



Mail Buoy



[Vol. 11 (1)]

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Winter 2008

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Developments and Emerging Projects

We had our annual board meeting in Seattle, Washington on January 12th, 2008, and though only half of the board members were able to physically attend, the outcomes from that meeting were quite significant and inspiring for the future of the organization. The APO has been slowly building back up since a sluggish point in 2004/2005, and although we are still entirely coordinated by volunteers (many of whom work at sea for several months out of the year), we have charted a path to increase the overall stability and effectiveness of the organization- one that works at building greater financial and administrative strength in order to tackle goals and projects important to our mission.

In the coming months, we will be overhauling the APO website with the primary goals of increasing its functionality, organizing and modernizing its configuration, making it more interactive for users, and increasing the accessibility and usability of the existing and future resources found on the site. One goal for the website is to create an *Observer Professionalism Central*, an on-line location that acts as an objective job site where observers and contractors/providers from around the world can meet independently. Observers could post a profile with their education level and experience (i.e. sea days, fisheries, gear types) and employers can post profiles with job descriptions (i.e. location, fisheries, gear types, eligibility standards, and employment time-lines). Keep your eyes wide for some exciting changes to the APO [website](#).

The APO is now coordinating the creation of an educational and entertaining book comprised of international fisheries observers' stories, anecdotes, poetry, artwork, and imagery- an evolution of the observer short-story book project presented at the 2007 International Fisheries Observer Conference (IFOC). The goal of this project is to introduce this increasingly important profession to the wider public, and in so doing, promoting fisheries observer programs as a management and conservation tool. Poster advertisements detailing this project are now available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), or [Portuguese](#) on the APO website and a [poster](#) (in English) is presented later in the Mail Buoy. For further information contact the "EOS Editors," at: eyesontheseas@gmail.com.

As we reported in the [Fall 2007](#) Mail Buoy, we have initiated a project intended to build a *Catalogue of Observer Casualties, Severe Injuries, and Near-misses*. This is an on-going project to construct a comprehensive database of incidents that have resulted or "nearly" resulted in severe physical harm or death to an observer. We hope to identify the circumstances by which observers are placed in physically threatening situations with the hopes to outline situation-specific safe-practice/preventative recommendations. Please, lead us to any observer casualty, severe injury, or near-miss instance that we haven't yet catalogued.

We are presently exploring avenues for initiating two other projects: 1. *Observer Service Delivery Comparison Study*- conduct an investigation into the various service delivery models and employment agreements that are currently available to observers with the intent of objectively bringing to light pros and cons (for observers, for programs, and for the end use of the data) for each of the investigated models for employing observers. 2. *Journal of Marine Fisheries Observation*- creation of an indexed technical journal devoted to research projects that are in some way derived from observer-collected data and studies focusing on particular aspects of marine fisheries observation. Our intent would be for the guidelines of this journal to be comparable to other well respected scientific technical journals.



[Alicia Billings - the APO's Newest Board Member](#)

Alicia started her observing career in the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program in 2001. For the next 5 years, she returned to Bering Sea, completing contracts on longliners and trawl vessels. Between contracts, she enjoyed her flexibility by taking land positions with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in Nebraska and the United States Forestry Service in Oregon. Her experiences in Oregon left an impression, and she decided to join the West Coast Observer Program in 2007 out of Port Orford, Oregon.



During her first contract, she put together an online survey that would retain the anonymity of the user while gathering useful information for the program. Because of the success of the survey project, Alicia decided to use her hobby to build web pages for others. In November of 2007, she started her own web design business, winning contracts from friends, family, and the Chamber of Commerce of Port Orford. She hopes to use this skill to increase the effectiveness of the APO through the website by updating the look and technology of the site.

Alicia is also working with the Port Orford Ocean Resource Team (POORT), leading a project in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to gather biological information of the Port Orford fish. Increasing the availability of data is one of Alicia's major goals. The lack of data sharing is a big oversight in the scientific world, and Alicia hopes to help bridge the gap between federal and state regulatory agency information at the ground level.

OBSERVER BIOGRAPHY SERIES:

***** The “Observer Biography Series” is a quarterly profile of an observer who has done something normal or new (but noteworthy) in the course of their career. Do you know of an observer whom you would like to see profiled in our next issue? Contact the APO to nominate him or her to be profiled!**

Sandra Vieira- West Coast Groundfish Observer

Sandra Vieira started working as an observer in January 2005 in the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP), employed by NWO, Inc. She continued to work in the North Pacific till the end of 2005, and again from December 2006 until February 2007. She also worked for the At-Sea Hake Observer Program (A-SHOP) during the spring/summer of 2005, and in March of 2006, she began working with the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) as a seasonal observer with AOI, Inc. until the end of 2007, when she gained a coveted year-round position with the program which she holds currently.

