



*the*  
**Mail Buoy**

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## APO Activities

### Funding to Attend the International Observer Conference in November

There is currently funding available from the National Observer Program to help approximately six active US observers (ideally one from each NOAA region) attend the 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Observer Conference which takes place November 8-11, 2004 in Sydney, Australia. The APO will be assisting in the distribution of these funds, the primary source of which is the National Marine Fisheries Service. Active is defined as having worked as an observer in a US fishery within 12 months prior to the abstract submission date.

Due to limited funds, selection for funding is on a competitive basis. Observers who are selected are expected to actively participate in the conference, either by taking part in one of the panels or by presenting a poster (details on the procedure for submitting abstracts for panel discussions and posters can be found at the conference website at [www.fisheriesobserverconference.com](http://www.fisheriesobserverconference.com) or see National section of this issue). They will also be expected to make a presentation to their peers/program upon their return. If a program or peer forum for presentation is not available, then a written report could be substituted. The presentation or report should be a summary of the panel in which the observer participated or an overview of discussions/panels/posters of the conference themes. The APO would also like to publish their summary in the Mail Buoy. This presentation or report is meant to (*con't on p.2*)

## North Pacific Council

### AP Update

Submitted by Tracey Mayhew – December 2003

Annual appointments to the Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the Advisory Panel (AP) were made during the December 2003 Council meeting. **During this Executive Session, the Council chose to eliminate the Observer Representative seat on the Advisory Panel.** The explanation given was that the Council wanted to pare down the number of seats on the AP from 23 to 20 and will eliminate 2 additional seats in December 2004. Although the numbers appear to go down, there were four new appointees to the AP to fill 4 of 5 previously vacant seats. Also eliminated was one processing company representative? The discussion regarding which seats to eliminate took place in Executive Session and so the reasoning behind the decision is not public information. The Council did, however, reserve the right to appoint interim members to the Advisory Panel based on agenda items. Within the last year the Council initiated an analysis on the restructuring of the Observer Program (see below). When this agenda item comes before the Council, the Council reserves the right to appoint an additional AP member for that specific (*con't on p.2*)

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### ***APO Activities...con't from p.1***

share the observer's experience and the conference proceedings with others who were unable to attend.

#### How to Apply

- Write a draft abstract (no more than 500 words) of your proposed presentation, panel discussion or poster.
- Submit it to the APO by March 10, 2004.

Submit a resume including your observer experience.

#### Selection Procedure

A 4-6 person committee comprised of NOAA Fisheries representatives, observers, (and potentially other funders) will evaluate the abstracts. The committee will notify observers if they are selected by March 20, 2004. The goal is to fund one observer from each of the six NOAA regions.

If you are selected for funding, several APO members are willing to help you fine-tune your abstract for submission to the conference (deadline April 2, 2004) as well as provide a practice audience for your talks if you would like the input.

#### Supporting Observer Attendance

If you are interested in supporting the attendance of observers, here are some suggestions:

1. If you are attending, you could share your room with an observer.
2. Donation of money – a fund has been established especially for the conference.

Please contact Kim Dietrich ([apo@apo-observers.org](mailto:apo@apo-observers.org)) for further information or to offer rooming or donate funds to help facilitate the attendance of observers to this conference.



### ***North Pacific Council Update...con't from p.1***

meeting and topic. This is better than no representation; however, a temporary, single-issue, stand-in participant is not going to be as effective as a full member who is responsible for understanding the big-picture. Whether

that person will have a vote on the Advisory Panel is also uncertain.

The following is an excerpt from the December 2003 Council Newsletter:

“The Council reviewed a preliminary draft analysis for an FMP amendment to restructure the funding and deployment mechanism in the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program. Under the new system, NMFS would contract directly with observer providers for observer coverage, supported by a broad-based user fee and/or direct Federal funding. The primary alternative would apply the new program to all Gulf of Alaska groundfish vessels, with additional alternatives to add halibut vessels, Gulf of Alaska shoreside processors, and BSAI vessels with currently less than 100% coverage requirements. Vessels and processors that are not covered under the new program will continue to operate under the existing program, whereby vessels contract directly with observer providers. The primary purpose of the review was to facilitate a discussion of the current list of alternatives and the analytical approach developed by staff. The Council also reviewed a letter from NMFS regarding various issues that affect the schedule for the analysis. The two primary issues identified involve: 1) the administrative appeals process for suspending and decertifying an observer, and 2) overtime pay for observers in programs where NMFS contracts directly with observer providers. NMFS has requested time to address these issues and to determine whether they will affect the agency's ability to implement two different observer programs: (1) in the GOA (modified program funded by fee, where NMFS contracts directly with observer providers) and (2) the BSAI (existing pay-as-you-go structure, where vessels contract directly with observer providers). Due to the above concerns, the schedule has been revised to include an update for the Council at the February 2004 Council meeting and an Observer Advisory Committee meeting in late February or March. Initial review of the draft analysis is tentatively scheduled for April. The preliminary draft analysis is on the Council website. The Council did not take any formal action on this issue.”

