand work force is essential to efficient sustainable resource management.

What support does the Observer require in a violation situation? By Reuben E. Beazley

Observer: St Johns Newfoundland Canada
Observer Company: Seawatch
Observer Newfoundland and Labrador region: 24 years
Shop Steward Teamsters Local 855: 21 years
First violation leading to a conviction: 1981/ Miss reporting discards/logbook
Violation reports since: Many (100’s)
Present status: Observer (full time)

The first responsibility of an Observer is to themselves and their families. Conditions aboard fishing vessels vary greatly. For the Programme to be effective, no preference can be given to which vessels will be covered. All possible inconveniences will be encountered.

Observers work independently and in isolation. While there are obvious and essential support structures such as family and union; in a violation situation far at sea, the Observer requires and must demand, unconditional support from the Observer company and government agency.

If a violation occurs, the Observer and the Captain will cooperate to resolve it. Changing position or depth to avoid catching a closed species is an example. Often, this kind of resolution is impossible. In any case, the Observer obtains the best data possible and lets the government agency determine how it wishes to proceed. In what context will the observer be working?

Will the Observer be forced upon the vessel, or will they be aboard with the Captain’s cooperation and consent? Do the fishers see the Observer as a threat to their livelihood or as necessary to the conservation of the resource? After initial resistance from fishers, it has generally been found that after a number of years, the former attitude will change to the latter.

In order to be effectively supported in a compliance role, some fundamental issues must be addressed from the Observer’s point of view.

1. A safe workplace.
2. The Observer must have a clear understanding of their role and the regulations with which they have to work.
3. There must be no confusion between the Captain and the Observer as to what is to be accomplished.
4. Access to, and updating of regulations is imperative, including continuous and direct communication with the government agency. Rules can change from trip to trip or even during a single deployment. The Observer must have backup in the case of conflict and conflict will occur - everything from intimidation and harassment to physical violence. The Observer in an enforcement capacity can directly affect the wages of the crew and, through resulting fines or restrictions, the financial future of the Captain, the fleet sector and the fishing company.

5. Prompt and clear attention must be given to Observer violation reports, with a mechanism in place to quickly inform the Observer of what action has been taken.
6. Observers may find themselves in multiple violation situations, especially on factory vessels. It may not be possible to thoroughly investigate all of them, so priorities must be established. Sometimes, a total loss of all sampling and species identification work will result, except as it applies to the violation
7. Regardless of whether the Observer coverage is industry-funded, protection of the fishery must be paramount. The integrity of the Observer Program must not be undermined in the name of cost; by having higher paid, experienced Observers replaced with lower paid, green ones, or simply by having wages cut across the board so that the standard of living cannot attract or keep good candidates. Observer cost is a fraction of its benefits. At times, the real problem for Industry is the presence of competent Observers aboard its vessels, Observers who, through years of experience can determine whether discarding, high-grading, dumping, or catching prohibited species is taking place. Observer cost must not be confused with a desire for increased Industry profits. Any fishery, anywhere, that cannot afford its own conservation, is ecologically and economically untenable. If we are to be serious about a sustainable fishery, and if the Observer really is integral to the process, the government agency must back up the Observer, and show a serious, long-term commitment to the Observer Programme.
8. It takes three to five years for an Observer to become comfortable with the job. It is simply a matter of learning from your mistakes. It is often only after a trip, during the debriefing process or from talking to older hands, that a green Observer realizes he has been deceived. Thus, there is a need to attract quality people and keep experienced Observers within the system, unless you wish to keep making the same mistakes over and over. The more complicated the vessel operations, the longer it takes to learn the tricks that can be used to hide violations from the Observer, and/or keep the Observer from obtaining firm estimates. Again, factory vessels are a special case and very difficult for one person to cover.
9. Debriefing is where the Observers learn their trade. It must be recognized that the debriefing is just as important as the trip. Without questions and input from an experienced debriefer, the learning process is much longer. There should be a representative of the government agency directly within the de-briefing structure.
10. Observers in a compliance role are in the front line of conservation. They must remember that they are not the crew. They must maintain a distance from the crew. This can lead to stress. The pressure to do the job is especially problematic in long-term violation situations.
11. By the very nature of the work, the Observer is foremost a sailor and subject to all the normal conditions and dangers of the sea. There has to be a support group for the Observer and professional counseling if necessary, particularly in the case of shipwreck and/or loss of life.

Commercial fishing vessels are, after all, the most dangerous workplace in the world.

Designing and Implementing Incentives to Improve Safety on “Unsafe” vessels by Suzanne Romain

Today I'd like to talk about financial motivators, policy and standards that use economic dynamics to achieve management goals. Financial motivators can be employed by multiple entities in fisheries management, providing a solid foundation of data collection and analysis. I am an observer in the Alaska region and will be using the dynamics of that region as a model for discussion. Specifically I'll talk about the database development needed to efficiently employ financial motivators and the types of financial motivators that can be applied.

US fishing vessel safety standards are limited to accident response not accident prevention and are inadequate guides for insuring a vessel is actually seaworthy. US fisheries are the only US mariners who are not required to comply with international safety standards for comparable vessels. The fleet is largely un-inspected for watertight integrity or vessel stability. The Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Act (CFVSA) requires emergency equipment onboard and has reduced fatalities in the Alaska commercial fishing industry, but the number of vessels lost and accident rates remain relatively unchanged. The threat of being placed on an unseaworthy vessel is the ranked second as a major concern in an observer's decision to continue working in the Alaska Groundfish program.

Safety standards for fishing vessels that carry observers include equipment requirements and onboard safety training. Performance standards for onboard safety orientations and drills are poorly defined, documented, and enforced. In a recent survey of Groundfish observers in Alaska 24% had safety orientations on most of their vessels and only 10% had safety drills on all of their vessels. Observer safety training is minimal compared to other fisheries biologists and all other mariners (excluding US fishing personnel) who work at sea. 77% of the observers surveyed felt annual safety trainings would be most appropriate for this region. The scope of the problems faced by observers in Alaska is hard to define; 53% of surveyed observers had been on vessels with valid Coast Guard safety stickers that they felt were unsafe and of this 53% only 63% reported the unsafe conditions to NMFS and 35% to their contractors. The methods of reporting to NMFS were inconsistent, with data spread between their cruise end electronic vessel survey, another North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP) exit survey, electronic reports to in-season advisors, a logbook or field diary, or verbally to a NMFS debriefer. Almost all reports to their employers were verbal. The likelihood of other observers getting on the vessel with reported safety issues actually being able to access what information is collected on that vessel in any representational format is low. Fisheries observers are being placed on vessels with documented safety issues without informed consent and there are currently no incentives for individual fishing vessels to improve vessel safety.