For the 5th International Fisheries Observer Conference (IFOC) in Victoria, British Columbia in May 2007, Sandra submitted a poster which was accepted for the poster forum. While at the conference, Sandra had the honor of representing the observer contingent by presenting an end note speech to the entire delegation. The speech expressed the thoughts of the attending observers in light of all of the presentations, work groups and posters presented, while touching upon topics to include for the next conference. The overall experience was both surprising and wonderful for Sandra. *Surprising* because prior to the IFOC, she hadn't realized how many different facets are required to manage, sustain and conserve a fishery. *Wonderful* because she was able to meet amazing people and discuss the world of fisheries.

Two particular projects Sandra worked on while in college stand out in her mind as experiences that indirectly led to her observing career. While off the coast of Monterey Bay, California, she took underwater samples of the Monterey Canyon aboard the *R/V Point Sur*- she still in fact has specimens retrieved from the depths of the canyon. The other project dealt with calculating the grazing and growth rates of dominant pigments found in the Elkhorn Slough using Carbon 14 method. She found working with radioisotopes - the methods used to extract, calculate and describe the different types of pigments found in the samples, and the different equipment used to work the project - very inspiring.

Before her first contract as an observer she thought, ‘Am I ready for this adventure, is it for me?’ but she knew she had to try because adventure and the unknown are both exciting and terrifying. Soon after gaining her sea legs and piecing together all of the duties expected of her, her thoughts changed to ‘Wahoo, what a ride’. Eventually, she does want to experience and participate in the many other facets within the fisheries world. In the meantime, however, she is thoroughly enjoying her career choice as an observer. The people she meets, her amazing travels out upon the open ocean, the

incredible diversity of animals she sees while out on a trip, her treasured time home on stand-by for the next trip out to sea, and collecting valuable data are experiences she never imagined she would encounter in her life.

Her current position has stationed her as a year-round observer in Gold Beach, Oregon. Gold Beach is situated in the heart of the Wild Rivers Coast, a 101 mile stretch of coastline that is widely regarded as some of the best nature has to offer. Currently, she owns a house that she shares with her two dogs. When WCGOP approached her this past year to make a video to enhance the training program for new west coast observers, she jumped at the chance- her astute understanding of the personal aspects of being an observer makes her an ideal candidate for this project. The chapter she detailed was one on observer life, trying to show with video the complexities of being a West Coast Observer. Living on the Southern Oregon coast gives her ample opportunity to decompress while not working on a boat.



Sandy believes that the APO is an amazing resource and center for national and international observers to become informed of each other's fisheries and their observer programs. Moreover, it is an easy venue to share one another's experiences and a wonderful way to stay informed of the going-ons in the world of fisheries. She frequents the APO website to stay up-to-date on what is going on in the observer world, whether it is new technology related to the methodology of data collection, information on how data collected by observers is utilized, and the job opportunities forum. She also enjoys reading the newest edition of the Mail Buoy.

Truly realizing how the biological system in the ocean realm is fragile but also resilient when the careful decisions are made to help safeguard this resource is one thing she has taken from her observing career. She has a great sense of pride because observing has the task of managing and preserving a wonderful natural resource and maintaining its irrefutable need in the world for other systems, us and the future. In order to succeed in maintaining healthy fish stocks, Sandy feels that we need to continue to increase current observer programs, expand into fisheries that may be lacking this vital source of data, and ultimately to always seek out the most professional and determined observers possible. Sustaining and conserving a fishery is not just a profession to her. She sees it as a necessity the world requires to survive and we should always carefully consider any and all actions involved with the mechanics of a fishery. As expansion continues, Sandy will always expect to work along with others to make sure that no matter the path, we will never lose sight of the overall goal that we are striving towards, the sustainability and preservation of the world's oceans.

Small Observer Programs: Aspects to Consider for Improvement

Ebol Rojas; International “Scientific” Fisheries Observer; Mexico

For the past fifteen years, there have been important developments of fisheries observer programs around the world. This phenomenon fundamentally exhibits the necessity for acquiring the information crucial for the execution of the obligations of international order (1995)¹ that lay out a foundation for “responsible” management practices of living marine resources, and for implementing international monitoring measures via Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), such as [CCAMLR](#), [ICCAT](#), NAFO, [IATTC](#), CCSBT, WCPFC, [IOTC](#)². The utility and the value of fisheries observer programs to attain these goals has been verified in diverse publications (1996)³ (2006)⁴ (2007)⁵.

For effective administration of an observer program, it is important to have a high level of understanding for the modern practices of resource (fisheries and human) management and a great deal of planning is needed. For nations with experience managing observer programs, these measures do not significantly alter the execution of its established programs. However, for countries and regions with no established fisheries observer programs, objectives and necessary means may need to be established rather hastily in order to implement the requirements included in the measures, often colliding with problems generated by the lack of prior observer program experience.

¹ FAO. 1995c. Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Rome. FAO. 41p.