You can check out the full newsletter at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/newsletters/1203news.pdf>

The restructuring will be discussed in further detail at the next Observer Advisory Committee meeting which will be on March 11-12. The EA/RIR for Establishing a New Program for Observer Procurement and Deployment in the North Pacific. If you have time, please provide comments to Kim Dietrich ([apo@apo-observers.org](mailto:apo@apo-observers.org)) and Tracey Mayhew ([orra@apo-observers.org](mailto:orra@apo-observers.org)) by March 1. This document can be downloaded from: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/analyses/revised%20OPO%20restructuring%20EA.pdf>

The Council also received a letter from the AK Region on this topic which is posted on the APO's website as well.

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### **Tracey Mayhew Testifies at Feb. Meeting**

*Part of testimony provided to the Advisory Panel regarding Observer Program restructuring....* I would like to say that I appreciate the work that NMFS and Council staff have put into this restructuring plan. It seems that the more we dig the more fundamental flaws we are finding that need to be addressed, and none of them are easy to resolve.

There is an OAC meeting coming up in March, I encourage the Council and AP to direct the OAC with the task of potentially adding to the problem statement, refining the alternatives, as well identifying other alternatives that will address the BSAI and GOA as one program.

If the Council is going to add to the Problem Statement at this meeting I would ask that that AP recommend the Council include in the Problem Statement that observers have been denied the rights of due process since the inception of the program. This is the fundamental problem, and the proposed statements are merely outcomes of that problem.

The action memo addresses the need to revisit the timeline. I would like to see a back calculated timeline. The current interim program will sunset in 2007 and although that may seem like a lot of time, it has been a year and the Problem Statement is still being developed. When you factor in necessary public review time, the time to implement the new program, and General Council review everyone needs

to have a realistic idea of how much time is available to pin down these alternatives. I would like to see that timeline available to the OAC during it's March meeting.



## **National UPDATE**

### **NMFS Fisheries Observer Coverage Level Workshop: Defining a Basis**

Summary report was prepared by Graeme Parkes, MRAG Americas, Inc. Tampa, FL and Mark S. Kaiser, Department of Statistics, Iowa State University. Link to the full document via APO's website in Hot Topics.

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### **International Observer Conference Themes**

(from [www.fisheriesobserverconference.com](http://www.fisheriesobserverconference.com))

The Conference will be calling for abstracts by April 2, 2004, to be considered as oral or poster presentations under the themes below.

#### **How should observer programs be designed and executed to achieve multiple objectives?**

- optimal coverage
- randomized experimental designs
- periodic review of designs
- spatial and temporal replication
- prioritization of observer functions
- ensuring accurate and reliable data
- biases of observer presence

#### **How are observer data analyzed and used?**

- fisheries management
- environmental impacts – monitoring and mitigation
- stock assessment
- compliance

**How do observers balance the roles of scientific data collection, compliance monitoring and education?**

- consequences of not achieving a balance
- statutory status of observers and obligations
- the observers’ role in violation situations
- is it ever appropriate to “turn a blind eye”?
- education of best practices, regulations, marine stewardship, codes of conduct
- promoting the worth of observer programs

**What are the strengths and weaknesses of the various options for delivering observer services?**

- use of contractors – standards and performance
- government-based, industry-based and independently-based programs
- Insurance and liability implications
- Control of program and data within a user pay system
- Integrity issues

**What is the career path for observers?**

- personal development
- retention of experienced observers
- avenues for promotion
- chains of command

**What is the best way to train and ensure the safety of observers?**

- content, strategies and focus of training
- legal obligations
- observer support
- appropriate equipment
- management of risks and threats
- accreditation and certification

**What are alternative ways to monitor fisheries and how can they be integrated?**

- strengths and weaknesses of alternative technologies
- industry logbooks, research vessels, port sampling

- videos, digital photography, vessel monitoring systems, data loggers
- using fishing crews as observers

**How to do observer programs in small-scale fisheries?**

- artisanal, indigenous, traditional fisheries
- recreational and charter-boat fisheries
- freshwater fisheries
- small-scale and low-value commercial fisheries
- observers working from their own vessels in small-scale fisheries

**How can observer programs throughout the world be standardised and shared?**

- sharing of data among observer programs
- data formats and standards
- sharing of observers among observer programs
- observer programs in multinational fisheries

**How can the obstacles to establish observer programs be overcome?**

- funding - the appropriate sharing of costs by industry, other stakeholders and government
- availability of observers
- obligations of industry, regulators and observers
- gaining industry acceptance of observer programs
- data ownership and confidentiality
- stakeholders’ perceptions of the worth of observer programs
- developing a manual of guiding principles for observer programs

**Recommendations for the future - What progress has been made since these conferences began and where do we go from here?**

**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 Region - Activities**

### **Changes To Required Seabird Avoidance Measures Become Final For Vessels Using Hook-And-Line Gear In Groundfish And Halibut Fisheries Off Alaska (Info Bulletin #04-04, 1/13/04)**

NMFS issues a final rule to revise regulations requiring seabird avoidance measures in the hook-and-line groundfish fisheries of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and in the Pacific halibut fishery in U.S. Convention waters off Alaska. This action is intended to improve the current requirements and further mitigate interactions with the short-tailed albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*), an endangered species protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and with other seabird species in hook-and-line fisheries in and off Alaska, according to James W. Balsiger, Administrator, Alaska Region, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The North Pacific Fishery Management Council took final action on these measures in December 2001 and a proposed rule was published on February 7, 2003 (68 FR 6386).