A Strategy for refining current systems and introducing financial motivators The first step to providing incentives or motivation for individual vessels to improve safety is to develop a common Language. This starts with a coordinated training development that includes USCG, NIOSH, regional Observer Program trainers, non-profit groups like the APO and AMSEA, union and labor advocacy groups, marine insurers, observers and most importantly, a national facilitating body, like the NOP. Safety training and certification standards should include expansion of observer safety training to comply with International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) safety standards or any standard certification that would put observer-collected data in context for Coast Guard assessors. Keeping knowledge fresh with annual or biennial trainings or refresher courses and providing a standardized system of documentation is also essential in insuring data quality. When training standards and data collection procedures are enacted it is possible to create a rating system with which to evaluate vessel safety in the fishing industry.

What can be done within the current system is defining performance standards for CFVSA and documenting compliance. The direction for future development should include defining “seaworthy”, watertight integrity standards, vessel stability training standards, safe operating procedures, and safe maintenance standards. There is no reason to re-invent the wheel here-International Safety standards do exist, and organizations like AMSEA, NIOSH, USCG, and many other groups have a wealth of information and resources available on safety. The key is in coordination, an easily accessible database through which all the entities with a stake in vessel safety can coordinate their efforts.

The first step in designing a nationally coordinated database is to identify the data users and the data needs. In the Alaska region there are multiple entities that are affected by vessel safety issues significantly enough to have motivation to actively promote increased safety. USCG is charged with CFVSA inspections and enforcement for observed vessels, and extremely costly and dangerous rescue duty for all vessels. The NPGOP collects data, and provides support and training on sampling related hazards and harassment, in addition to promoting high retention, to insure highest data integrity. Contractor interests include on-the-job injuries and logistical hazards which both affect profit margins and more importantly employee retention. Marine Insurers have a significant financial stake in Industry-wide vessel stability, operating procedures, risk factors and injury prevention. The APO would like to see some level of informed consent for observers and an active effort to improve vessel safety in Alaska. With so many groups that could benefit from safety standards and improved vessel safety, its wonder how we have the worst marine industrial safety standards in the nation.

So we have a common language from our coordinated training development, everybody who cares is on the same page. We then provide a network accessible to all those entities with a stake in vessel safety. Now we can talk about the kinds of financial motivators that can be employed in such an environment. One

kind of financial motivator that is cost effective and less confrontational is a Catch-22 type, incident or cumulative incident triggers that require Safety inspections, trainings or vessel modifications for continued observer coverage (and hence fishing). This can be as simple as a current safety sticker or can be education oriented like a required safety-training course for key crewmembers. Fining systems, incident or cumulative incident triggers that result in fines can also be applied, most effectively in fact by entities with government authority (i.e., not observers). Rewards systems, incident or cumulative data triggers that result reduced rates for necessary expenses can most effectively be employed by service providers, like contractors or marine insurers through Observer coverage costs or Insurance premiums.

The power of an easily accessible database and common language is the benefit of numbers- they allow flexibility for entities to employ the financial motivator that best works for them and hence increases the number of stakeholders actively promoting vessel safety. Both also provided a database that is representative of the prevalence of safety issues in U.S. Commercial Fisheries in context with recognized safety standards and could illuminate how the U.S. fishing vessels measure up to recognized international safety standards. The most compelling argument for coordinated training development and data sharing is that it is an efficient utilization of resources. By coordinating the strengths and jurisdiction of different entities using cost-effective information technology we can address vessel safety issues the scientific way - through observation, analysis and experimentation.

Is the data collected worth the risk?

By Gillian Stoker

Everyone here knows that commercial fishing is an inherently dangerous occupation and that it is not possible to remove all the potential risks one faces when they choose to go to sea to work. That said, in order to determine if the data collected by an observer on a specific vessel is worth the risks that that observer may incur, a number of steps need to be taken.

First, we need to determine if the safety regulations currently in place are adequate.

Second, we need to insure that observers receive sufficient training not only in emergency procedures but that they have some basic knowledge to aid them in evaluating safety problems on vessels.

Third, the agencies need to require that detailed safety reports be completed on every observed vessel. This will require not only the time and effort of observers but also the ability of debriefing staff to solicit the needed information. Which leads us to,

Fourth, insuring the presence of agency staff capable of evaluating observer reports on vessel safety problems and of

determining both whether of not the reports are valid, and, when valid, what the relative severity of the problems was.

Now, once the agency has gone so far as to validate and rate observer reports they need to either determine at what point the safety concerns raised are of sufficient gravity to necessitate waiving coverage of specific vessels or, at the very least, ensure that any observer who is requested to board a vessel about which valid safety complaints have been raised is given a complete history of those complaints to allow them to make an informed decision as to whether or not they are willing to board. The agency also needs to ensure that observers do not face negative repercussions from their employers if they should refuse to board.

Looking at commercial fishing fleets in the United States, I think it is fair to say in answer to step one, determining if current safety standards are adequate, that the safety regulations currently in place are woefully inadequate. U.S. safety standards for commercial fishing vessels are lower than for any other domestic commercial vessels and lower than international standards for fishing vessels in spite of generally universal acknowledgement of the high-risk environment in which these vessels habitually operate.

Numerous recommendations have been made over the years in an effort to reduce risk on fishing vessels. Recommendations have come from various sources, including the U.S. Coast Guard, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the National Transportation Safety Board. Many of their reports have recommended similar actions to improve safety, often including high on their lists of priorities such things as regular mandatory safety inspections, increasing requirements pertaining to vessel stability and water tight integrity, increasing licensing requirements, and changes to fisheries management regimes.

To date, however, the only major change to fishing vessel safety regulations has been the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Act of 1988, which focuses primarily on insuring that vessels carry emergency equipment that increases the chance of those on board to survive an emergency but does little towards minimizing the chance of an emergency occurring in the first place.

Unfortunately, considering the extremely limited success of past attempts to improve safety regulations in the commercial fishing fleet, chances are no major changes will be implemented in the near future.

Knowing that the safety regulations in place are inadequate, the need for regular, high-quality safety training is undeniable. Observers need not only training in the emergency procedures relevant to the vessel types on which they are to work but also need training in topics such as vessel stability and how to assess water tight integrity. I do not expect the agencies to train observers as vessel inspectors, but I do feel that we deserve to be given a base of knowledge that will aid us in both recognizing potentially dangerous situations and in discussing safety concerns

in a more intelligent and credible manner. I also definitely expect the agencies to ask observers detailed questions about safety concerns when they come off vessels.