² **CCAMLR**- Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources; **ICCAT**- International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas; **NAFO**- Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization; **IATTC**- Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission; **CCSBT**- Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna; **WCPFC**- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission; **IOTC**- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

³ Flewelling, P.1996. Introduction of the following Activities, Control and Surveillance: An Instrument for the Management of Fish. FAO *Fisheries Technical Paper*. No. 338. Rome, FAO. 227 p.

⁴ MRAG. 2006. Observer Programmes Best Practice, Funding Options and North Sea Case Study. A Report to World Wildlife Fund (WWF) by Marine Resources Assessment Group (MRAG).

⁵ McVea, T.A and Kennelly, S.J. (ed.), 2007. Proceedings of the 5th International Fisheries Observer Conference –15 – 18 May 2007, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. NSW Department of Primary Industries, Cronulla. Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence, Cronulla, Australia, 412 pp. ISBN 978 0 7347 1861 7. Available on-line: www.fisheriesobserverconference.com

SMALL OBSERVER PROGRAMME ADMINISTRATION

TECHNICAL:

- ✓ Investigate the historical and present state of a fishery, and evaluate the information (data) necessary for fulfilling management needs
- ✓ Design models for sampling protocols and data entry (forms/ e-forms)
- ✓ Designate program coordination and observer service delivery methods
- ✓ Designate standard requirements and procedures for observer work
- ✓ Design the observer manual with specific area and fishery considerations
- ✓ Provide for the reception and analysis of observer reports sent in from sea and for management of the observer database
- ✓ Provide for the analysis of the collected biological samples
- ✓ Designate debriefing and evaluation procedures as observers end deployments

COORDINATION:

- ✓ Coordinate with the fishing companies for the placement of observers on vessels for all investigation/management areas covered
- ✓ Provide necessary equipment for observer work
- ✓ Receive and report upon assessments of the management/technical areas
- ✓ Coordinate yearly training courses, including safety, navigation, communication, and all topics that observers may face
- ✓ Provide updated manuals, guides, and forms and software for data entry.

Small Observer Program Advantages: Small observer programs offer some evident advantages over larger more complex observer programs, such as:

Low Administration Cost: Given a small number of ships to be monitored, small observer programs can be managed with one or two coordinators and the debriefings can be administered by the technicians of the investigation/management area.

Flexibility and Versatility: Observers can be trained simultaneously for several fisheries in one yearly training course, avoiding redundancies in necessary common matters to all fisheries (i.e. safety, basic sampling protocols, navigation). With flexibility, arises the concept of high mobility for observers among several fisheries. This mobility, with experiencing and learning many fisheries, can improve observers' quality of the work because it keeps them interested- it improves motivation and avoids stagnation in one's work. Experience indicates that to maintain high standards of quality it is important not to deploy observers in more than 4 different fisheries per year. Therefore, in order to improve versatility during selection and designation of observers for work, it is important for the coordinator to possess a pool of observers qualified in more than one fishery.

Small Observer Program Pitfalls: The following considerations may help avoid pitfalls for effective administration of a small observer program:

Financing: The method for financing an observer program is one of the most important issues to consider. In some cases, when a program is based off of fishing industry financing, uncertainty (among observer data end-users) can be generated due to a lack of credibility in the data, considering that the objectives of the fishing industry may not be identified with the principles of sustainable use of the fishing resources. A program must be careful to ensure the objectivity of observer data.

Observer Safety: Many established and developing observer programs: do not provide observers with the minimum indispensable elements of safety (e.g. immersion suit, PFD, personal EPIRB, and first aid kit), do not require vessel safety certification (i.e. Coast Guard, IMO) before observers board, and/or do not regularly make vessel safety inspections with observers before departures. Certain important considerations must be made to ensure the security and safety of on-board observers.

Program Objectives: Problems in data collection for a program can occur due to: a lack of clear program objectives, exaggerated controls, and deviations in the importance and functionality of observer duties. An observer may need to consider an incredible amount of variables in work performance, and they may be discouraged with a lack of apparent usefulness (evident analysis objectives) for their work. Clear and apparent planning and systematic use of observer data is recommended.

Employment Standards: For some programs, deficiencies can exist in: eligibility and certification standards for observers, employee codes of conduct, and clear definitions for conflict of interest scenarios. With no regulatory elements to distinguish punishable acts, legal holes can be generated when determining infractions among observer work activities.

Training Standards and Resource Availability: An observer needs more than just an initial training course in order to develop the necessary knowledge and skills essential for addresses all tasks faced during work. Resources and updated manuals must be readily accessible and feedback to and from observers should be regularly facilitated for improving upon sampling and information collection protocols. At a very low cost, training materials could be made available in electronic format or made publicly accessible on the world wide web. There are existing proven models at the international level (2007)⁶⁷ for observer manual creation and implementation of training courses.