### **Who Must Use the New Seabird Avoidance Measures?**

Seabird avoidance measures will apply to the operators of vessels using hook-and-line gear for:

- Pacific halibut in the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) and Community Development Quota (CDQ) management programs (0 to 200 nautical miles (nm)),
- IFQ sablefish in EEZ waters (3 to 200 nm) and waters of the State of Alaska (0 to 3 nm), except waters of Prince William Sound and areas in which sablefish fishing is managed under a State of Alaska limited entry program (Clarence Strait, Chatham Strait), and
- groundfish (except IFQ sablefish) with hook-and-line gear in the U.S. EEZ waters off Alaska (3 to 200 nm).
- Other than noted above, vessel operators using hook-and-line gear and fishing for groundfish in waters of the State of Alaska must refer to seabird avoidance measures in State regulations.

- Exemption: Operators of vessels 32 ft (9.8 m) LOA or less using hook-and-line gear in IPHC Area 4E in waters shoreward of the EEZ are exempt from seabird avoidance regulations.

### **What are the New Seabird Avoidance Requirements?**

The primary requirements are:

- Seabird avoidance gear must be onboard, made available for inspection upon request by specified persons, and must be used while hook-and-line gear is being deployed.
- Use of a line or lines designed to deter seabirds from taking baited hooks (paired streamer line, single streamer line, or buoy bag line).
- Offal discharge methods, including removal of hooks from any offal that is discharged.
- Seabird Avoidance Plan—a new reporting requirement. Must be written, current, and onboard the vessel. This new Seabird Avoidance Plan is available at:  
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seabirds/torilines/form.pdf>

### **What Type of 'Bird Scaring Line' Must be Used?**

The type of 'bird scaring line' you are required to use depends on the area you fish, the length of your vessel, the superstructure of your vessel, and the type of hook-and-line gear you use (e.g. snap gear). **See the actual regulations for your specific requirements.**

- Larger vessels [greater than 55 ft (16.8 m) length overall (LOA)] in the EEZ must use paired streamer lines of a specified performance and material standard.
- Smaller vessels [greater than 26 ft (7.9 m) LOA and less than or equal to 55 ft LOA] must use a single streamer line or, in limited instances, a buoy bag line. Required performance and material standards are not specified for smaller vessels.
- In certain situations, an additional device must be used—adding weights to the groundline, use of a second buoy bag line or streamer line, or strategic offal discharge to distract birds away from the setting of baited hooks.

### **Is 'Night-Setting' an Option as a Seabird Avoidance Measure?**

No. Night-setting, the use of a line shooter, or the use of a lining tube (for underwater setting of gear) must be accompanied by the applicable seabird avoidance gear requirements as specified in regulation.

### **Are Free Streamer Lines Still Available?**

Yes. See

<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seabirds/streamers.htm> for the nearest Streamer Line distribution center.

**What Do I Do if I Accidentally Hook Birds While Hauling Gear and They Come Onboard Alive?** The new regulations continue to require that every reasonable effort be made to ensure that birds brought on board alive are released alive. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) says that these live birds should be released on site if they meet ALL of the following criteria:

- Bird can stand and walk using both feet.
- Bird can flap both wings and there is no apparent wing droop.
- Bird is alert, active, holds its head up and reacts to stimuli.
- Bird is not bleeding freely.
- Wing and tail feathers have not been lost and are in good condition.
- Bird is waterproof (water beads up on feathers).

If the bird does not meet all of these criteria, then see Appendix 2 of the [USFWS Biological Opinion on the Effects of the Total Allowable Catch-Setting Process for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fisheries to the Endangered Short-tailed Albatross \(\*Phoebastria albatrus\*\) and Threatened Steller's Eider \(\*Polysticta stelleri\*\)](#), September 2003 for details on how to care for the bird.

#### **When Are the New Regulations Effective?**

The new regulations are effective February 12, 2004, 30 days after the publication of the final regulations in the Federal Register ([69 FR 1930, January 13, 2004](#)).

This action is necessary to improve the effectiveness of seabird avoidance measures and further reduce the incidental take of seabirds in hook-and-line fisheries off Alaska. The action is issued pursuant to 50 CFR Part 679.

This information bulletin only provides notice of a regulatory change. For the purposes of complying with the regulatory change, you are advised to see the actual text of the regulation in the Code of Federal Regulations.