The North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program is the only program I'm aware of that currently asks very specific questions about safety issues as part of a written report completed by every observer for each vessel they are assigned to. Even in this situation, however, where quite an extensive list of detailed questions are asked, observer responses are often incomplete or unclear. This is a failing both on the part of the observers and the agency staff debriefing them. We, as observers, need to recognize the importance of our vessel safety reports. We need to take the time to ensure that they are written in sufficient detail that another observer reading that report at a later date would understand the significance of the issues raised. Agency staff need to be trained to solicit detailed information on safety concerns from observers and need to ensure that that information is thoroughly documented. I also believe that the agency personnel working with observers to document safety concerns should be trained to assess observer reports and to grade them as to the severity of the concerns. Perhaps something as simple as a three-tier system, rating concerns as insignificant, significant, or severe.

The agency then needs to set standards to identify **vessels** as unacceptable safety risks. Perhaps receiving a predetermined number of safety complaints rated as significant or severe within a given time frame could lead to a decision to waive coverage. It should certainly lead to requiring that observers be notified of, and given timely access to, past safety reports on that vessel.

In conclusion, I don't think anyone would argue that observer data **is** worth the risk incurred when the programs are looked at as a whole. On a vessel specific level, however, there are times when, as a long-term observer, I don't believe that the information collected on specific vessels is worth the risk. I have spent the past ten years observing in Alaska in programs where there are strictly enforced coverage requirements (i.e., no coverage exemptions issued). I know when I am assigned to a vessel that if I refuse it for safety reasons another observer will soon be on board, generally with no loss of fishing time for the vessel. Therefore, in such a situation, I am faced with an ethical dilemma. Should I board a vessel I consider to be unacceptably risky, or should I leave someone else, perhaps one of my best friends, to take that risk. How many of us have to come back and say a vessel is unsafe before we are believed?

Effective Observer Training: Are we up to the Challenge? By Tracey Mayhew

Fisheries observers have varied life experiences and educational backgrounds. Some trainees come directly from formal schooling, others are in the midst of a career change. During training they are subjected to many hours of intense instruction that range from completing paperwork to species identification to

donning immersion suits. At the same time, they deal with the emotional aspect of facing the unknown. I will discuss meeting and overcoming these challenges to build a well-prepared Corps of Fisheries Scientists.

When I first decided to become an observer and was hired, 8 years ago, I was Excited. I was leaving the little East Coast island I had grown up on to go to Alaska and it was gonna be great!

I got to Seattle for training and when I saw the 583 page manual I became Overwhelmed. I had been out of school for a while and wondered what I had gotten myself into.

Into the second week of training I was discovering all the things that needed to be dealt with before leaving for 3 months. I became Stressed.

By the time I got to Dutch Harbor I was Terrified.

Observers come from varied backgrounds; this and the uniqueness of the job provide us with unique challenges.

The overall goal of training is to prepare observers to meet the needs of the agency. To achieve this goal there needs to be an environment that is conducive to learning.

I think we can all agree that as adults we have life responsibilities and tasks that we need to complete. I think we can also agree that these responsibilities can become distractions – we become preoccupied. When we are preoccupied and distracted we are not able to learn as well.

How can training programs help observer trainees to alleviate distractions?

First we must recognize that these distractions exist and strive to meet the needs of trainees during this time.

Possible Distractions

- Personal/Family – Some trainees are leaving their families and children. I met a trainee who was a single mom, talk about a distraction.
- Insurance – when trainees learn the details about the job, they may decide they want more of it.
- Gear – There is always personal gear that you need to buy
- Financial – Mortgages, having bills paid while at sea, having pay checks deposited
- Having the time to get a Physical
- Signing a contract
- Emotions - As a trainee you cycle through a lot of different emotions. I guarantee you that after you experience Alaska Groundfish Safety training you WILL have an emotional response.
- Time Management – is an issue during training as well as on the vessel.
- And there are many other distractions.

Options:

There are a number of options we (trainers & employers) can use to help trainees deal with these distractions

1. Recognize that these issues exist for trainees and Respect their needs as adults to deal with them.
2. Provide resources – insurance information, gear stores with the best prices to save the time of shopping around; info on how other observers have handled bills
3. Build time into training and let trainees know that the time will be available: a 9-5 or 8-6 training leaves no time in a day to conduct personal business
4. Group discussions – to share information
5. Mentoring – alleviates stress before and during a deployment by knowing that help is available and there is someone to talk to

Outcomes:

The benefits that we will see are:

- Learners with less preoccupation, who are more open to learning
- Easier transition
- Better prepared
- Increased support
- Less stress
- Increased health and safety
- Increase retention
- Better data collection from the onset



OBSERVER PARTICIPANTS

Members and officers of the APO were extremely impressed by the involvement of observers who attended the conference. We asked each of them if they would share their thoughts/feelings/ ideas about the conference with other observers and others who read the Mail Buoy. We posed 3 broad question: 1) what was the biggest take home message for you? 2) what did you find most interesting and 3) how do you intend to use this information? Here's how they replied....

Lorraine McDonald

At-Sea-Observer for Archipelago Marine Research (West Coast Canada); 7 Years as an at-sea-observer on various fisheries including: Trawl, Foreign (Hake), Halibut, Salmon, Long Line and Live Rockfish.

1. The biggest take-home message is that across the participating 22 countries and various types of fisheries the same problems are encountered; both with fisheries management and the need for, and problems with instituting, observer coverage.
2. I found most interesting the appreciation that the end-user scientists have for the information that the observers collect.
3. I intend to use this information to refresh my enthusiasm. I feel once again the "environmental warrior" champion of truth surge of feeling for my job. As the sole observer representative from the West Coast of Canada, I will also be the source of information for our pod of observers, to inform them of what other observers are doing about wages and working conditions.

Keith Davis

I have observed in several different programs across the U.S. during the past four years. Prior to the conference I was traveling for six months over-seas. My most recent observing experience was in the tuna long-line fishery of Hawaii. Kim Dietrich from the APO did the legwork and Vicki Cornish from the NOP provided the funding for me to attend the conference. I appreciate all of the work that both of these ladies did and all of the Steering Committee's work in providing opportunities for so many of us observers to attend.

The take home message that I gathered from this Conference is, in one word... **Communication!** These meetings are an incredible medium for ALL people involved with fisheries management to interact with one another... not only on the professional level, but over a couple of "Hurricanes" in a dueling piano bar off Bourbon Street, for instance. There were twenty-two countries represented at this conference. This is wonderful, and I feel honored to be a part of such a gathering.