Final considerations:

A well administered fisheries observer program can effectively carry out a multiplicity of fisheries management tasks, from monitoring fishing for bycatch to determining and quantifying Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities. Standardizing basic observer work procedures can favor the diverse deployment of observers in an international context. As we consider countries with small or developing observer

⁶ CCAMLR. 2007. Scientific Observer Manual. Available on internet: www.ccamlr.org

⁷ ICCAT. 2007. Observer Manual. Available on internet: www.iccat.int

programs, it is evident that some are lacking in comparison with the adopted standards in other countries or regions. Although a small observer program may exhibit advantages that make possible diverse monitoring and investigation projects at a very low relative cost, there may be fundamental organizational and/or data credibility issues due to a lack of: financial objectivity, safety standards for observers, clear program objectives, resource availability, and continued training past the initial courses. In order to generate the appropriate financial means and know-how to optimally administer a small or developing observer program, it may need a great deal of help and collaboration from the international community (i.e. The United Nations' "Assistance Fund"⁸) and from nations with experience managing observer programs.



Tackling Global Marine Resource Issues: Perspectives from the IFF4

Keith Davis; Fisheries Observer; North Pacific and Pacific Islands

During the 5th International Fisheries Observer Conference (IFOC) in Victoria, B.C. this past May, Dr. Martín Hall of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) announced that the 4th International Fishers Forum (IFF4) was to be held in Puntarenas, Costa Rica November 12th-15th, 2007. In the fall, in between observer contracts in Hawaii and Alaska, I had the opportunity to work as a field assistant at a sea turtle (primarily olive ridleys, some Pacific greens, and, on rare occasions, leatherbacks) nesting site on the Pacific coast of southern Costa Rica, so... I guess you could say I was in the area. The mission of the IFF4 was "to convene an international meeting of fishermen, management authorities, seafood retailer industry, experts in fishing technology, marine ecology and fisheries science, and other interested parties to facilitate the sharing of information and experiences on: (i) sustainable fishery practices; and (ii) approaches to minimize problematic interactions with sea turtles, seabirds, sharks and cetaceans in pelagic and demersal longline fisheries⁹."



At IFF4 with Fishers and WWF representative from Indonesian and New Zealand

⁸ United Nations. 2004. Fifty-eighth session of the UN General Assembly. 21 January 2004. A/RES/58/14; section 10.

⁹ Link to the International Fishers Forum website at: www.fishersforum.net

Aside from the various Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO), fisheries council, fishing industry, seafood-retail industry, and fisheries science folks in attendance, I was glad to see so many artisanal (native, small range) fishers present from an assortment of communities about the world. Among some of the “other interested parties” present were a significant turnout of environmental Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) present, like the Ocean Conservancy, Birdlife South Africa, Conservation International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature & Natural Resources (IUCN), and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) had quite a commanding presence there with nearly two dozen representatives.

Its no wonder that the interactions of sea turtles, seabirds, sharks, and cetaceans with longline fishing gear are of prime concern to so many people from so many different perspectives among the international community. Many of the species included in these groups are of a “highly migratory” nature and can be found (simultaneously or seasonally) among numerous fisheries management areas and international waters (“high seas”) around the world. Hence management considerations for these species in any body of water must be addressed with international cooperation in order to foster sustainable populations. You could think of the management of a highly migratory species as a product on an assembly line- the final product is only as good as the poorest workmanship on the production line, and the quality workers have an obligation to help bring the workers who fall behind up to speed so that all have a product to be proud of.



Olive ridley hatchlings; Pacific coast, Costa Rica

incidental catch of certain species while fostering sustainable (ecologically and economically) levels of the targeted marine resources to fishers doing their best to understand and implement the increasing restrictions placed upon them as they feel the squeeze on their livelihoods and the security of their families.

Sea turtles and sea birds spend at least part of their lives on shore (nesting and for some, breeding), which may lead to finger-pointing if conservation and management efforts are not designed cooperatively, with terrestrial as well as marine considerations. Many of the threatened and endangered species from these groups interact in some capacity with longline gear. This fact translates to a great deal of pressure on many sides- from the regulatory bodies of states (countries) working hard with scientists to draft, implement and enforce responsible rulings meant to mitigate the

When cetaceans interact with longline fishing, there is not only the consideration of how the life of a whale, dolphin, or porpoise may be greatly affected by feeding off of the oftentimes “buffet line” of longline gear or the atypical instances where they may be caught or entangled in the gear. Incidental interactions of cetaceans with fishing gear can be quite a costly and timely affair and of utmost concern for many longline fishers. They

may lose a great deal of prized catch due to cetacean depredation, and, if an animal is caught even for a brief period, the fishing gear can become a big mess and drastically influence the effectiveness of much of the gear in the vicinity. Sharks can also cause a great deal of damage to the catch and gear. From my experience observing on pelagic longliners, sharks too tend to go for the more highly prized fish and some sharks (especially thresher sharks with their long tails) can tangle up gear resulting in lost fish.