Additional information can be found at the NMFS Alaska Region website <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seabirds/guide.htm> or by contacting [Kim.Rivera@noaa.gov](mailto:Kim.Rivera@noaa.gov), NMFS's Seabird Coordinator, 907-586-7424.

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## **Investigation Into The Circumstances Surrounding The Sinking Of The Uninspected Fishing Vessel**

**Arctic Rose** – The final report of Coast Guard findings can be downloaded at:

<https://www.piersystem.com/clients/uscg-13/ArcticRoseReport-CompleteFinal.pdf>

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## **Results of the IPHC 2003 PIT Tagging Experiment**

Gregg H. Williams

### **Introduction**

In 2003, the IPHC staff carried out a coastwide tagging project utilizing Passive Integrated Transponder, or PIT, tags. The primary objective of this program is an independent determination of the exploitation rate, although additional information on migration and growth is also expected to become available. The tags are implanted subcutaneously in the head of a halibut, leaving no external markings indicating the tag presence and avoiding recurring problems with tag reporting rate noted in earlier tagging studies. Roughly 44,000 tags were released in 2003 from the setline assessment survey vessels in all areas except Area 4E. At offloading sites, scan samplers examined over 583,000 halibut for tags during June-November, locating 86 tags. Plans for 2004 include additional PIT tagging releases in Area 2B and 3A. Scanning will be conducted throughout the fishing season.

### **What are PIT tags and why use them?**

A PIT tag is a radio frequency device that transmits a unique code to a scanner where it is displayed in a numeric or alphanumeric form. The tag has no internal battery, hence the term "passive." The tag is glass-encapsulated, 11.5 mm x 2 mm in size, and injected with a 12-gauge hypodermic needle. A handheld scanner powers (excites) the tag circuitry by radio frequency induction and receives the code back from the tag. Optimal read range is 7 to 30 cm. During manufacture, the PIT tag is coded with one of 3.5 billion unique codes.

Although IPHC has conducted many tagging experiments during its history, analyzing the results of these projects has been difficult due problems created by a lack of information on reporting rates, i.e., the rate at which recovered tags are reported to IPHC. Simply stated, not all recovered halibut tags are turned in, and the rate of reporting probably varies among areas of the coast. IPHC decided to use an internal tag which is recovered by a dedicated sampling team, using a proscribed set of sampling protocols, to overcome this problem.

PIT tags are a relatively new technology but have been used in a variety of applications, including product inventory and tracking runners in marathons. Marine fisheries applications have been few but the most notable use is on juvenile Pacific salmon on the Columbia River. Other uses in the region include an experiment being conducted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife on black rockfish.

## Project objectives

The primary objective of the PIT tagging program is to obtain an estimate of the exploitation rate for an area that is independent of the stock assessment model. If the exploitation rate and catch are known, then exploitable biomass can be estimated directly because catch is exploitation rate times exploitable biomass.

Objectives for this program differ from past IPHC tagging studies, which have focused primarily on migration, growth or survival.

Secondary objectives include gaining information on migration rates and additional information on growth. Since tagging is taking place coastwide during a single, narrow time period, the staff expects to get multi-directional movement patterns. To our knowledge, an experiment to tag an entire stock has not been conducted on a marine stock before. Migration rate data can be gathered from whole fish, heads, or both. Migration by size can be determined by initial size alone (i.e., data gathered when the fish is tagged), or through knowledge of both initial and recapture size, when whole fish are sampled.

Growth information will also be gathered in this study. Size at age in the catch is estimated annually from data collected by the port sampling program in every area. This provides a direct measurement of changes in size at age and it is based on a very large sample size (about 2,000 fish per regulatory area). We also get the same information from the survey data (also about 2,000 fish per area). These are then two independent estimates of growth, via size at age. The growth information from tagging acts only as an accuracy check on these other data sources, rather than being the definitive method for how we determine growth.

## Project planning

Planning for the project began in 2000 with a series of holding experiments at the Seward Marine Center to locate a satisfactory tagging location and measure the shedding rate for a PIT tag in halibut. Three different tag sites were investigated, and the site ultimately chosen is on the white (left) side of the fish, just posterior to the jaw and below the opercular groove. Shedding rates were quite low, roughly three percent. The primary factor in tag retention was the proper application of the tag, so IPHC staff spent considerable time developing a simple tagging protocol. Based on expected survey catch rates and a potential scanning rate of 25% of the landings in selected ports, an estimated 45,000 tags were projected for release.

## 2003 release operation and results

Tagging took place from the IPHC setline assessment survey vessels. Each vessel set an additional 300 hooks at each station to catch halibut for tagging. All viable halibut were expected to be tagged. Each fish was brought aboard carefully, either being lifted up and over the rail by the gangion (small fish) or with a gaff through the "V" of the lower jaw. The halibut were checked for injuries and tagging suitability, with 43,999 fish ultimately tagged throughout the survey range. Table 1 shows the number of fish tagged by regulatory area and survey vessel.