While listening to Hafeni Mungungu from Namibia, Africa speak, I came up with an idea. I was so intrigued with how organized and developed his program was... of how much we could learn from each other by sharing information in this type of medium- this made me think of an OBSERVER EXCHANGE PROGRAM. I know it may sound logistically difficult and expensive, but just think of the lines of communication that it could open up. Not only will it be an exciting and culturally incredible experience for the observers who travel to over-seas programs, train with the locals, and work in their program for a few months, but think of the perspective it will bring to the observers who have a Namibian, Portuguese, or Australian observer integrated into their program. We have a lot to learn from each other. Not only between one region and another in the U.S., but from observer programs around the world. Let us open the doors even wider and see what happens next!

Overall, I think there were a few great improvements from the Newfoundland Conference (Especially in observer attendance), was very thankful that I could attend and contribute as much as I did. I look forward to the great changes that can come from ideas that arose during this conference. See all of you in Australia (?) in a couple of years.... and remember... put us all on a boat! Feel free to contact me any time (lblegend@yahoo.com)

Mark Wormington

I attended the International Observer Conference with a (Thank you!) subsidy. I've worked as an observer since '90 (7 years Alaska; 1 year West Coast; approximately 2 1/2 years at sea).

The overriding message I received at the conference was that I might as well have had "Inappropriate" tattooed on my forehead. When a moderator prefaced an open question session with an admonition against query-as-editorial (his word choice was subtler) more than a smattering of applause defied acoustic protocol and dispersed only after deflecting off my rosy beazer. By compulsively attempting to introduce economic/environmental politics as the overlooked master shaper and distorter of all resource issues I seem to have earned only antipathy from my respected peers.

Most interesting among a wealth of thoughtful, well-prepared and sagely brief presentations was Ann Weckback's deeply touching account of surviving disaster at sea, which she accomplished with rare honor and courage. Ann's DNA might harbor a gene therapy for hypothermia, but the poetry of a good heart trumps anything science can cull from that ordeal.

I'm determined to make use of the many fine examples of conference speakers who know how to prepare, communicate, cooperate and organize. Awkward though I may be as messenger, I came away even more impressed that the core message I failed to deliver is absolutely on target: We'll never buy our way to sustainability without changing our spending habits. The USA is supposed to be the world's greatest democracy, and the 21st is supposed to be the century for biology that the 20th was for physics. It follows that professional biologists should be the opinion leaders who influence public policy toward sustainability--which generally runs about 180 degrees from current policy (as enacted, rather than as stated). Our best ideas are ever crushed by the best-funded ideas. There's nothing professional in being a pawn, no matter the title on our business cards. Our political apathy, our civic inaction renders us impotent in attaining the ultimate goals our vocation demands.

Anyone with ideas for a sustainable community laboratory in Port Orford, Oregon, please contact me (via the APO). The experiment will be underway in May, 2003.

Bruce Wade

I am employed by Javitech Ltd., Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada. I have been employed as an observer for the Scotia Fundy Region for 4 + years.

Whether you are from Canada, USA, Australia or where ever, the one most common thing is that as Observers we face many challenges in our work every day. The collection of Biological and Surveillance data tops our agenda but there is also information on sea birds, turtles, and various marine mammals that is collected. These are all vital in helping to understand and sustain a healthy and viable fishing industry.

I found it most interesting speaking with other observers and contractors at the conference. To hear first hand of how observer programs in other parts of the world operate, the issues that they have to contend with, and how they deal with them is priceless in keeping the spirit of Observing well and alive. Some people look at Observing as a job, but for most observers (including myself) in the Scotia Fundy Region it is a career that we intend to put many years into.

When you sit down and go over the wealth of information dealt with at the conference, it is all useful at one point or another. Perhaps at one point in reading you can say, "hey, this is how I can combat this problem", again stressing how important it is to go back and delve into the material. The MAIN phrase that I have kept with me came from one of the presenters, and I can't find his name to give him credit, is "**Do your work everyday like you will need to defend it in court**". Enough said! Thank you for your time and keep up the good work.

Julie Belliveau

I have been observing for Saltwater Inc. in the Hawaii Longline Observer Program for two years. I was

fortunate to have my participation at this year's conference paid for by both Saltwater Inc. and NOAA Fisheries. The most important take-home message for me was the importance of my job. It is easy as an observer to lose sight of the big picture while concentrating on the day-to-day duties of being out at sea. We are often jumping from boat to boat so quickly that the application of the information we collect seems unimportant. The conference gave me a new appreciation for my job and the data collected.

The thing I found most interesting was the vast differences between the programs. I have only observed in Hawaii and was not aware of how different the job is in other areas of the world. I am curious to try new programs and see new oceans. I was intrigued by the possibility of an exchange program and would like to pursue the possibility. I plan to share my experience with other observers to impress upon them the importance of good data, safety and other topics touched upon at the conference.

Juan Levesque

I have been observing for 7 years with SEFSC-NMFS-pelagic longline program.



The main take home message for me was about the split in priorities between the west and east coast. I am referring to enforcement vs. data collecting issues. Secondly, I believe it was about how observer programs are developed. What are the objectives, etc.? I found the talks about data quality and how to set up programs very interesting. Maybe some day I will be in charge of setting up a program thus I would like to run it successfully and safely. I found justification (or lack thereof) of the 5, 10, 20% coverage interesting. No real size behind these numbers, not sure why this has not been tested in the courts?

Phil Moore

I have been an observer since 1994. I have worked in the Alaska region with the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP), Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game (ADF&G) Shellfish Program, and the Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program.

The National Observer Program sponsored the event and provided some expenses to most observers. The body of the conference was panel discussions on selected topics. Each panel had several presentations. Each speaker's presentation lasted seven minutes. Most of the panels had speakers from Alaska region observer programs. Rather quick discussions occurred for some deep topics.

The food around New Orleans/Louisiana is excellent. The National Observer Program sponsored the event and provided some expenses to most observers. The body of the conference consisted of panel discussions on selected topics. Each panel had several presentations lasting seven minutes. Most of the panels had speakers from Alaska region observer programs. Rather quick discussions occurred for some deep topics.

In response to the APO's request for feedback, a few of the most interesting aspects of the conference were:

1. How much variety there is within observer programs in the U.S.A. and throughout the world. i.e. different fisheries, sampling, data products, program management, Service Delivery Model (SDM) issues, priorities, etc. It was interesting to see other Pacific program overviews at the conference. An observer in those programs biggest concern is catching too much sun.
2. The observer programs located in the Alaska region are large in size and have a great amount of experience working with observers and their issues. Alaska programs are at the forefront of dealing with many observer issues. i.e. new regulations, new sampling protocols, new program policies and safety training.
3. Observer data generates jobs and products. Many people in the fishing industry, public/private resource management agencies, and related private industry, base their work/products on our data and efforts.