As the science increasingly supports the ideal that there has been a drastic decline of the world's large predatory pelagic fishes, bycatch in pelagic fisheries has become a primary international concern. Boris Worm and Ransom Myers, of Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, concluded in their report¹⁰ (upon ten years of research) that since the onslaught of worldwide industrial fishing in the 1950's, much of our oceans' predatory fish species have declined by 90%. James Leape, the Director General for WWF- International, stated at the IFF4 that "at the current rate of fishing we will exhaust the large pelagic marine resources by the middle of the century." A collapse of the stock of large pelagic predatory fish "could have ripple effects across entire ecosystems," as Brad Justin reported in the September 2006 edition of the *Mail Buoy*¹¹, "likely causing devastation to other economically important species." This relates to the incredible connectivity of the predator/prey relationship of the marine food web- for instance, as you remove a shark from an ecosystem, that shark is no longer in the water hunting mahi mahi, and less pressure on the mahi mahi stock may mean more pressure on their food source, which may also be the same food source for tunas, which in turn may put pressure on the stock of tunas.

Worm and Myers noted that their conclusions offer an opportunity for re-growth of fisheries by fostering initiatives that reduce the bycatch of certain species of concern. When we talk about "reducing bycatch," besides avoidance/preventative measures, one should also consider the percentages of utilization and retention of kept bycatch and the survivorship/mortality rate of released bycatch. I have only observed on vessels where shark finning is illegal (though they may keep shark fins if other parts of the shark are retained), however, shark finning is still readily practiced in many areas of the world. Various delegates at the IFF4 stood up against shark finning- some asking for tougher trade restrictions. This follows the 2004 United Nations General Assembly resolution¹² that "urges States... to put into effect" the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) *International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks*¹³. However, as Imene Meliane of the IUCN Global Marine Programme noted at the IFF4, tougher restrictions may result in a transfer of the problem if there is not enough enforcement to back up the measures.

¹⁰ Myers, R.A. & Worm, B. Rapid Worldwide Depletion of Predatory Fish Communities. *Nature* 423, 280-283 (2003). http://as01.ucis.dal.ca/ramweb/papers-total/nature01610_r.pdf

¹¹ APO. 2006. Responsible Fisheries Management: A Win-Win Situation. *Mail Buoy*; September 2006. The Association for Professional Observers. APO-MB-9(3). 6-11pp

¹² United Nations. 2004. Fifty-eighth session of the UN General Assembly. 21 January 2004. A/RES/58/14; section 18., adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization in 1999

¹³ The FAO *International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity* and the *International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries* were also part of this UN Resolution

Though it is generally accepted that fisheries observers are not to be considered enforcement agents, the former Deputy Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, Andrew Rosenberg¹⁴, said in his Keynote address at the 4th IFOC in 2004¹⁵, “observer programs are a critical tool for [management’s] success and should be used to help lead the change rather than adapting to it.” Observer programs are playing an increasingly significant role with the Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) of many international fisheries¹⁶. Recognizing the FAO *International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU)*¹⁷, certain RFMOs are now directing the placement of observers on transshipment vessels in an effort to help ensure the legality of high seas trading of marine resources. Their appeared to be a consensus at the IFF4 that IUU activities continue to be a major international problem, and observer programs are a key to tackling that issue.

During the artisanal fisher workshop facilitated by the always inspiring Dr. Martín Hall, I heard much concern for legal fishing activities- performed by foreign factory vessels allowed to fish very close to shore. For instance, representatives from two Latin American countries at the workshop said that industrial (primarily foreign-flagged) vessels fish less than one mile from their coasts, which they say puts incredible pressure on their in-shore coastal fisheries. At the IFF4,



Artisanal Fishing Vessels; Puntarenas, Costa Rica

I also heard accounts of and witnessed presentation after presentation of studies reporting declining targeted pelagic fish stocks and smaller sized fish being marketed in various regions of the world due to the lack of availability of larger sized fish.

One positive outcome that came from the artisanal fisher workshop was that attending artisanal fishing organizations agreed to adopt the FAO *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries Management*¹⁸. Another proactive approach I witnessed at the IFF4 were the

¹⁴ Andrew Rosenberg was also on the US Commission on Ocean Policy, which drafted the document “An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century,” and is now a professor at New Hampshire University.

¹⁵ Mcvea, T.A, Kennelly, S.J. 2005. Proceedings of the 4th International Fisheries Observer Conference. NSW Department of Primary Industries, Cronulla Fisheries Research Center of Excellence, Cronulla, Australia. ISBN 1 9209 12 20 2. 230pp. www.fisheriesobserverconference.com

¹⁶ APO. 2007. MCS Observers on board at-sea Transshipment Vessels. *Mail Buoy, Fall 2007*. The Association for Professional Observers. APO-MB-10(3). 8-9pp. www.apo-observers.org/mailbuoy/2007-fall.pdf

¹⁷ FAO. International Plan of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Rome, FAO. 2001. 24p. <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/003/y1224e/y1224e00.HTM>

¹⁸ FAO. 1995c. Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Rome. FAO. 41p.

