Mail Buoy

SUMMER 2009 VOLUME 12, ISSUE 2

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Portland, Maine, USA July 20 – 24, 2009

If you have a good picture that you would like on the cover of the next Mail Buoy, submit a picture to us!

International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference Update

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A Publication of the Association for Professional Observers
Project Updates

APO “Focus Area” Restructuring

Recently, with the help of Member feedback and many Board discussions, we came to the realization that the outcomes of certain APO projects had historically been presented in such a manner that their usefulness in establishing foundations for future projects to be built upon was limited. We then decided to engage these issues by initiating an organizational and web restructuring scheme meant to optimize the utility of these important resources and to help APO Members become more involved in the eventual outcomes of APO projects.

With the intention of accommodating the APO’s Mission and Visions in a more focused, consistent, and directed manner, we have identified and initiated four project-oriented APO Focus Areas meant to encompass the directives of all current and foreseen projects, actions, and outcomes of the APO.

The four focus areas are: Education and Outreach; Observer Data; Observer Health, Safety, and Welfare; and, Observer Labor and Professionalism. Each focus area is coordinated by at least two APO Board member representatives who will manage all activities that fall under that particular area of APO work and who will act as contacts for that APO Focus Area. Outside involvement is greatly encouraged for all APO Focus Areas, and we anticipate that members, volunteers, and interns will play important roles in the successful outcomes of many focus area projects. We will of course acknowledge all help in project outcomes and regular Focus Area Volunteers will be recognized on the APO website.

Please take the time to navigate to each of the four APO Focus Area pages listed below. Perhaps you will notice there are certain issues you would like to see addressed within the work of an existing project, or you may even have an idea for a new project you would like to help initiate. Nevertheless, we hope you will find useful information within these pages concerning the current work of the APO as well as important resources designated by each of these four general areas of APO work. For more information specific to each APO Focus Area, please navigate to the following pages, and, if you have any interest in volunteering, you will find focus area contact information listed there.

Education and Outreach

The work of the APO Educational and Outreach focus area is centered about initiating and managing projects intended to support the dissemination of educational information related to the Fisheries Observer profession; increase and improve the utility of Fisheries Observer, fisheries management, and fisheries science resources available to the public; and to reach out, among a wide range of stakeholders internationally, in order to foster a broadened vantage among all of the APO’s work.

Observer Data

The work of the APO Observer Data focus area is centered around initiating and managing projects intended to provide resources regarding, further investigate, and take action upon important issues related to: the public access to Fisheries Observer data; observer data collection protocols; observer training and data quality control standards; observer program service delivery model structuring; and, rules that have an impact on the independence and integrity of fisheries resource monitoring programs and the resultant data collected.

Observer Health, Safety, and Welfare

The work of the APO Observer Health, Safety, and Welfare focus area is centered about initiating and managing projects intended to provide resources regarding and investigate and take action upon important initiatives meant to foster the health, safety, and general welfare of Fisheries Observers, like: at-sea working conditions and emergency procedures; safety training, rules and standards; drills, inspections, and compliance and enforcement of rules and standards; and, protection of observers’ professional livelihood while at sea.

Observer Labor and Professionalism

The work of the APO Observer Labor and Professionalism focus area is centered about initiating and managing projects intended to identify initiatives associated with fostering heightened observer professionalism and addressing issues that have bearing on the fair and equitable labor rights of Fisheries Observers.

Note: All of the APO Focus Area pages and associated pages and links should be considered “under construction”. With consideration for the immense amount of information presented on the APO site, this restructuring will take a great deal of time to complete. Please do not be discouraged if you navigate to a particular page that may be incomplete and please feel free to provide your comments and suggestions back to us regarding our restructuring: apo@apo-observers.org (be sure to put “Focus Area Restructuring” in the subject heading). Your feedback would be greatly appreciated during this process and we will provide periodic updates in regards to focus area developments via the Mail Buoy newsletter.
APO Membership Updates

With our new restructuring development towards a Focus Area scheme, we feel that our membership must progress along with these changes. Membership should be the engine that drives a non-profit organization, and we hope that our restructuring will help to empower members to be a part of the APO from a variety of independent vantages and involvements.

There are certain services that the APO has always provided for free to its Members and non-members alike. For instance, access to the APO website, hosting a myriad of important observer resources and links, has always been open to all and the Mail Buoy newsletter has traditionally been made available to anyone who wishes to receive it. These APO primary services shall continue to be free.

Rather than having set membership dues, we are offering Absolutely Free APO Membership!!!

Though you will not be required to pay anything to become an APO Member, we do hope to encourage those who do make use of APO services to become a supporter of the APO by making a donation. You may be surprised to know that at the present time the APO is 100% volunteer run, so your donations will have direct influence on helping this grassroots organization become stronger and provide better services back to you.

Donate now to the APO!

Begin reaping APO Membership benefits now! When you subscribe to the APO mailing list, you will receive the Mail Buoy newsletter on a quarterly basis as well as other periodic important updates. Go to http://www.apo-observers.org/mailbuoy to sign up. At the very top of this page, you will be asked to simply provide your name and your email address, and you're in.

Begin your APO Membership today!

Note: As mentioned above, we are presently reconstructing APO Membership into a tiered-membership system with consideration for integrating APO Membership in with our new APO Focus Area scheme and for allowing members to decide to what level they wish to be involvement with the APO.

Once we have this system up and running, members will be contacted and asked what interest (if any) you may have with becoming more involved with the APO. We anticipate the majority of members would just like to receive the Mail Buoy and regular announcements though have no other further involvement. You will not be required to respond to this announcement if you do not wish to increase your APO Membership level. However, we do hope that many members may like to become more involved in some way, especially if they can do it independently (i.e. without the cooperation of a Board member). We are doing our best get this up and running as soon as possible. In the meantime, please feel free to provide your comments and suggestions back to us regarding APO membership: apo@apo-observers.org (be sure to put “APO Membership” in the subject heading).