Big take home message... Well, all of these people talking about you (OBSERVERS) at the conference. Observers are a central element to much of U.S. fisheries management. Observer Agencies, programs, and individuals try to expose themselves to

or have mechanisms for OBSERVER input. They want our input. The public process is an input medium. Talking to staff is an input.

LASTLY, How to use it?? Some personal observations/ideas:

- PARTICIPATE in the input process. I.E. - DO SURVEYS - That is a common medium for observer input.
- SUPPORT people who participate in representing observers.
- INVOLVE yourself if the job/issue/interest drives you and time permits you to do so.
- ATTEND the forth conference in Australia (?) in 2004.

Many observers from the Alaska region have been active in the above. Observers and our work place have benefited. The National Observer Program staff are contributing more and more guidance on observer issues that are evolving onto the national stage. i.e. Insurance, Safety, Retention, Appropriate compensation, etc. I hope someone continues to do so in the future.

Signed - a satisfied conference attendee.



Jennifer Eichelberger

Alaska Groundfish Observer, Alaskan Observers, Inc. beginning March 1998; West Coast Groundfish Observer, August 2001 to present

I would like to thank the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program, Alaskan Observers, Inc. and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission for making it possible for me to attend the International Fisheries Observer Conference in New Orleans. It was a terrific conference and I am very grateful that I was able to be a part of it.

The biggest take-home message of the conference for me was that nearly all participants, from program managers and data users to field coordinators and observers, expressed a sincere concern and interest in taking care of observers. It was acknowledged time and time again that the people in the field are the foundation for collecting the data that is needed to manage fisheries. In my mind, "taking care of observers" means having high standards for safety training and equipment, providing observer support before, during, and after deployment, and adequately addressing insurance coverage and compensation rates for the observers. It was also very apparent that funding is always a concern and limiting factor for running observer programs. Therefore, despite the good intentions of program managers, implementing actual plans and policies that achieve the goal of "taking care of the observers" may often fall short, resulting in low retention rates of observers.

For me, the most exciting aspect of the conference was gaining an international perspective on observer program issues. I had no idea that there were so many observer programs around the world, and it was really fascinating hear about the challenges and achievements of the other programs. For observers who like to travel, which seem to be many, the idea of an "Observer Exchange Program" was a very exciting topic of conversation. Since observer programs are generally over-tasked and often under-funded, I do not feel that observers should expect the observer programs to develop and implement exchange programs. I think a grassroots effort by interested observers would be more effective in making something like this happen. Observers could work with contractors, the Association for Professional Observers (APO), and possibly the (US) National Observer Program (NOP) to facilitate resume posting and exchanges of job advertisements and descriptions on the internet. I, for one, am starting to get a little settled down and am not too likely to pursue employment in observer programs overseas, but I am very interested in maintaining communication between programs and learning more about what goes on in observer programs and fisheries in other parts of the world. If the next International Fisheries Observer Conference is in Australia, sign me up!



Lorna Cameron

In the middle of November in New Orleans, Louisiana, I, among others, attended and participated in an INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER CONFERENCE. There were over 22 countries from around the world attending and although there were not observers from all the 22 countries I did learn a lot about how other programs are run.

I am an observer with the NORTH PACIFIC GROUND FISH OBSERVER PROGRAM, based in Seattle, Wa., and working in Alaskan ports. There are a lot of different goals that each program is centered around; there are also issues that other programs don't delve into, such as monitoring enforcement.

Of the many topics discussed one I thought most about was the goal. What is each program trying to achieve? There were many different thoughts racing through my mind. Ideally the management of the fisheries is the true goal, in the broadest sense, but I was thinking more specifically. What fish are being observed and how are they observed. I thought this was the interesting part. I realize that each fishery has logistical problems to overcome and different placement of observers on boats and this ultimately affects the data, which we collect. One thing I realized is that the U.S. has many different observer programs. This seems silly to me that they are not uniform in goals, running of the programs, data base similarities and such. For such a large organization, such as NMFS, I would think it would be easier to manage or access all different fisheries through the one system and that it would be cost effective to minimize the differences.

Another topic that has a large impact was that of our safety. The discussions were good, but what brought home the impact of a boats safety on my well-being, was the talk given by a fellow observer, who experience first hand a large boat emergency. Ideas about how we could do little things to improve my safety are things that I plan on discussing more with NPGOP.

Our hotel had access to Bourbon St, which, with any number of observers present could pose to be a major distraction. It was. I did manage to balance a good evening atmosphere and still maintain my presence at the daily presentations and discussion. I must admit that they were not like the schedule I normal work under, not having the random break schedule given at the beginning might have been the most difficult part.

I would like to thank APO and Vicky Cornish (organizer of Observer Conference 2002) for waiving my conference fee. The rest I was self-sponsored.

Kim Dietrich

Observer in Alaska Groundfish –intermittent 1991 – 2000. Alaska Marine Mammal Program in Prince William Sound. Sea Sampler/research assist for IPHC & NMFS AMLR Program.

The biggest take-home message for me is how incredibly vulnerable we (observers and fishers) are while working at-sea. I cannot thank Anne Weckback enough for sharing her experience on the f/v Galaxy. I realize this was incredibly difficult and can only hope that in some way talking about the experience was good for her as well. I will have safety on the brain for many months to come. Although we all know the risk of working at sea is not coming back, I don't think we spend nearly enough time thinking about safety and planning for various contingencies. It was interesting to learn that fishing vessels in other countries have extremely high safety standards (including stability & maintenance, licensed crew, mandatory training of all crew, etc.), much higher than the standards in the United States. I would like to utilize the information to continue networking with the international programs and work toward improving safety training for observers in the U.S. as well as push for better commercial fishing vessel safety standards.

Colleen Duifhuis

I've been observing in the Alaska groundfish program since August 1998.

The biggest take-home message for me was that there is a lot of work to be done on improving our programs. It was encouraging to hear that there are many people working on this. There are so many opinions on the different issues and it will be a long haul to work through them, but eventually improvement will be seen.

I found the most interesting part of the conference to be learning about how different observer programs work from all over the world. The diversity was very good and it was fun to listen to and meet these people.

I think I'll use the information that I got at the conference to encourage others and myself when things go bad that there are people out there working hard to help us. There's a lot to be done and they need our help in the process as much as we need them.