The number released varied by area, as expected, as the tags were released in proportion to abundance in the area. Area 3A

had the largest number of tags released (16,434, or 37% of the total tags), with Area 3B close behind (15,292; 35%). The largest halibut tagged was 213 cm in length (roughly 7 feet); the smallest was 38 cm (15 inches). Approximately 38% of the halibut tagged were sublegal in size.

The IPHC staff developed new procedures for data recording during this experiment, necessary in part due to the need to make sure the tag was working prior to releasing the fish back to the sea. This was accomplished by scanning the tag, which prompts the tag to emit its identification number back to the scanning wand. The wand captured the information, which was sent electronically to a personal digital assistant (PDA) device operated by a sea sampler in the deck recording shack, for data storage. The release data were then transferred to compact flash cards, the same type used by digital cameras, which were mailed to the office upon completion of the survey trip. This process eliminated the need for recording data by hand on paper forms, thereby enabling the tag release data to be available for use by analysts more quickly.

**Table 1. Number of PIT tags released by vessel and IPHC regulatory area in 2003.**

Reg. Area	Vessel Name	No. Tags Released
2A	Blackhawk	301
<b>Area 2A Total</b>		<b>301</b>
2B	Star Wars II	1,620
2B	Viking Joy	806
<b>Area 2B Total</b>		<b>2,426</b>
2C	Bold Pursuit	2,754
2C	Waterfall	1,221
<b>Area 2C Total</b>		<b>3,975</b>
3A	Bold Pursuit	910
3A	Free To Wander	7,611
3A	Predator	1,787
3A	Viking Spirit	1,532
3A	Waterfall	4,594
<b>Area 3A Total</b>		<b>16,434</b>
3B	Free To Wander	5,199
3B	Kristiana	4,513
3B	Norska	2,382
3B	Waterfall	3,198
<b>Area 3B Total</b>		<b>15,292</b>
4A	Heritage	623
4A	Pacific Sun	2,833
<b>Area 4A Total</b>		<b>3,456</b>
4B	Heritage	465
4B	Pacific Sun	671
<b>Area 4B Total</b>		<b>1,136</b>
4D	Heritage	979
<b>Area 4D Total</b>		<b>979</b>

**2003 recovery effort and results**

Recovering PIT tags in this experiment required that each fish be scanned using a portable handheld scanning device. The ports currently staffed by port samplers account for about 70% of the total pounds landed, so scan samplers were placed in the same ports, with a goal of sampling 25% of the landings from each regulatory area. Scanning began June 1, the same date when tag releases started from the survey vessels.

With the tag placed in the head, scanning could occur on either whole fish or heads. Samplers were instructed to sample whole fish, if possible, when it could be done without causing a disruption to the offload and processing of fish. This would enable the sampler to get a fish length on recovered tagged fish. If sampling whole fish was not possible, scanning only heads was an acceptable alternative, as the primary goal was to locate tags. In this scenario, scan samplers were not required to be present at the actual offload but could arrive later and scan heads from totes. The only requirement was to know the total number of fish scanned and the name of the vessel so a fishing location taken from a log could be assigned to the sample by office staff. By the end of the season, whole-fish scans represented 65% of the total number of scans. After an initial period of orientation and explanation, most processors were very helpful in allowing scan samplers access to vessel offloads.

IPHC hired seasonal staff for the Alaska sampling but contracted with Archipelago Marine Research, Inc. (AMR) of Victoria, B.C. for scanning Canadian landings. AMR already has staff present in most Canadian ports for other duties but some are employed for less than full time, so scanning would enhance their ability to retain those staff. The AMR staff took part in the 2-day training with the Alaskan samplers in Seattle in mid-May.

Scan sampling took place in Vancouver, Port Hardy, Prince Rupert/Port Edward, and Tofino/Ucluelet, B.C. Alaskan ports staffed included Sitka, Petersburg, Juneau, Homer, Kodiak,

Seward, Dutch Harbor, Adak, and St. Paul. IPHC office staff conducted sampling in Newport, OR during one of the short commercial openings, then contracted with a local sampler for subsequent openings. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife port samplers also scanned sport-landed halibut in Area 2A. Sampling also occurred in Bellingham, mainly on vessels landing halibut from the limited entry sablefish fishery, where halibut retention is allowed.

A total of 86 tags were recovered during the June-November scanning period (Table 2). Most of the recoveries in an area were of fish released in that area. Area 2A was the only area not to have any tags recovered. Almost all of the recoveries of Area 3A releases occurred in Area 3A. The number of recoveries in 2003 was about what was expected for the first year, however the number of recoveries is too few to permit any analysis of exploitation rates. In 2004, 500-600 tags are projected to be recovered.

**Table 2. Distribution of PIT tag releases and recoveries in 2003, by IPHC regulatory area.**

**Future plans**

The tagging conducted in 2003 comprises the primary tagging effort of the experiment. Additional releases of approximately 20,000 tags are planned in 2004 in Areas 2B and 3A to provide improved estimates of annual survival and strengthen the statistical basis for estimation of population parameters. Scanning for recoveries will continue at least through 2006 to fully capture as much information as possible about fishery exploitation rates and movements between areas. Scan samplers will be deployed to the same ports as in 2003, with the exception of Adak. Also, additional scanning is anticipated in Area 2A with the assistance of state and tribal representatives.