Great news everyone- we finally have a working draft of the Eyes on the Seas manuscript! While we are still editing much of it, we’ve got a great start to the book. There are eight Chapters to the manuscript, with about 6-8 entries (short stories and poetry) per chapter. The chapters are:

* Chapter 1: Getting Started - Perceptions vs. Realities;
* Chapter 2: Duties and Role;
* Chapter 3: A Sailor’s Life;
* Chapter 4: High Seas Relations;
* Chapter 5: Staying Healthy and Safe;
* Chapter 6: Sea Level Conservation;
* Chapter 7: An Extraordinary Lifestyle; and,
* Chapter 8: Beyond Observing.

Eyes on the Seas will include: a Foreword, drafted by a guest author from a popular NGO - who has tons of experience working with observer programs - who will help link the Fisheries Observer profession with what seafood the public may pick up at the market or be serving on their dinner tables at home; an Introduction, defining the Fisheries Observer Profession on an international scale and giving an editor’s perspective (drafted by the project editors); and, an Afterword, drafted by a guest author who has had a wide variety of perspectives in the observer profession, from working as an Observer to her current position working with observer...
Eyes on the Seas, Cont.

programs internationally. She will provide for us an outlook on where she thinks the Observer profession is heading in the coming years. We would rather not to yet announce who the Foreword and Afterword authors are, though we can tell you that we are greatly honored by each of them joining this project.

The end of the book will have several appendices and Profiles of all contributors will be featured in an appendix of the book. With currently over 40 people involved in this project, we feel that this should prove to be a very interesting part of the book. The wealth and diversity of experience that contributors have can be exhibited and readers have the opportunity to appreciate the personal side of entries.

More good news- we now have the Eyes on the Seas project page up and running on the APO website. Check it out at http://www.apo-observers.org/eos! We will provide periodic updates there.

Currently, we are preparing the manuscript to begin our Review Period. For our Review Period, we will ask several selected individuals from among various stakeholder groups who have a vested interest with observers or observer programs to review the draft manuscript of Eyes on the Seas (over a two-month period) and provide feedback to us. We see our review period as serving two purposes: 1. to ensure that the manuscript is a good as it can be before it is finalized, and 2. to expose this project on a larger scale. We think many of our reviewers will be amazed at the quality and the amount of the works within and will help us spread the word about the project.

We have begun compiling a list of Eyes on the Seas Reviewer and some have already been contacted and confirmed their interest. However, we are still looking for a few more Reviewers. Keith Davis, will have a draft of the manuscript with him at the 6th International Fisheries Observer Conference and he will gladly allow anyone who is interested to browse through a copy. He hopes to recruit a few more Reviewers there and to begin a list of people who would like to be contacted for purchasing the book as soon as it has been published.

As soon as Eyes on the Seas has been published, you will be able to purchase your copy right on the project page on the APO website. Please do keep in mind that it is our intention that a large portion of the proceeds from EO S book sales will go towards the creation of an Observer Professional Development Scholarship fund, meant to foster the advancement of Fisheries Observers among their profession and beyond and to help this grass roots non-profit organization strengthen.

Please contact us eyesontheseas@gmail.com if you have any interest in helping this project to success, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who have already contributed their time and creations into this project. Thank

APO Accommodation Sponsorships at the Conference

We have filled up the APO Apartment at the 6th IFOMC and have a great group of folks in there from a variety of backgrounds from around the world (from four different continents!).

We are happy to announce that the following six IFOM Conference delegates are being fully sponsored by the APO to be accommodated with lodging during their time at the Conference:

Andy Ashley - Active Fisheries Observer; Northeast, USA. Andy has ~250 Sea Days in the sea scallop dredge fishery. He will be a volunteer at the conference, offering up his help with APO activities and with the Observer Professionalism Workshop.

Alicia Billings - APO Board/Prior Observer (North Pacific and West Coast, USA); Port Orford, Oregon. Alicia is the APO Treasurer and Web Master and has her own web design/consulting business. Alicia will be presenting on a panel at the conference called “Using Fishery Observer Data in Community-Based Fisheries Management” (Session 11), Friday morning July 24th.

Keith Davis - APO Board/Active Fisheries Observer (USA and Internationally); 10+ years/1000+ Sea Days. Keith is the APO Secretary and considers himself to be Independent in all of his endeavors. At the conference, Keith will be helping to coordinate the Observer Professionalism Workshop (a half-day workshop, from 08:30- 12:00 on Thursday July 23rd) and will be an oral presenter for the APO on a panel (Session 9- the NGO Panel; 1300, Thursday July 23rd). The presentation is entitled “The Association for Professional Observers (APO):
Strengthening fisheries monitoring through advocacy and education, since 1995.”

Shikami Kennedy - Chief Fisheries Officer for the Fisheries Department in Mombasa, Kenya. Mr. Kennedy has more than 10 years in the field of Fisheries, environmental and natural resource management with increased responsibility and duties as his career has progressed. Shikami has a good deal of field experience working as a Regional Tuna Tagging Technician (RTTP) and a marine mammal Observer aboard seismic oil exploration vessels on several separate deployments. The fisheries industry in Kenya is now governed by a Ministry of Fisheries and Development and are considering going beyond the territorial waters to implement the Fisheries observer program and the Monitoring Control and surveillance (MCS) strategies under the joint initiative being fronted by the regional countries in the western Indian Ocean region (WIO) - this includes Kenya, Tanzania, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, and Mozambique. Mr Kennedy will be helping with Observer Professionalism Workshop at the conference.

Prabhath Patabendi - Head- Education & Research; Sustainable Fishery Program, Institute of Human Development

Conference, Cont.