presentations of technical (gear) initiatives which either foster the reduction of bycatch or help to decrease the injuries to animals which are released. Circle hooks were of course highly promoted at the IFF4 since most studies show that they tend not to reduce the catch rates of targeted catch (aside from smaller sized pelagics in some cases) while they have been proven to significantly reduce the incidental catch of some species (i.e. sea turtles), and circle hooks tend to not be ingested as regularly as “J” hooks or tuna hooks. The ingestion part is important considering the survivorship of the released bycatch. For example, you can be certain that a live finned shark is not going to survive very long after it is released, but you may also imagine that a shark that ingests a hook may have a tough time surviving after it is released. However, if its only hooked in the mouth, it may have a much better chance of surviving... that is unless its jaw is cut to retrieve a hook which is a whole other story.

On the last day of the conference, I had the opportunity to see a presentation given by Phillip Fitzpatrick, of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). The MSC have many worldwide certification¹⁹ projects where they are working with the fishing industry to market (with the MSC certified label) products from sustainable fisheries to the consumer. There were also several retail vendors at the conference (i.e. Whole Foods Market, Tesco Stores) who are making a stand to help promote sustainably-managed certified (i.e. MSC labeled) marine products in their stores. I also learned that some organizations (i.e. WWF in Central America and other areas of the world) are taking an educational approach with implementing regulatory actions and facilitating observer programs in small artisanal fishing communities, emphasizing awareness building and creating incentives for the fishers to take an active stake in helping to ensure a sustainable fishery that they can take pride in. I think many from the IFF4 would agree that simply passing a regulatory measure is not inherently going to fix a problem (though it may be a start), however proactive approaches like the ones listed are steps in a pathway that may just lead to a brighter future for ensuring sustainable fisheries worldwide. We are in a “time of crisis,” as James Leape said in his eloquent and inspiring IFF4 keynote address, and we must “move quickly and move together” to tackle these global issues.



Observers Now 100% Mandatory in CCAMLR Antarctic Krill fisheries

You may recall an article in the January 2007 *Mail Buoy*²⁰ by APO board member Ebol Rojas, entitled “The Antarctic Krill Fishery Needs Mandatory Observers.” Ebol was a Scientific Observer for a pilot observer program project for this fishery. In this article, Ebol discussed the critical importance of krill to the “health of many species and

¹⁹ MSC Certification is a process by which a fishery is certified as a sustainable fishery. There are many fishery product certifications worldwide, however the MSC Certification seems to be one that is highly respected among several entities including some environmental NGOs, including WWF.

²⁰ APO. 2007. The Antarctic Krill Fishery Needs Mandatory Observers. *Mail Buoy*, Winter 2006/2007. The Association for Professional Observers. APO-MB-9(4). 6-11pp

ecosystems,” and the advancing technology and the increasing effort of vessels fishing for krill. Ehol stated that “without observers, there is a high likelihood of significant bias of critical data needed to properly manage the fishery,” and concluded by saying, “with such an important stock to the entire world’s marine ecosystem... it’s hard to believe that observers are still not mandatory for this fishery.”

We are happy to report that CCAMLR has enacted a conservation measure to have mandatory 100% observer coverage for all krill fishing in its management areas. The exact wording stating this in CCAMLR Conservation Measure 51-03 (2007) follows:

***Observers 6.** Each vessel participating in the fishery shall have at least one scientific observer in accordance with the CCAMLR Scheme of International Scientific Observation or a domestic scientific observer fulfilling the requests in the scheme, and where possible one additional scientific observer, on board throughout all fishing activities within the fishing period.*

***For a full draft of CCMLR Conservation Measure 51-03 (2007) go to the CCMLR website: www.ccamlr.org

USA REGIONAL UPDATES:

****We greatly depend on volunteered updates from your program. Please, submit stories and commentaries from any national or international observer program.*

The Northeast Region:

News from the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program

Amy Van Atten, Katherine McArdle, Sara Wetmore, and Tania Lewandowski; Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC); Woods Hole, MA

Debriefing Workshop

In January of 2008, the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program developed and held a debriefing workshop for 17 debriefers (“editors”) to provide guidance and tips on how to successfully debrief observers. Kit Van Meter, a professional in conflict resolution, ran the workshop, with direction from NMFS staff. Editors have to balance assisting observers in accurately completing their data logs along with providing the motivation to do so and correct any deficiencies. Additionally, editors must build on the training skills



Instructor, Kit VanMeter during the Debriefers’ Workshop on how to communicate well with observers during the debriefing process.

observers have already received and continuously keep them informed of protocol changes. The contents of the workshop consisted of methods of communication between editors and observers, sources of frustration for editors, editor's strengths and weaknesses as communicators, what influences communications, debrief role-plays, attributes of editors, and discussion of observers' comments.