FMI: [www.iphc.washington.edu](http://www.iphc.washington.edu)

RELEASE			RECOVERY										Overall	
			Area	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	4C	4D		Unkn.
			<b>No. of Fish Scanned</b>	2,274	113,502	34,707	158,644	158,382	56,023	30,787	13,591	15,379		583,289
<b>Area</b>	<b># Tagged</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Prcet of lbs. Scanned</b>	45.1	38.6	28.8	40.7	35.2	38.1	40.9	94.3	38.0		37.9
2A	301	0.7												
2B	2,426	5.5			14									14
2C	3,975	9.0			6	7	1							14
3A	16,434	37.4			1		27						1	29
3B	15,292	34.8					1	15						16
4A	3,456	7.9						1	6	2	1			10
4B	1,136	2.6								1				1
4D	979	2.2										2		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,999</b>	<b>100.0</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>86</b>



## Research at the Auke Bay Laboratory on Benthic Habitat

Summary from AFSC Quarterly Report, July-Sept 2003

Since 1996, scientists at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Auke Bay Laboratory (ABL) have been conducting research on the effects of fishing gear on benthic habitat. Most of the research has focused on the effects of bottom trawls. The use of bottom trawls is one of the more controversial fishing methods due to documented changes in species composition and diversity and a reduction in habitat complexity associated with this gear type.



*Undersea gardens of coral and sponges provide cover and food for sea life in the Aleutian Islands. Photo by Bob Stone.*

The ABL studies provide information for developing appropriate measures for minimizing adverse impacts of fishing on habitat, as required in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Research has focused on understanding the direct effects of bottom trawling on seafloor habitat;

Understanding the associations of fish and invertebrate species with habitat features that may be affected by fishing gear; and developing analytical tools to assess habitat impacts and evaluate proposed mitigation measures. This article provides an overview of research on benthic habitat conducted by the ABL's Groundfish Assessment Program in collaboration with scientists from several universities and other government agencies.

Full article can be downloaded:  
(<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/Quarterly/jas2003/featurelead.htm>)

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Perez, M. A. 2003. **Compilation of marine mammal incidental take data from the domestic and joint**

**venture groundfish fisheries in the U.S. EEZ of the North Pacific, 1989-2001.** NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-AFSC-138, U.S. Dep. Commer.

This report presents a compilation by species, year, area, and gear type (trawl, longline, pot, and jig) of observer data on incidental take by the domestic (1989-2001) and joint venture (1989-1990) groundfish fisheries in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone of Alaska and the U.S. West Coast. Nineteen species of marine mammals (276 individuals) were observed killed or injured. Four of these 19 marine mammal species are classified as endangered under the Endangered Species Act: the western population only of the Steller sea lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*), the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), the fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*), and the sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*). Sperm whales were not killed in groundfish gear, but two sperm whales were considered seriously injured after becoming entangled in and released with trailing longline gear. The only take recorded for the jig fishery was one Dall's porpoise (*Phocoenoides dalli*) entangled in the lines and released with trailing gear; no marine mammals were directly killed by jig gear. Thirteen individual marine mammals sustained minor injuries before being returned to the sea, and 26 other individuals returned to the sea unharmed after either being caught by the gear or boarding the vessel of their own volition.

Sea otters (*Enhydra lutris*) were reported killed in the groundfish fisheries only by pot gear, and only in 1992. Stratified random sampling ratio estimates were used to calculate total bycatch. The at-sea Pacific whiting trawl fishery off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California was estimated to have incidentally caught and killed a total of 44 marine mammals between 1990 and 2001. In Alaska, the domestic trawl fishery was estimated to have incidentally killed a total of 445 marine mammals during the years from 1989 to 2001. The estimated average annual bycatch of Steller sea lions by the domestic trawl fisheries in Alaska during 1990-2001 was about 10% of the level of the average annual estimated take (127 sea lions) by the joint venture fisheries in Alaska during 1985-1989.

Full Tech Memo is available at:  
<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/Publications/AFSC-TM/NOAA-TM-AFSC-138.pdf>.

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Barbeaux, S. J., and M. W. Dorn. 2003. **Spatial and temporal analysis of eastern Bering Sea echo integration-trawl survey and catch data of walleye pollock, *Theragra chalcogramma*, for 2001 and 2002.** NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-AFSC-136, U.S. Dep. Commer.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is charged with determining whether fisheries for walleye pollock, *Theragra chalcogramma*, affect ecosystem function, specifically, any adverse impacts on endangered species. Although the spatial and temporal scale of fisheries impacts are an important concern, analyzing fisheries interactions at fine spatial scales is hindered by the resolution of available data. Our study had two goals: to analyze echo integration-trawl (EIT) survey data in association with observer catch records to evaluate the intensity of the walleye pollock fisheries, and to define the spatiotemporal resolution reasonable given the dynamic nature of the resource and the limitations of the data.