Pre-conference Mixer; Monday, July 20th 8:30 PM; at the “Dry Dock”

At past conferences, we have noticed that many folks (especially Fisheries Observers) may not be provided with much orientation as to how exactly (outside of their own presentations) to become involved in conference proceedings and they may miss out on opportunities to share their input into the workings of the conference. Also, we have found that it may be difficult for some of these folks to find people, among the sea of delegates from around the world, who are of the same profession as them (from other regions/nations) to network with. With this in mind, the APO will be hosting an informal Pre-conference Mixer on Monday July 20th 8:30 PM at the Dry Dock restaurant and tavern down by the wharves in Old Town Portland, “Old Port”: 84 Commercial Street [Map]. I hear the Dry Dock has great food - everything from corn and haddock chowder to “world famous” Dry Dock Steakburgers as well as highly praised veggie burgers. They have two large decks overlooking the water, so we should have plenty of space to spread out.

We have plans for a few of us (and guests) to give a brief introduction/orientation regarding ways that we have been able to best get involved at past conferences, will make a few introductions to help folks facilitate networking, and offer up a few pitchers to get us all rightly acquainted. That’s “a few”, so make sure you show up on time! With this mixer, we are primarily hoping to pull in conference newcomers and those who may need to catch their bearings for getting into the conference swing of things. Active Observers are our primary target group with this, though we would like to encourage other stakeholders to join us who feel they may get something out of this event. If you have any questions about this event, please don’t hesitate to contact those of us from the APO who will be there: Keith Davis lblegend@yahoo.com, Alicia Billings aliciabillings@gmail.com, and Ebol Rojas ebolred@yahoo.com.ar (Se habla español).

FROM THE APO
It has been a while since I turned in my Grundens and gumby suit for the more pedestrian lifestyle enjoyed by most of the rest of the world. Now I work in the Protected Resources Division of the Southwest Region of NMFS, but I’m more involved with the management side of things which limits how often I get to touch, taste, and smell things like I used to during the eight years I spent as an observer and field researcher. However, a recent series of fortunate events has allowed me the opportunity to exercise some of the expertise I developed in my former life and is helping to carry forward an interesting scientific investigation.

One of my responsibilities involves management and protection of sea turtles with respect to activities in our region. There are several species of turtles that do visit the waters off the California coast including leatherback, loggerhead, olive ridley, and green sea turtles. In general they are considered occasional visitors, passing through when oceanographic conditions are favorable. The relatively cooler waters commonly found off the coast here most of the year tends to discourage regular or persisted presence by individuals. The one exception to this is a resident population of green turtles that inhabit San Diego Bay. For decades, these animals have been known to favor the warm waters in the southern part of the Bay resulting from the discharge of heated water from a power plant. This was thought to be a unique situation and likely the most northern area where any green turtles would reside. Until recently, that is.

The story begins with a couple of recreational fishermen in the Long Beach area who were spending a considerable amount of time fishing in a local channel more than 1 mile inland from the ocean, the San Gabriel River. In the spring of last year, they noticed that just about every time they were fishing, they observed sea turtles hanging around in the water. They were also concerned because they had witnessed a few incidents of these turtles being accidentally hooked by other fishermen. They didn’t know much about sea turtles, but they did realize this was probably an unusual situation and decided to find out who might be interested to hear their story.

About this same time, I’m sitting back in the office thinking about turtles in the local waters. I had been made aware of anecdotal reports of turtles in the Long Beach area over the years and was imagining how we might find a better way to locate and document what I assumed would just be the occasional passerby. Eventually these local fishermen got pointed in our direction, and although their story about a bunch of big turtles seen in the river all the time sounded a little far-fetched, I agreed to meet them one afternoon. They gave me a guarantee, “You will see one within 10 minutes”.

It was more like 10 seconds. During that initial hour that I was there, it was obvious that multiple green turtles were literally just hanging out and popping their heads up to the surface periodically to breathe. As someone who has traveled halfway across oceans working on methods to reduce sea turtle bycatch, it was stunning to see them right in the middle of one of the most heavily urbanized areas anywhere. Many questions about these turtles immediately came to mind, but the most compelling one for me was whether this was a temporary arrangement or were these guys more permanent residents. The key element here is that this location in the San Gabriel River is dominated by the heated discharge of cooling water by two power plants, very much like the situation in San Diego Bay.

So here is where the old observer in me comes into play. Before I could start rallying the interest of our agency and any available resources, I needed more information. The only thing I could realistically do was start going down to this stretch of river where the warm water is released and the turtles had been seen as often as I could and record what I saw. There is an art to observational study of the water (probably goes for...
land as well) which involves simultaneously scanning as much area as possible while still looking closely. That is just a fundamental part of what I use to do at sea everyday. It's easy to take that ability for granted, but I am consistently amazed when I'm standing right beside somebody and they won't see anything while I've spotted half a dozen turtle heads pop up. After a couple of months of regular monitoring visits lasting only about 30-45 minutes and the consistent turtles activity I was observing, I was fairly convinced of the possibility that these turtles were residents. By then, I had also heard stories of sightings from other local fishermen and folks who ride bikes or jog along that river from the last 25 years, and it appeared to me this may not have been a new development. The whole picture just needed to be put together. My interpretation of what I had seen and documented helped to encourage the local aquarium to mobilize some of their volunteers to get out and monitor the river and other adjacent waters around Long Beach for turtle activity. It has also been enough to convince the researchers at our Science Center in La Jolla, who study the San Diego Bay green turtles, to get interested in what is happening here in Long Beach. We are hoping to launch a directed research project to learn more these turtles in the near future. It promises to yield some interesting results and I am very grateful to have an excuse to be outside, face-to-face with Mother Nature once again. I wanted to share this for a couple of reasons. First, to point out that a potentially meaningful discovery and opportunity to further our knowledge and understanding of an endangered species arose from the simple observations of a couple average guys on the street who took the time to say “Hey look at that. Is this normal?” I think that fits in pretty well with the mission and mindset of observers. You don't have to be a genius to make contributions to science; you just need to pay attention to what is right in front of you. You never know what might be important. I also wanted to highlight and acknowledge how fortunate fisheries and natural resource management is to have experience people out in the field whom have the capability to take in things happening quickly around them and identify the important details. It is an acquired skill. It certainly played a role in how I approached this situation and contributed to what I think has been a successful outcome so far. For the record, you can still find me down at the river on occasion keeping an eye out for the latest developments. Can't seem to break the habit...