NEFOP staff enjoying the role playing and learning how to handle certain situations during the workshop

At the workshop, various role plays were performed between a staff member and an editor, while the rest of the audience observed. Role plays consisted of “debriefing an observer for the first time”, “debriefing an observer who has recently gone on a new gear type”, “debriefing an observer who has major data quality issues”, and “debriefing an observer who has nearly perfect data”. After each of these role plays, ways were discussed on how to streamline

communication and make more efficient use of time. We also discovered that individual personalities

develop a particular style or preference in how to communicate while debriefing. Finally, we discussed ways we could make communication between editors and observers more successful. Those included exploring new technologies that provide real time electronic feedback, have editors leave daily messages on their work phones when they are away from the office to provide good communication examples, and create training manual(s) that focuses on communication obstacles for editors. This workshop was extremely beneficial in that it generated discussion on how to debrief observers in many different situations. We are hopeful that the topics brought up during this workshop will be used in the future by editors to ultimately enhance data quality and observer retention.

Hagfish Coverage

We began covering the Atlantic hagfish fishery in July 2007, after a NMFS rule was implemented defining an information collection program. The program consists of mandatory dealer reporting or hagfish and observer coverage. Over the past several months we have researched the fishery, the vessels and their operations, and have refined the data collection protocols. We are currently targeting 5% coverage. The hagfish fishery was recently featured on the Discovery Channel's “Dirty Jobs.”



Unloading hagfish from a hagfish pot

Trainings



Observer measuring scallops during a training trip

A class of sixteen new observers (9 from East West Technical Services and 7 from Atlantic Inspection Services, Inc.) graduated for the NEFOP Training Center on February 14, 2008. This class completed courses in safety training, fish identification, marine mammal identification, a turtle workshop, marine mammal necropsy and sampling techniques, and were trained to observe gillnet, trawl and scallop fisheries. Additional Observer Certification Courses are scheduled for April 2008 and September 2008.

A Safety Level II Training, which includes basic sea survival techniques and more advanced training such as fire fighting, man over board drills, and using damage control simulators from the U.S. Coast Guard is scheduled for March 26-27, 2008, with another planned for June 2008. We require our certified observers to attend these safety trainings.



Abandon ship drill during a NEFOP Safety Training

For more information about the NEFOP, please visit our website at:
<http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/fsb/>



The Gulf of Mexico (USA):

Pelagic Longline Observer Positions for Bluefin Tuna Study

Chad Lefferson; IAP World Services; Galveston, Texas

IAP World Services is hiring Pelagic Longline Fisheries Observers for the second year of the Bluefin Tuna Study being conducted in the Gulf of Mexico.

Qualifications: you must have at least a BS degree in Marine Biology or related field, offshore experience and a working knowledge of offshore large (pelagic) fish species. Candidates must be a natural U.S. Citizen or a non-U.S. Citizen with at least 5 years of continuous residency in the U.S. Must be physically capable of serving as an Observer and be able to communicate verbally and in writing in English.

Responsibilities: The successful candidates will be collecting catch, effort and environmental data for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) aboard offshore commercial fishing vessels.

Training: may be held as early as mid-February at the Miami Lab in Miami, Florida.

Deployment: expected soon after training and continuing through to mid-June along the Gulf Coast.

Salary: Competitive salary, travel, and per diem.

Closing Date: Please apply ASAP- positions will be filled quickly (*and may already be filled by the time this draft goes to print*)

Contact:

Chad Lefferson
IAP World Services
Email: Chad.Lefferson@noaa.gov
Phone (228) 762-4591, x300
Fax (228) 769-9200

*****Please go to www.iapws-pts.com Southeast Fisheries Research Center for more specific and updated information.**

LETTERS TO THE APO:

**** The following is an excerpt from a letter sent to the parents of Jay Alderman, a fisheries observer who died while working in the field on September 20th 2007.*

[A note to the Alderman's from two of Jay's Observer-Friends](#)

Christy Cusick and Jennifer McCarten; Fisheries Observers; North Pacific

To the Alderman Family:

While we never personally met your family we wanted to send our condolences for your recent loss. We worked with Jay at the Westward Seafoods plant in Dutch Harbor. We were the observers at the plant for most of the summer. Jay's boat would come to the plant every few days to offload their fish. We only knew Jay for a few months but over that time he quickly became one of our favorite vessel observers. He rarely had any free time on land but when he did we would drag him around town with us to get coffee or go to the gym. He liked to tease about our fancy coffee orders. We just liked being around him. He made us smile every time we saw him. It's such a gift to meet a genuinely good person and that's what Jay was to us. He had nothing to hide and was just himself. We only wish that we had been able to have the opportunity to know him better.

Since Jay worked for one of the smaller observer companies many of his fellow co-workers never had the opportunity to meet him. The observer community can often become like an extended family when you're in Dutch Harbor. When news spread about what happened even people who didn't know Jay personally were very upset. Many of our close observer friends remember him not by meeting him directly, but by recalling the positive things that we had said about him during our time working with him in Dutch




Harbor. When they heard his name they all remembered how highly we had spoken of him.