Anne Weckback Fund (summary by Tracey Mayhew)

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the donation fund for Ann Weckback, the observer on board the F/V Galaxy when it caught fire on Oct. 20th. The number of people who came forward with a donation is inspirational. Observers, observer providers, NMFS employees and people around the globe sent in donations and wishes. My hope is that we all know, that when needed, the observer family will pull together and we will all step up and help each other out. I hope everyone can feel comforted and inspired by this fact. Ann is still determining how the money can best be used. When a decision is made we will report back to you. Again, thank you so very much for your support and contributions! Be healthy, stay safe!



APO ACTIVITY UPDATE (continued from p.1)

The candidates are as follows:

President (vote for 1): **Suzanne Romain**

Vice-President (vote for 2): **Nicole Caputo, Kelly Van Wormer, Gillian Stoker**

Secretary (vote for 1): **Kelly Van Wormer, Jared Bryant**

Treasurer (vote for 1): **Kim Dietrich**

If you're a current member of the APO, you should have received a ballot in the mail along with the October Mail Buoy. Ballots are due by January 10, 2003. Votes will be accepted via snail mail, e-mail and telephone. Send your ballots by **January 10, 2003** to: APO, PO Box 30167, Seattle, WA 98103 or via email: APO@apo-observers.org or apo_obs@hotmail.com. For more information, you can also call Kim Dietrich (VP) 206-547-4228 or Kelly Van Wormer (Secretary) 206-723-6850 or email either of the above.

Observer Advisory Committee Meeting – Jan. 23-24
NMFS and Council staff met in Juneau October 28-29 to discuss potential alternative management proposals and a strategy for making changes to the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program. Staff anticipate two products from the upcoming OAC

meeting: 1) a discussion paper which outlines a proposed problem statement and general alternatives and issues for long-term, significant revisions to the Observer Program, and 2) a NMFS proposal for a short-term pilot project to test deployment of observer resources to determine catch composition and bycatch rates in a specific fishery.

The next OAC meeting is scheduled for Jan. 23-24 at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle. The plan for the OAC meeting is to review both of the papers mentioned above, with the primary focus on the discussion paper and proposed structural changes to the program. Council review of these papers will be scheduled for the Council's February meeting (Jan 27 - Feb. 3). The APO strongly encourages observers to attend. FMI contact Nicole Kimball at the NPFMC or Kim Dietrich, Observer representative on the OAC.

Hawaii Longline Observer Program UPDATE

Update from the Pacific Islands submitted by Joe Arceneaux, HLOP

I recently returned from 2 weeks of travel on the other side of the equator. On November 26 & 27 I conducted two public meetings on the America Samoa (AS) Longline Observer Program. I presented a brief overview of the goals of the program and the reasons behind it. While in Pago Pago, I coordinated with AS Dept of Marine & Wildlife and Western Pacific Council staff on safety workshops for vessel operators. PIAO has secured AMSEA to conduct two marine safety drill instructor sessions in Feb/Mar 2003 to help meet the need of certified drill instructors in the marine community in AS. Western Pacific Council will conduct safety inspection workshops in January 2003 to help vessels qualify for the commercial fishing vessel safety sticker. We have identified suitable office space. The port sampling program (plant sampling at the tuna canneries) may move into the same suite, as their current office is very, very small.

The 5th SPC/FFA Data Collection Committee was in Brisbane. It is a biannual meeting of program managers from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). Changes to data forms and logsheets were the order of the day. I was in attendance along with a representative from the New Zealand Ministry of Fisheries as an outside opinion. The meeting was very informative and we got through the entire agenda despite some of the derailing discussions that went on. Data form issues seem to be the same no matter where you are.

I've also included a short overview of the Papua New Guinea Observer Program (next article).

Papua New Guinea Observer Program-A short overview Distilled from a paper presented by Ms. Valonna Baker.

Introduction

The Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority has an observer program that provides data valuable to the management of Papua New Guinea's fishing grounds. The observer program management team is located in Port Moresby. It is led by the Observer Manager, Mr. Noan Pakop and the Deputy Observer Manager. Their primary role is coordinating observer placements in Papua New Guinea's many ports.

There are senior observers in the six major ports; Wewak, Port Moresby, Rabaul Kavieng, Madang and Lae. They assist the managers and perform briefing and debriefing duties, a crucial part in assuring data quality.

The fisheries monitored by the program include both foreign and domestic purse seiners, pelagic longline, fish and shrimp trawlers, and port sampling.

Staff & Personnel

The observer program currently has a total of 44 trained and qualified observers available for sea duty and port sampling. There are an additional 15 dedicated senior observers /port samplers spread amongst the six major and a few minor ports. To aid the observers, there are also 10 fisheries officers assigned throughout the provinces and Port Moresby.

The National Fisheries Authority (NFA) has set a target level of 80 observers to provide an optimum level of observer coverage. Coverage levels vary between the fisheries, with a long-term plan to build up to 20% coverage of all foreign fleets.

Two training courses have been conducted in the last two years, and two more trainings are planned to build up the pool of observers to the target level. Earlier this year, the NFA held a quality control workshop to prepare the senior observers to do quality control checks at the port with the observers. It is expected that SPC personnel will conduct a follow-up quality control workshop in 2003.

Observer Coverage Rates

In order to effectively use the available observers in 2000, and forecast coverage targets for 2001, observer coverage levels were set as follows.

- Foreign fleets 5%. (long-term target 20%)
- Tuna fisheries 100%.
- PNG based foreign purse seine 100%.
- Shrimp trawl 5%. (during seasonal closure 20%)
- Shark longline 30%.
- Payao deployment 100%. (deploying Fish Attracting Devices; FAD)
- all other fisheries 5%.

There was a change last year towards 100% coverage of all PNG domestic purse seiners associated with mothership transshipments at sea.

Observer Activity for 2002 based on sea days from January to November 2002

Fishery	Observer sea days
Domestic purse seine	1247
Foreign purse seine	984
<i>Total Purse Seine</i>	<i>2231</i>
Tuna longline	233
Shark longline	90
<i>Total Longline</i>	<i>323</i>
Shrimp trawl	217
Mothership	305
Payao deployment	12
Other fishery	36
<i>Total Observer Sea Days</i>	<i>3,124</i>

Trial Fisheries

- Trial fisheries require 100% observer coverage. This year, the following trial fisheries were observed.
- Shrimp trawl (Torres Strait). This fishery lasted from September 2001 to September 2002. It involved three vessels.
- Fish & Crustacean Trap Fishing (Gulf of Papua). This was tried by one vessel, but it proved unproductive and the operations were stopped.
- Mid-water Trawl Fishery (Dog Leg Area). This involved mid-water trawling in conjunction with a community based arrangement of villagers supplying catch to a vessel. This is a sensitive fishery that is expected to operate within 3mi if shore.
- Tuna handlining (Pump boats). This is a new gear type involving two vessels targeting larger tunas that associate with payaos (FADs) .