6th International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference

Dennis Hansford; National Observer Program; USA

The International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference (IFOMC) Steering Committee scheduled to meet in Portland, Maine June 20-24, 2009 has received over 200 abstracts from 33 countries. We are pleased to have had such a terrific response to the call for abstracts, with many differing and intriguing insights and aspects to fishery resource monitoring and conservation. The 12 planned conference sessions with oral presentations, promise to be thought provoking and rich with lively dialogue. Just as pleasing, is the response to our pre-conference events, Data Extrapolation, Vessel Safety Training, and Moving Sushi, a Marine Resource Expedition through over 40 countries. Finalized sessions and details on presentations can be viewed at http://www.ifomc.com.

In conjunction with oral presentations, we will have over 100 poster presentations by observers and non-observers from around the world. On July 22nd, you will have the opportunity to enjoy some light refreshments and meet these poster presenters and don't forget to note your favorite poster! Prizes...
IFOMC, cont.

will be awarded for best observer and non-observer poster. Updates to the web page are still taking place and you will be able to get the latest information on pre-conference events and planned social activities. Our Data Extrapolation Workshop, which is a full day workshop, will look at a variety of methods for extrapolating data collected at-sea. The workshop's objective is to establish a set of common best practices in data extrapolation. The workshop will be facilitated by Lisa Borges, European Commission, Belgium and Vicki Cornish, Ocean Conservancy, USA.

Another pre-conference event features observer trainers from the Northwest and Northeast observer programs in conjunction with the U. S. Coast Guard. They have put together interactive training sessions for on board safety drills and how to respond to leaks and ruptured pipes through the use of a local fishing vessel and the Coast Guard's highly effective Damage Control Trainer. The D. C. Trainer can simulate a variety of scenarios that requires rapid response and creativity. Here is an opportunity to get first hand experience of the type of training U. S observer candidates receive.

Our final pre-conference event, open to delegates, features two videographers that have been trekking across 42 countries between Africa, Europe, and Asia filming a documentary on marine resource use and its conservation. Moving Sushi, a Marine Resource Expedition with Michael Zeljan Markovina and Linda Schonknecht, will share videos, photos, and stories from the expedition route as they film their holistic and objective documentary. All pre-conference events are scheduled for July 20th; check the web site for times.

Also scheduled on the 20th, is a meeting for the members of the Observer Professionalism Working Group. The meeting will be facilitated by Keith Davis. Later during the conference, on the morning of Thursday July 23rd, the Observer Professionalism Working Group will hold a concurrent workshop session exploring observer employment practices from around the world.

This year's keynote speaker is Dr. Rebecca Lent, Director of the Office of International Affairs in the Fisheries Service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries Service) in Silver Spring, M.D. As with past speakers, it is anticipated that Dr. Lent will challenge conference delegates to embrace and implement the conference vision; to develop, promote and enhance effective fishery monitoring programs to ensure sustainable resource management throughout the world's oceans.

Other conference speakers include noted marine science heavyweights, such as, Ben Rogers, Dr. William T. Hogarth, Dr. Andrew Rosenberg, and Martin A. Hall.

The conference planners have provided several exciting evening social events that include:

- Registration reception with light hors d’oeuvres at the Holiday Inn by the Bay; July 20th
- Conference welcome reception at the Portland Museum of Art; July 21st
- Sunset schooner cruise with the Portland Schooner Company, shopping excursion to Freeport, ME (home to L. L. Bean), and self-guided tours of Greater Portland and Casco Bay Region micro-breweries; July 22nd
- Conference banquet, featuring a Maine lobster feast, hosted by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute; July 23rd.

Once again, the NMFS National Observer Program has provided funding for fisheries observers to attend the 2009 IFOMC from July 20-24. Regional observer program managers notified current and former observers, where possible, about the potential of receiving funding for travel and accommodations at the conference. Observer program managers encouraged interested observers to submit an abstract. The abstracts were reviewed by the regional programs, which then selected two candidates to be considered. Funding will cover flight, lodging, meals, and conference registration. Congratulations to the 10 observers who were selected for funding support to attend the 6th IFOMC!

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Matthew Walia</td>
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The 6th IFOMC is upon us. So hurry to our secure on-line registration and sign up for the 2009 IFOMC and special events. See you in Portland, Maine!
Management Effectiveness of the World's Marine Fisheries

Note: this announcement, with Abstract and Author’s Note, are being printed here with direct permission from Camilo Mora, Ph.D., the primary author of the paper.

“A global analysis shows that fisheries management worldwide is lagging far behind international standards, and that the conversion of scientific advice into policy, through a participatory and transparent process, holds most promise for achieving sustainable fisheries.” – June 22nd Press Release of Management Effectiveness of the World's Marine Fisheries; Mora C., et. al.