In this analysis we used the concept of Observed Catch to Survey Biomass Ratio (OCSBR) as a tool to measure fishery intensity at local levels. The OCSBR is the ratio of observed catch to EIT survey estimated biomass in a given area for a specified period of time. The OCSBR should not necessarily be considered a proxy for the local exploitation rate. This analysis addresses how varying temporal and spatial resolution changes the OCSBR value. A correlation analysis is used to determine the temporal and spatial scale at which OCSBR is a reasonable measure of fishing intensity.

Full Tech Memo is available at:  
<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/Publications/AFSC-TM/NOAA-TM-AFSC-136.pdf>



Photo: Rockfish, Dave Wagenheim, 2003

### **West Coast Groundfish Observer Program**

#### **West Coast Groundfish Observer Program Data Report and Summary Analyses**

In January 2004, the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) released is an update of the report released in January 2003, which summarized the first year of data collection. The WCGOP collects at-sea data onboard the west groundfish fleet (excluding the at-sea and shoreside whiting fleet<sup>1</sup>). The WCGOP's goal is to collect information on the discard of west coast groundfish to be used in assessing the total fishing mortality of a variety of groundfish species.

This report includes trawl data collected during the first two years of the program (Sept 2001-Aug 2003).

The full report is available online:  
<http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/fram/Observer/datareportjan2004.cfm>



### **Northeast Region Update**

Current Bycatch Priorities and Implementation Plan posted at:  
<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/doc/03bycatchplan.pdf>



### **ALASKA FISHERMAN'S UNION INFO**

Negotiations of 2004 contracts are currently ongoing for Saltwater, Inc., Alaskan Observers, Inc., and NWO. Please contact Duke Bryan or Harold Holten for further details on the status 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](mailto:dukeworks2@aol.com) or [haroldholten@ak.net](mailto: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](http://www.apo-observers.org/union_page.html)

Also see [www.observernet.org](http://www.observernet.org) for current updates/postings by observers regarding negotiations.

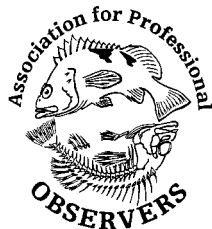
### **JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

As of 5/15/03, the APO has been posting job announcements in the Jobs folder on the

ObserverNet.org bulletin board. A few links to other job posting sites still exist at: <http://www.apo-observers.org/> and click on current jobs & internships in the left side navigation bar.

## MISC. NOTES & TIDBITS

**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

### Publications utilizing observer data:

Aydin, K. Y., V. V. Lapko, V. I. Radchenko, and P. A. Livingston. 2002. A comparison of the eastern and western Bering Sea shelf and slope ecosystem through the use of mass-balance food web models. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-AFSC-130. Downloadable from the AFSC website > Publications > TechMemos.

Hansford, D.C. and V.R. Cornish (Eds.). 2003. Fisheries Observers Insurance, Liability and Labor Workshop. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-F/SPO-59. 102 p. Available for download:  
[http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/nop/Insurance\\_Workshop\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/nop/Insurance_Workshop_Final_Report.pdf)

Manly, B. F. J., A. S. VanAtten, K. J. Kuletz, and C. Nations. 2003. Incidental catch of marine mammals and birds in the Kodiak Island set gillnet fishery in 2002. NMFS Report can be obtained from Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program. Request from [Mary.Sternfeld@noaa.gov](mailto:Mary.Sternfeld@noaa.gov).

Parkes, G., and M. S. Kaiser. 2004. NMFS Fisheries Observer Coverage Level Workshop: Defining a Basis. NMFS, Seattle, WA. Download from APO > Hot Topics page.

### 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, every Thursday, 4:00-5:00 pm, Rm. 102, Fisheries Science Bldg.  
<http://www.fish.washington.edu/Seminars/>

Feb 12 – Packed to Travel? Twenty Years of Moving with the Pelagics. Contrasts in the Spatial Distribution of Fish Species off Peru and Their Relationship to Environmental Conditions, Gordie Swartzman

Feb 19 – Killer Snails – Killer Diversity: Comparative Biology of the Most Diverse Marine Genus, Alan Kohn

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

**Northwest Fisheries Science Center Monster Jam**  
<http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/events/monster.cfm>

The Weekly Monster Seminar JAMs are held on Thursdays at 11:00AM in the Auditorium, unless otherwise noted.



Feb 12 - **Nutrient Controls over Terrestrial Carbon Storage**

Dr. Alan Townsend, Institute of Arctic & Alpine Research, University of Colorado

Feb 19 - **Why Experimental Ecology Matters for Conservation Biology** Dr. Mark Bertness, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Brown University

Feb 26 - **Avian Predation on Juvenile Salmonids in the Lower Columbia River: Should Caspian Terns Join the Four H's?** Dr. Daniel Roby, USGS-Oregon Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit/ Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Oregon State University

**Conferences & Workshops**

Feb. 9-13 Western Groundfish Conference, Victoria, BC. [www.iphc.washington.edu/halcom/groundfish/wgc2004/wgcsplash.htm](http://www.iphc.washington.edu/halcom/groundfish/wgc2004/wgcsplash.htm).