FMI contact: Noan Pakop, Manager, National Fisheries Authority, Monitoring & Enforcement Business Unit, Observer Program, PO Box 2016, 11th Floor, Deloitte Tower, Port Moresb, National Capital District, Papua New Guinea. Tel: + (675) 309-0444, Fax:+ (675) 320-2016, Email: npakop@fisheries.gov.pg



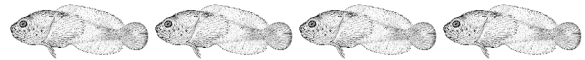
National Observer Program UPDATE

Fisheries Observer Logo T-Shirts Available



Ray Troll (of "Spawn Til You Die" fame) and Karen Lybrand have teamed up on a new "Fisheries Observer" logo, designed especially for NMFS observers. A limited number of t-shirts are being

distributed by NMFS to long-term observers in appreciation of all the hard work and dedication that observers demonstrate in performing their job. Additional t-shirts with the "Fisheries Observer" logo are also available for sale at the web site <http://www.promoplace.com/6266/stores/NOAA>.



ALASKA FISHERMAN'S UNION INFO

For any union or contract related problems or questions, please contact Duke Bryan or Harold Holten at:
 Alaska Fisheries Division-UIW
 721 Sesame St., #1C
 Anchorage, AK 99503
 Ph: 907-561-4988
 Toll free: 1-877-471-3425
 Duke Bryan in Tacoma: 253-272-5551 or 253-272-7774
 Email: dukeworks2@aol.com or haroldholten@ak.net

The latest versions of AOI, NWO and SWI union contracts can be found at the following URL:

http://www.apo-observers.org/union_page.html

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The APO attempts to update Job links on our website weekly. Visit <http://www.apo-observers.org/> and click on current jobs & internships in the left side navigation bar. If you'd like to be on the email list for bi-weekly reminders/updates, send an email to apo@apo-observers.org.

MISC. NOTES & TIDBITS

High Seas Driftnet Detection and Tracking in the North Pacific

MISSION STATEMENT: To develop tools for locating GhostNets and assessing their environmental risk in the North Pacific Ocean

OBJECTIVES

- **To identify and prioritize** the most likely locations for the GhostNets at a given time using space-borne sensors and output of existing models
- **To use** this information to search the high-probability regions for GhostNets
- **To develop** GhostNets identification capacity using LIDAR and other airborne sensors as the search tools
- **To create** a data and information system for project implementation

- **To assess** potential risks of GhostNets to the Alaskan Fisheries and coastal environment
- **To communicate** results of the project to stakeholders

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In order to search efficiently for GhostNets, one needs information on where they are likely to be. This can come from (1) **historical information** (i.e., recent sightings in the past), (2) **chance sightings** (i.e., where they have been sighted by Coast Guard or fishing vessels, research cruises, or aircraft), and (3) **knowledge of ocean conditions** conducive to collection of marine debris.

Although this project will take advantage of the first two sources of information, we will rely to a great extent on the third source of information since this would be the mainstay of an operational program to recapture GhostNets in the open ocean. Using historical and current satellite data, we will identify and locate convergence zones (CV) in the North Pacific since these are likely places for concentration of marine debris. The same forcing factors that concentrate net locations may also concentrate biological productivity and activity. As a result, there may be a significant overlap between the location of the nets and the location of marine organisms at risk of entanglement.

We therefore propose to identify and prioritize the most likely locations for the GhostNets at a given time. Upon creating our model, we will utilize airborne remote sensing techniques, including LIDAR, gated imaging, thermal and high-resolution multi-spectral imagery and synthetic aperture radar technology to search the high-risk areas to locate and map the GhostNets. The data gathered will then be available to aid in the removal or destruction of these nets. In addition, the net signature will be analyzed and compared with satellite data for continued refinement and possible future satellite detection of these nets. Sighting reports can be made on the internet at www.highseasghost.net or by calling our toll-free line: 1-866-374-3863.

The High Seas GhostNet Project is supported by the following: Alaska SAR Facility, Airborne Technologies, Inc., Business Integration Group, NOAA Environmental Technology Laboratory, NOAA ORA, NOAA/NMFS Honolulu Lab, Scientific Fishery Systems, Inc., System Science Applications, US Coast Guard, and University of Alaska Fairbanks SFOS IMS.

Pacific Coast Marine Protected Areas: A Public Clearinghouse for Planning Information *(originally from Fish Folk ListServ posting 12/3/02)*

Keeping track of the growing number of MPA planning processes in the Pacific just became a lot easier. NOAA's National Marine Protected Areas Center (NMPAC), working with the Communications Partnership for Science and the Sea (COMPASS), has developed a web-based clearinghouse, <http://www.PacificMPA.org>, that provides a single,

straightforward and factual source for timely information about ongoing governmental MPA planning efforts along the west coast from Washington to California. For each MPA planning process, the site provides up-to-date information on goals, possible outcomes, timelines, upcoming public meetings, draft environmental documents, links to the responsible agency programs, and agency points of contact. Updated regularly with input from over a dozen federal and state MPA agencies, this site gives all interested stakeholders the tools to track and effectively engage in MPA activity throughout the Pacific region. For additional information about the PacificMPA.org web site, contact Sarah Lyons at sarah.lyons@noaa.gov. For information about the National MPA Center's Science Institute in Santa Cruz, California, contact Dr. Charlie Wahle at charles.wahle@noaa.gov.

NEW MEMBERSHIP: if you want to become a member of the APO, please write, e-mail or call Kim Dietrich. An annual donation of \$15 is required. Donations are used to publish and distribute the *Mail Buoy* and to pay for costs of testifying at Council meetings out of state. Also, if you are not an observer but would like to receive your own copy of the *Mail Buoy*, there is an annual charge of \$10. The *Mail Buoy* is also available electronically either directly from the APO or via our website.



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).

WEBSITES OF INTEREST:

North Pacific FMC: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/>
 Pacific FMC: <http://www.pcouncil.org/>

National Observer Program (NOP) Website:
<http://www.st.nmfs.gov/nop/index.html>

North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program:
<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/observers/default.htm>

ObserverNet: <http://www.observernet.org/>

BOOKS

(From FishFolk, 12/12/02) - **Local Knowledge and Local Stocks: An Atlas of Groundfish Spawning in the Bay of**

Fundy By Jennifer Graham, Stephen Engle and Maria Recchia,
63 pages

This report documents fishermen's knowledge of local groundfish stocks and spawning grounds in the Bay of Fundy. It is based on research conducted with local fishermen by staff of the Centre for Community-based Management. At the heart of the report are maps showing where and when fishermen have caught spawning haddock, pollock and cod, and how these fisheries have changed over time. This report finds strong evidence for the existence of local stocks of cod, pollock and haddock in the Bay of Fundy and documents and discusses active and lost groundfish spawning areas. In many instances the loss of inshore fisheries is associated with the disappearance of local spawning activity. Fishermen attribute the progressive loss of groundfish spawning areas to the effects of overfishing, habitat change, diminished food availability, and pollution. Immediate action must be taken to protect and rehabilitate remaining local stocks and their spawning areas in the Bay of Fundy. Fishermen can play a significant role in the process because they have information about groundfish stocks that supplements scientific knowledge.