Abstract

Ongoing declines in production of the world’s fisheries may have serious ecological and socioeconomic consequences. As a result, a number of international efforts have sought to improve management and prevent overexploitation, while helping to maintain biodiversity and a sustainable food supply. Although these initiatives have received broad acceptance, the extent to which corrective measures have been implemented and are effective remains largely unknown. We used a survey approach, validated with empirical data, and enquiries to over 13,000 fisheries experts (of which 1,188 responded) to assess the current effectiveness of fisheries management regimes worldwide; for each of those regimes, we also calculated the probable sustainability of reported catches to determine how management affects fisheries sustainability. Our survey shows that 7% of all coastal states undergo rigorous scientific assessment for the generation of management policies, 1.4% also have a participatory and transparent processes to convert scientific recommendations into policy, and 0.95% also provide for robust mechanisms to ensure the compliance with regulations; none is also free of the effects of excess fishing capacity, subsidies, or access to foreign fishing. A comparison of fisheries management attributes with the sustainability of reported fisheries catches indicated that the conversion of scientific advice into policy, through a participatory and transparent process, is at the core of achieving fisheries sustainability, regardless of other attributes of the fisheries. These results illustrate the benefits of participatory, transparent, and science-based management while highlighting the great vulnerability of the world’s fisheries services. The data for each country can be viewed at http://as01.ucis.dal.ca/ramweb/surveys/fishery_assessment.

According to Dr. Mora:

“The core results of the analysis were:

1. Only 7% of all coastal states in the world carried out rigorous assessments of the stocks and ecosystem effects of fishing, 1.2% also have transparent and participatory political processes to convert scientific recommendations into policy and less than 1% of the coastal states in the world also provide for an efficient process for the enforcement of regulations.

2. Policy transparency was the prime factor determining fisheries sustainability while in non-transparent systems subsidies also had an additional significant toll on sustainability.

3. In 33% of the poorest countries in the world, mostly countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, most of their commercial fishing is carried out by the fleets of the European Union, Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan and the United States.”

Continued on Page 10...
The Governance and International Cooperation in Fisheries Observation: Dealing with Corruption and Loopholes

Ebol Rojas; International Fisheries Observer/ APO; Mexico

In recent years, the demand for fisheries observation by the governments and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMO) in charge of monitoring fishing activity has been increasing, especially in the international context. Some of the new tasks assigned to observers are associated with: the accurate determination of catch, bycatch, and discards; interaction with vulnerable marine environment; and the new initiatives in regards to deterring Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

It is common knowledge that fisheries observation constitutes an important tool in the management and monitoring of fishing and related activities (i.e. high-seas transshipment activities) worldwide. However, there are certain issues on the rise that bring to light many questions in regards to the effectiveness of observer programs and the awareness that such systems could be considerably improved upon through strategic agreements centered about the standardization of protocols, international certification of observers, and the transference of knowledge among observer programs internationally.

Conflict of interest, poverty, welfare and fisheries observer misconduct:

In Uruguay, where the government does not have a set budget to attend to the observer program, the program is funded through a direct invoice to the fishing boat operators. Consequently, payment of wages to fisheries observers’ can be a tortuous process and fisheries observers do not receive a salary whilst at sea performing their duties - the process of payment starts once the deployment is finished and the observer has already debriefed. First, before an observer gets paid, it is required that payment be returned to the government from the fishing vessel captain, corresponding to the number of days the observer was deployed at sea on that fishing vessel. The expense is then verified by the government (if they get that money on time from the operator of the fishing boat) and finally the observer receives his wages. According to an anonymous source in the Uruguayan observer program this process normally takes more than 30 days (after returning to port) and in some cases over 3 months. For example, an observer deployed on a 120-day trip (very common for an Antarctic deployment within the CCAMLR Areas 88.1, 88.2 or 58.4) does not receive ANY kind of compensation or advance of final payment from the contractor (in this case the Uruguayan government) for 5 months (in a best case scenario) after beginning deployed upon an assigned vessel.

André Standing writes that according to a source within an observer training program in Southern Africa, the...
Corruption, cont.

Intimidation and threats, fisheries observers are offered money to report fraudulently to the pertinent authorities, which is also supported in a report to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2008 regarding IUU fishing in Southern Africa (MRAG & CAPFISH 2008). Due to the high incidence of poverty and social conditions, considering the low wages in these developing countries such bribes need not be substantial, and usually where law enforcement officials are inadequately paid, they may simply "look the other way" (Stop Illegal Fishing 2008). According to reports, an entire on-board observer program monitoring a shrimp fishery in Kenya was ceased. Among the main causes was allegations that observers habitually received boxes of prawns from the captains of the fishing vessels (Standing 2008 and Stop Illegal Fishing 2008). The stakeholders of the prawn fishery met in Malindi town (Kenya) to analyze the situation of the fishery, deciding to suspend that fishery and reorganize. Due to issues such as: overlap with artisanal fisheries, high level of bycatch, ineffective monitoring, control and surveillance, deficiency of fundamental data for fisheries management, they recommended as key to improving management that observers must be placed on-board all vessels. A working group is developing a plan to reorganize the fishery (Shikami Kennedy pers. comm. 2009).

According to a report in Traffic International (2001), regarding fisheries observers in the Russian EEZ of the Bering Sea, it seems that the scheme for appointing and remunerating observers constituted a corrupt practice. Oftentimes, observers were part of the staff of fishing agencies, some of them employees of the scientific research institutes of the State Fisheries Committee, and some were parents or friends of fisheries law enforcement agents. The author also signaled that there were no pre-determined earnings for observers and the level of financial reward varied partly according to an observer’s level of activity on board. An appointment on-board a "good" vessel (see Box 1) was considered by an observer to be a prize, and often expected to be recompensed in turn with a present or money from the observer to his chief (superior) for being assigned to that "good" vessel. It was reported that fishing companies with presence in the Russian EEZ have supposedly established agreements with observers and their managers of how the deployment system should work - those observers who try to disclose or avoid violations whilst onboard are excluded of the better deployments, or assigned to a "cheaper" fleet. For example, in the autumn of 2000 a Japanese vessel was discovered inside a prohibited zone in the Commander Islands, carrying an "observer" onboard (Vaisman 2001).