The day before the accident the three of us were walking on the dock when we came across a huge Pacific Halibut sitting in one of the totes. We took a picture of Jay standing next to it. It's something that we will always treasure. We wanted your family to have a copy of the picture as well.

When we realized that Jay was gone we were both so completely devastated and heartbroken. All we could feel was incredible sorrow. We can't even begin to imagine what you all are going through. Your family has been in our thoughts ever since that day.

We are so grateful to have had the opportunity to know Jay and can not express enough how sorry we are for your incredible loss.

Christy Cusick
Jennifer McCarten



*** *The following is a letter sent to us in regards to an article printed about Jay Alderman in the [Fall 2007 Mail Buoy](#).*

Friend of the Alderman's Sends Her Thanks

Helen Pickett; Friend of the Jay Alderman Family

Hello Mail Buoy,

This is Helen Pickett- the Alderman's friend. I have just gotten to see the article written about Jay in the Newsletter.

Anyway, I wanted to let you know I thought you did an excellent job on it. You informed me of many things I didn't know. It is hard for us non-fisherman to really explain things the way you did. It really enlightened me. I greatly appreciated that.

You also did a very good job on the personal side of his life. Now he is not just some unknown who drowned. You put a face & personal experience to his name. You showed that he took his job seriously, but was also a fun loving young man who loved his family & friends. Also that he was loved by many. You made a person people can relate to instead of just a name.

We could tell you put a lot of thought & effort in writing it & I just wanted to let you know we think you did a very good job.

~THANK YOU~

Best Wishes to You and "May God be With You"
to keep You Safe in your many journeys.

Love,

Jay's friend, Helen

CREATIVE CORNER:

***Contributions to this section aim to exhibit the creative side of observers.

The Limerick Series: "Philosophical"

Brad Justin; Observer/APO Board; North Pacific, USA

Can anyone tell me just why
Observing reminds me of pi
Three point one four
We circle the shore
And stare at the same old blue sky

The Limerick Series: "McDonalds"

Brad Justin; Observer/APO Board; North Pacific, USA

Sailing the high seas is fun
We like to catch fish by the ton
The fishes will die
To feed you and I
Filet o' fish patty on bun

EYES ON THE SEAS

A COLLECTION OF FISHERIES OBSERVER STORIES

Fisheries Observers... are vastly non-existent in the general public's eyes. This project - the creation of an educational and entertaining book comprised of international fisheries observers' stories, anecdotes, poetry, artwork, and imagery - has been initiated in order to introduce this increasingly important profession to the wider public, and in so doing, promoting fisheries observer programs as a management and conservation tool. We are currently soliciting for submissions from both current and past observers from around the globe. It is intended that the bulk of funds generated from this project shall be reserved, via a scholarship system, for observer professional advancement opportunities.

Profile and Abstract [Deadline: May 2008]:

Biographical Profile (<200 words):

1. Photograph (preferred, but not required)- an at-sea or field photo would be best. Please indicate who took the picture for photo credits.
2. Name (with prefix) and contact information (as detailed as desired). We understand that some may choose to "remain anonymous" for publication purposes. We will ensure respect for all personal information provided.
3. Home port
4. Total number of sea days logged to date
5. List all geographic regions and fisheries observed
6. Dates (year to year) worked as an observer
7. Other skills and interests (related or not)

Abstract (<400 words): Description of each intended contribution should include the following points (please list multiple submissions separately):

1. Is it a short story narrative, a poem, an illustration or some other creative work?
2. For narratives:
 - a. Fact or Fiction
 - b. Intended **theme(s)** and primary directed **audience(s)**
 - c. Draft title and a list of at least five main points

First Draft Submissions [Deadline: September 2008]:

- ❖ We encourage contributors to choose their own subject matter and mode of expressing their unique perspective on the fisheries observer profession. We will offer guidance as necessary.
- ❖ Each contribution must respect the confidentiality of all persons and subject matter contained within their narratives or photographs.

**If you would like to utilize an existing work, please enclose it with your abstract(s).*

Contact or submit to the "EOS Project" editors Keith Davis and Glenn Quelch, at: eyesontheseas@gmail.com ; HC 30 Box 3B, Concho, Arizona 85924, USA

A project of the Association for Professional Observers (APO)

Photo Credit: Jennifer Padilla

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Links:

ObserverNet (on-line observer forum)

www.observernet.org

National Observer Program

www.st.nmfs.gov/st4/nop

International Observer Conferences

www.fisheriesobserverconference.com

AMSEA (Marine Safety Instruction)

www.amsea.org

**** Submissions for the forthcoming **Spring Mail Buoy** are due by the end of **April 2008**. The APO is currently recruiting for observer representatives from national and international observer programs. Please, contact us if you are interested with helping with the APO.*

Suggested Citation:

APO. 2008. *Mail Buoy; Winter 2008*. Association for Professional Observers (APO).

APO-MB-11(1). 22p