This publication is available from the Saint Francis Xavier bookstore for \$18.75 + HST + shipping and handling.

To obtain a copy of this report, contact STFX bookstore.
Telephone: (902) 867-2450, Fax: (902) 8675115 or email:
bkstore@stfx.ca

Publications using LOGBOOK Data:

Osterblom, H., T. Fransson, and O. Olsson.
2002. Bycatches of common guillemot (*Uria aalge*) in the Baltic Sea gillnet fishery.
Biol. Cons. 105:309-319.

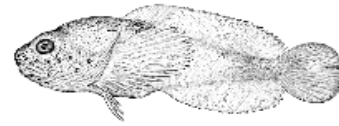
Other Articles of interest:

Van Zile, D. 2002. Sorting 'Em Out. *National Fishermen*
December: 20-23. (article on presorting halibut)

Sala, E., O. Aburto-Oropeza, G. Paredes, Ivan Parra, J. C. Barrera and P.K. Dayton. 2002. A general model for designing networks of marine reserves. *Science* 298: 1991-1993.

Leadbitter, D. 1999. *Bycatch Solutions: A handbook for fishers in non-trawl fisheries*. FRDC Report No. 1998/201, Ocean Watch Australia Ltd., New South Wales, Australia.

[*Editor's Note: I think it's a pretty good overview of bycatch/fisheries solutions in fixed gear fisheries written in a way that's easy to understand. It's focused on Australian fisheries but there are lots of applications that can cross borders so to speak and many that already have....it can be download at:*
<http://www.oceanwatch.org.au/pdf/bycatch.pdf>]



THINGS TO DO (Seattle):

UW School of Fisheries & Aquatic Sciences (SAFS) Quantitative Seminar every Friday, 12:30-1:20pm, Rm. 203, Fishery Sciences Building, 1122 Boat St. See:
<http://students.washington.edu/gfay/seminar.html> for more information.

UW SAFS Department Seminars, Bevan Series on Sustainable Fisheries, Thursdays starting Jan 9, 4:30-5:30 pm, Rm. 102, Fisheries Science Bldg.
<http://courses.washington.edu/susfish/schedule.html>

Fisheries-Oceanography Coordinated Investigations (FOCI) Lunchtime Seminar Series. Thursdays, Noon, Bldg 4, Rm. 2039. For topics see www.pmel.noaa.gov/foci/seminar.html

Conferences & Workshops

2003 ANNUAL WORKSHOP - MARINE SCIENCE FOR THE NORTHEAST PACIFIC: SCIENCE FOR RESOURCE-DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES
Jointly sponsored by the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council, GLOBEC Northeast Pacific Program, Steller Sea Lion Coordinated Investigations, North Pacific Research Board, North Pacific Marine Research Institute, and Pollock Conservation Cooperative Studies

January 13-17, 2003
Hotel Captain Cook, Anchorage, Alaska

The public is invited. This conference will be especially useful for scientists, fishermen, coastal community residents, subsistence users, environmentalists, and others interested in what is going on with marine research in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea.

For more information, check out the Trustee Council's website at
<http://www.oilspill.state.ak.us/events/Sympos.html>.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Observer Advisory Committee, Jan 23-24, Seattle, Alaska Fisheries Science Center

North Pacific Fishery Management Council: Jan.27 – Feb.3, Seattle, WA <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/>

Pacific Fishery Management Council: Sacramento, CA, Mar 10-14, 2003 <http://www.pcouncil.org/>

North Pacific Fishery Management Council: Mar.31 –Apr.5, Anchorage, AK <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/>

BRIEFING & TRAINING SCHEDULE

Visit <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/observers/schedules.htm> for more up to date information on groundfish training & briefing.

Date	Type	City
Dec. 9 - 12	4 day	Anchorage
Dec. 16 - 19	4 day	Seattle
Dec. 27 - Jan. 15	3 Week	Seattle
Dec. 27 - Jan. 15	3 Week	Anchorage
Dec. 30 - Jan. 3	4 day	Seattle
Dec. 31 - Jan. 4	Level 2	Anchorage
Jan. 6 - 9	4 day	Seattle
Jan. 7 - 10	Level 2	Anchorage
Jan. 13 - 16	4 day	Anchorage
Jan. 13- 16	4 day	Seattle
Jan. 20 - Feb.7	3 Week	Seattle

Jan. 21 - 24	4 day	Seattle
Jan. 27 - 30	4 day	Anchorage
Feb. 3 - 6	4 day	Seattle
Feb. 10 - 13	Level 2	Anchorage
Feb. 10 - 13	4 day	Seattle
Feb. 17 - 20	4 day	Anchorage
Feb. 24 - Mar 14	3 Week	Anchorage
Feb. 24 - 27	4 day	Anchorage

INTERESTED IN WRITING/PUBLISHING THE MAIL BUOY or doing other APO tasks?

Volunteers needed—contact Suzanne, Kim or Kelly. We’re always looking for extra help with letter writing/editing, insurance research, grant writing, database updates. The **SUBMISSION DEADLINE** for the next issue is **March 1, 2003**.



The APO continues to be interested in your ideas - if you have an idea for an article or story, would like to respond to a previous article, or think the APO has overlooked some issues, drop us a letter or call any time. Contributions from all sectors are welcome. **Thanks to Vicki Cornish, Dennis Hansford, Margaret Toner, Jacob Chabinka, Gillian Stoker, Suzanne Romain, Reuben Beazley, Richard Gill, Tracey Mayhew, Mike Tork, Lorraine McDonald, Keith Davis, Mark Wormington, Bruce Wade, Julie Belliveau, Anne Vanderhoeven, Randy Munro, Joe Arceneaux, Juan Levesque, Phil Moore, Cheryl Brown, Dennis Lee, Jennifer Eichelberger, Lorna Cameron and Colleen Duifhuis** for your articles/comments, your prompt answers to questions, requests for information in electric format, and/or your editing contribution. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. (KD)