The cases of those fishing vessels involved in illegal activities often times “being monitored” through an onboard fisheries observer displays how the interest in the proper management of the fishing resources and political interests collide and how political conflict leads to mismanagement. In 2004, the FV Maya V, an Uruguayan toothfish longliner, was apprehended in Australian waters- that vessel was carrying a fisheries observer appointed by the fisheries authority. Technicians of the Ministry of Fisheries denounced that observer designation was ordered directly by the Director of Fisheries, because they were politicians and members of the same party. Designations were not based upon technical observer-placement criteria (Fuentes 2004). The results of the investigations regarding the performance or non performance of the fisheries observer during the deployment were never disclosed, however it is known that the observer deployed again after the issue of the “Maya V” (Rodriguez 2004).

In Senegal, it was reported in 2006 that foreign vessels were "Senegalized" to avoid monitoring by on-board observers. Representatives of the Fisheries Observer Union of Senegal alleged that foreign fishing boats were beneficiated by Senegal politicians. The Union Secretary, Maguette Niang, stated the following about this issue: "These ships are in this way free of any obligation of embarking observers to control their actions and they even benefit by the advantages foreseen by our citizens in the payment of the licenses and of any other benefit." (Afrol News 2006). These reports are consistent with reports issued by André Standing:

"Many representatives of small-scale fisheries in Africa complain that governments unfairly favor the interests of commercial and foreign

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**BOX 1.-**

**When the system fails: The case of the Russian Observers in the Bering Sea.**

The author says about the job of observer in foreign fishing boats in Russia “...can be an attractive one; the wages can be high. Expenses incurred while on board, as well as the salary, are paid by the ship owner or the firm leasing the vessels. In simple terms, inspectors are paid by the firms they are supposed to be monitoring. Salaries depend greatly on the country and the particular fishing company to which the vessel belongs. Usually, the on-board inspectors try their best not to reveal their earnings, but reportedly Japanese ship owners pay up to USD120 per day. The South Korean ship owners reportedly pay from USD80 to USD100 per day, while Norwegian and Taiwanese owners pay slightly less. Polish ship owners are reported to pay approximately USD40-50 per day, while the Chinese have the “worst” reputation in this regard, paying only USD20-25 per day.

In addition, the on-board inspectors have free access to food and alcohol.

There are rumors that some firms specially interested in having good relations with the inspectors tend to satisfy their "fleshy desires" during the trip.

fishing at the expense of their own welfare...

However, where the concept of conflicts of interest is more easily applied, it involves those in a position of public office abusing their power for personal financial reward. A manifestation of this is when senior officials and politicians, some of whom may be involved directly in fisheries management, simultaneously own private fishing boats or are partners in fishing and fish processing companies. This appears to be a common occurrence in many countries. For example, in the in-shore prawn sector of one East African country it is widely known that the three leading commercial fishing companies are each co-owned by the President and both the current and former Ministers of Fisheries’ (Standing 2008).

In Argentina, the management of the fisheries in Santa Cruz and its observer programme were an object of public scrutiny in recent times. The leader of the opposition Coalicion Civica and a seamen’s union denounced irregular practice in the management of the prawn fishery for the Fishing Secretariat, declaring excessive discards and supposedly corrupt practice by fisheries observers - they said that the price is 10000 Argentinean pesos (about 2,632 US dollars) for not doing their reports. Other sources alleged lack of information from the accusing parties (Nuestro Mar 2009) (prensalibreonline.com.ar 2009).

In “developed” countries, conflict of interest issues such as these don’t usually clearly arise. Nevertheless, in June 2009, a Spanish executive of a fishing company stated that in Italy the fisheries observers in bluefin tuna fisheries are the parents of the fishermen which is a clear case of conflict of interest (www.adn.es 2009).

For these types of situations - with low wages or more substantial wages but with poor effectiveness or deficiencies in the method of payment, or with inherent conflicts of interest plaguing a program – the potential for fishing vessel operators to dishonestly destabilize the role of observers appears to be increased.

**No safety in any fishery?**

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), fishing activity produces 24,000 deaths worldwide in the fishing industry on a yearly basis (FAO 2008) (ILO 1999). These levels are in agreement with what the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA) reported regarding the fisheries in the USA. 2002 statistics, provided by the US Department of Labour (DOL), showed a fatality rate of 71 per 100,000 workers. However, for the 80s and 90s in some fisheries, independent of fisheries observer on-board deployment, that rate was near to 350 per 100,000. The same report from ILO says that 24 million non-fatal injuries occur in the fishing industry each year. Although, normally fisheries observers in the performance of their onboard duties are not exposed to the same hazards faced by fishermen, we must consider the risks common to all seafarers onboard (including observers). With the exception of the exhaustive report by AMSEA in 2004, traditionally the hazards faced by onboard fisheries observers were not monitored, catalogued, or studied outside of the USA.

In direct response to this issue, the APO initiated a Catalogue of Observers Casualties, Injuries, and Near Misses (Justin, 2007) - a database which has also begun to include incidences occurring outside the USA. This ongoing project could help bring to light these issues on a large scale - allowing stakeholders to review, assess and learn from past hazardous situations fisheries observers have faced. Effective implementation of the international efforts to achieve the level of training, knowledge, and equipment needed for supporting fisheries observers’ safety whilst at sea is very poor. In 2004, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) issued a resolution regarding the safety of “all those on board” fishing boats licensed to fish within CCAMLR Convention Areas (including fisheries observers). Resolution 23/XXIII says:

> “Safety on board vessels fishing in the Convention Area ...
> Urges Members to take particular measures through, inter alia, appropriate survival training and the provision and maintenance of appropriate equipment and clothing to promote the safety of all those on board vessels fishing in the Convention Area.” (CCAMLR 2008)

Without details on the level of training required, minimal equipment, and/or the clothing to be issued, the application of this Resolution for the developing member countries were ambiguous, partial, and with null monitoring of the execution on the part of the Commission.