Feb. 15-20 2004 Ocean Research Conference, Honolulu, HI, <http://aslo.org/honolulu2004/>

Feb 22-29 24<sup>th</sup> Sea Turtle Symposium, San Jose, Costa Rica, [www.seaturtle.org/symposium/](http://www.seaturtle.org/symposium/)

May 2-6 Fourth World Fisheries Congress, Vancouver, WA, [www.worldfisheries2004.org/home.htm](http://www.worldfisheries2004.org/home.htm).

Nov. 8-11 International Observer Conference, Sydney Australia, [www.fisheriesobserverconference.com](http://www.fisheriesobserverconference.com).

**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS/E-MAIL**

APO General	<a href="mailto:apo_obs@hotmail.com">apo_obs@hotmail.com</a>
Kim Dietrich (Treas & Board)	206-547-4228 <a href="mailto:dietrichk@qwest.net">dietrichk@qwest.net</a> or <a href="mailto:apo@apo-observers.org">apo@apo-observers.org</a>
Liz Mitchell (APO Board)	<a href="mailto:emitch@efn.org">emitch@efn.org</a>
Kelly Van Wormer (VP-APO board)	<a href="mailto:akfishsticks@hotmail.com">akfishsticks@hotmail.com</a>
Tracey Mayhew (contracted)	<a href="mailto:orra@apo-observers.org">orra@apo-observers.org</a> (907) 929-7998
Suzanne Romain (President)	<a href="mailto:sromain@hotmail.com">sromain@hotmail.com</a>
OTC	907-257-2770
NPFMC (Council)	907-271-2809

**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

March 11-12 **Observer Advisory Committee Meeting:** Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle at 8:30 a.m. Room 1065.

March 29 **North Pacific Fishery Management Council:** Anchorage, AK, <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/>

March 7-12 **Pacific Fishery Management Council:** Tacoma, WA, <http://www.pcouncil.org/>

Mar 22-25 **Western Pacific Fishery Management Council,** Honolulu, HI, <http://www.wpcouncil.org/>

April 4-9 **Pacific Fishery Management Council:** Sacramento, CA, <http://www.pcouncil.org/>



**BRIEFING & TRAINING SCHEDULE**

**North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program:**  
Visit <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/observers/schedules.htm> for more up to date information.

**Training**

Feb 9-12	Level 2	Anchorage
Feb 23 – Mar 12	3-week	Anchorage

**Briefing**

Feb 9-12	4-day	Anchorage
Feb 17-20	4-day	Seattle
Feb 23-26	4-day	Anchorage

**West Coast Groundfish Observer Program**

Training: Feb 9-20, 2004, Newport, OR

writing/editing, insurance research, grant writing, database updates. The **SUBMISSION DEADLINE** for the next issue is **April 15, 2004**.



**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

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 Tracey Mayhew** for your articles and testimony at the Council. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. (KD)

## WHAT IS THE ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONAL OBSERVERS?

APO is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the exchange of information for observers and to the conservation of marine resources. Specifically, APO's Objectives are: (A) **To facilitate the exchange of information for observers regarding fisheries in the United States territorial waters by:** \*creating a professional association and network for exchanging information and expertise and fostering contacts within the various observer programs, management personnel and the fishing industry throughout the nation; \*disseminating information concerning observer, marine conservation, biological and interagency issues via a quarterly newsletter, the Mail Buoy, maintaining a website and listserv for up-to-date information between newsletters, and developing brochures explaining procedures to obtain better access to publicly owned information; \*encouraging and promoting observers to attain positions of leadership within the fisheries; \*identifying the needs of observers within the current management system in United States fisheries by formulating a Bill of Rights assuring observers the right to adequate insurance, wages and safe working conditions; providing input to the developing National Observer Program to standardize protocol on a national basis, developing a national vessel safety protocol for vessels carrying observers to promote and maintain a safe working environment for all observers; working with agency officials to monitor cases where safety violations occur; and \*encouraging national and international growth of APO by promoting chapters to qualified groups, including observers from private, state and federally supported observer programs, who will promote the purposes of APO. (B) **To encourage the conservation and sustainability of marine and other aquatic resources by:** \*initiating a partnership with the administrative agencies and scientific communities to enhance biological sampling protocol and overall data quality; \*helping secure funding for observers, who are the base-line data collectors, to participate in observer program workshops for the purpose of improving the monitoring systems of the nation's fisheries; \*educating members and non-members concerning the uses of observer data; \*disseminating abstracts and references of emerging research and publications to the public relevant to observer programs or that which is based on observer data; \*identifying problems in sampling protocol and recommending alternatives and future priorities to management agencies to improve data quality;

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