By example in another region, in 2002 the APO conducted a survey regarding various topics in regards to fisheries observation. That survey was completed primarily by US North Pacific (Alaska) Observers. The perception of the safety onboard for observers was very low: 53% of the observers thought the vessels they were deployed on were unsafe (even...
Corruption, cont.

though those vessels had a U.S. Coast Guard sticker), 35% remarked about problems with their contractor, and only 24% had received a safety orientation or safety drill (and the quality of the drills was rarely evaluated) (Romain 2002).

Unfortunately, operational and environmental hazards do not constitute the only objects of concern in regards to the safety of onboard fisheries observers. Threats such as harassment regularly arise during the daily work of observers. Consequently, besides the emotional and physical inflictions imposed upon observers, there could be a significant cost to the data quality in the cases of interferences.

One RFMO, the Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), is leading the way in regards to monitoring cases of observer harassment/interference. Through the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP) and its International Review Panel (IRP), protocols were implemented for the monitoring of infractions and minimization of the cases of observer harassment/interference. Nevertheless, the IATTC (such as with others RFMO s) does not have specific jurisdiction in its member states (countries) and has no national authority. Therefore, proper investigations of these cases need collaboration by all member states. To allow for comparisons of incidences (gauged by observer sea days) and the effectiveness of adopted measures - for these efforts to track cases for the implementation of observer harassment mitigation measures to be useful - it is necessary to work cooperatively among all of the member states to develop standard international implementation schemes. For example, Fig. 1 depicts the percentage of cases analyzed within a period of sessions of the IRP (between meetings 18-42).

This chart shows apparently an important quantity of possible interference/harassment cases occurring in developing countries, but without any link to the number of observer/sea days per country it is difficult to distinguish the real trend (Rojas 2008a).

Understanding the importance of the observer harassment issue, the RFMOs are gradually taking measures to deter the offences against fisheries observers. Recently, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) also incorporated a recommendation regarding harassment within the rules of the Regional Observer Program. ICCAT signifies a serious violation as: “assault, resistance, intimidation, sexual harassment, interference with, or undue obstruction or delay of an authorized inspector or observer...”. Nevertheless, they also fail in regards to properly defining these terms and with coming to an agreement, among the member states (nations), of the actions to be taken with the vessels and/or crews when their is non-compliance. At the 27th Meeting of the Commission in 2008, the USA CCAMLR delegation made recommendations to begin a system in primary agreement with recommendations previously made by the APO (Rojas 2008b).

In some developing countries the problems associated with harassment are the worst. As a testimony, the Environmental Justice Foundation mentions the issue of at least two Angolan inspectors [observers] which have ‘disappeared’ whilst onboard industrial trawlers performing their duties (EJF 2005) (Vidal 2009).

**International initiatives to strength the fisheries observer programs**

Among the diverse global instruments and guidelines for a governance framework for fisheries and management of living resources, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) encourages the coastal states (in its Arts. 117 and 118) to collaborate with other countries in the conservation and management of the common living resources on the high seas. Also, in Art. 119.(1)(a), the UNCLOS recognize that the developing countries may need assistance to ensure compliance with management measures, and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) recognize that developing States may require direct assistance to enjoy their international rights to sustainably harvest high seas marine living resources. However, in reality the cooperation to enhance monitoring for these countries, through the implementation and or improvements of the observer programs, has been very deficient.

In the case of the Tuna RFMOs, they have begun a process of cooperative consultation (Kobe, Japan 2007). Unlike the other RFMOs, the Tuna organizations share similar goals, manage the
Corruption, cont.

same resources, and in some way share the same members and industry fleets. An example of how cooperation amongst RFMOs can work is modeled in the scheme of Transhipment Observation which is conceptually the same, optimizing the service delivery and method of deployment, and standardizing the primary documentation (such as the Transhipment Declaration which is same one across the organizations).

At the 26th Meeting of the Commission, CCAMLR implemented the Ad Hoc Technical Group for At-Sea Operations (TASO). TASO was initiated with the intention of coordinating and improving CCAMLR observer programs, implementing the decisions of the Commission, and advising the Scientific Committee. The implementation of these decisions ran into problems - the CCAMLR International Review Panel stated in 2008 that there is an important inconsistency in the monitoring and reporting needs for different fisheries and management areas. For example, the Scientific Committee for the krill fishery have made requests to make monitoring and reporting appropriate, including the requirement for biological data and mandatory observers. However, this is a clear example of how the political interests can collide with the best management and monitoring of the resources being that implementation of these measures recommended by the Scientific Committee were not immediately implemented (CCAMLR, 2008).

Since 1999, the International Fisheries Observer Monitoring Conference (IFOMC) has been a platform for sharing knowledge on worldwide fisheries observation, addressing issues of Professionalism, Training and Safety through the different working groups and panels. In 2000, the Observer Bill of Rights (OBR), stating the rights of observers and obligations of the contractors/governments, was formulated as an instrument to improve the standards of the observer programs (OPWG 2008).

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), through the National Marine Fisheries Service, has been collaborating in the training of observers in developing countries (such as Ghana, Senegal, Philippines, and Vietnam) being an example of how to apply the requirements of the UNCLOS and UNFSA regarding international cooperation with developing or emerging countries.

Discussion

For an at-sea observer program to be successful, it is necessary to consider the effective function of multiple factors involving certain observer program essentials, such as: training, equipment, compliance, management and issuance of clear rules regarding how to carry out onboard observer duties. The importance of a program must not only be determined by the number of observers, observer sea days/year, or the budget, but also by the volume of biomass which are monitored and the ecological value of the species (e.g.: Krill).

The long cooperation between FAO, ILO and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has lead to the promulgation of guidelines and rules regarding the safety of those serving on board fishing vessels. However, with the exception of two specialized publications on the part of FAO (Davies & Reynolds, 2003; van Helvoort, 1986), the issue of fisheries observer safety has not been an object of extensive analysis and has not been followed up on as it should be.

Implementation of observer safety regulations has in general been very poor, showing the most wide loopholes of management at the international level. Even the ILO left fisheries observers without coverage under the Convention 188 on Work in Fishing (ILO 2007), never consulting the fisheries observer stakeholders when implementing these measures, considering fisheries observers as persons who are not working in fisheries.

The monitoring (or non monitoring) by developing nations within their own exclusive waters of marine resources common to international waters (also within the jurisdiction of various RFMOs) has greater significance every day, in regards to the economic impacts (locally and regionally) and the impacts to the ecosystem/marine food web. If we consider the FAO figures that place 8 developing countries (or emerging economies), with China at the top of the list, among the 10 main world fishing producers (in marine and continental catches) (FAO, 2009)(IMF, 2008), the effectiveness of fisheries monitoring in these developing countries is not only important because of the well know issues regarding food security - reaching the 50% threshold of worldwide fish exports, developing countries are of fundamental importance as suppliers to the world markets (FAO, 2008). In the cases of mismanagement, the environmental consequences associated with the amount of biomass harvested from these countries are concerning.

The process of observer certification and decertification should be reviewed, standardized, and widely published. This way allowing contractors and RFMO managers to accede easily to the work history of each observer, the good and the bad, including detailed information such as certifications, decertifications (and the causes). In actuality, without the sharing of this information, an observer decertified in one observer program, region, or RFMO may be able to find work...
Corruption, cont.

in another (without the other program knowing of that observer’s work history). Such a system should be standardized and optimized in order to offer all of the guarantees to observers that their work performance will be properly assessed and that they will be appropriately supported for doing their jobs the right way. Such a standardized system would ultimately help to improve the mechanisms for recruiting the best-qualified observers.

Incidents regarding safety and harassment in fisheries observation are often not monitored, with scarce follow up for many nations. The meager amount of data gathered to date is poor and useless, not reflecting any real trends to understanding the safety of fisheries observers. A standardized and complete database would allow us to understand the external factors affecting the performance of onboard observers, the nature of the risks per fishery/area, and would help in the development of better trainings and protocols. A centralized program for the monitoring of these issues is essential to compiling such a database. An organization such as the APO is able to carry out independent (multi-stakeholder) projects such as this, though we would need full cooperation through agreements with the main stakeholders (RFMOs, governments, and observer programs) for such a project to be successful.

For many nations around the globe, the dominance of poor economic and social environments reduces the cost of corruption, observer costs, and essentially provides opportunity for maintaining low working conditions for fisheries observers. Appropriate safety and working standards for observers are not their main objectives. According to Watson-Wright (2005) such conditions are often used as avenues for corrupt politicians to extend their circle of power.

When a new concern has become credible within the scientific community, there are still many probable reactions by policy makers – many of which do not always work towards bettering management practices.

It is the responsibility of “developed” nations who import seafood from developing nations to not only note the presence of an observer program (when accessing the levels of sustainability of the source fisheries) but to examine the way they are using observers in those fisheries and ensure that their standards of quality are at the levels they have set in their own nation.

A broad and pro-active approach to management issues is necessary for developing measures that can be exported beyond the borders of one observer program, region, country, convention area. Particularly, through cooperative-management agreements, focused working groups can study and assess the implementation of guidelines meant to improve the efficiency of observer program, with keeping in mind to assist developing nations with meeting desirable standards. The drafting of and successful implementation of a binding global agreement or the creation of an International Fisheries Observation Organization/Congress would help to: solve these management deficiencies, harmonize legislation, protocols, trainings, and the standards of international certification of fisheries observers.

This would facilitate the exchange of observers, which is a win-win for many stakeholders (from the contractors pulling from a larger pool to management regimes needing to spend less for training observers). These ideas should be considered and developed upon in the framework of the IFCMC, starting with a declaration of intentions.

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Observer Programmes are recognised world-wide as a very important tool in the sound management of fisheries. Many management agencies rely greatly on data collection by onboard scientific observers to feed into stock assessments, management plans and addressing the ecosystem impacts of fisheries. Observers can also play a valuable role in the monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing activities.

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is generally regarded as the world’s leading certification and eco-labeling program for sustainable seafood and in recent times the organization has experienced spectacular growth, both in the number of certified products available to consumers and in the number of fisheries being certified or entering assessment. Observers can play a very important role in strengthening the sustainability of fisheries and in addressing specific issues that could lead to improvements in fisheries entering the program as well as in already certified fisheries.

The MSC’s standards for sustainable fishing and seafood traceability are based on independent third-party assessments by accredited certifiers and complies with the FAO’s ‘Guidelines for the eco-labeling of fish and fishery products from marine capture fisheries’. Fisheries around the world are given a way through MSC certification to be recognized and rewarded for good management.

A study commissioned by the MSC in 2006 looked at the environmental benefits of its sustainable fishery certification programme, based on case studies of ten certified fisheries, researched using documentary evidence and personal communications with field experts. The authors took as their starting point the mandatory actions – known as ‘conditions of certification’ – which have to be undertaken once fisheries are certified and which should lead to the overall improvement of certified fisheries. They then sought to identify changes in the ten fisheries stemming from these conditions and considered whether the MSC programme was mostly, or partially, the stimulus for change, or whether the MSC was not the primary catalyst. About 75% of the 89 positive gains identified came about after the fisheries had been certified. Of these 47 were mostly stimulated by the MSC programme, 20 were partially stimulated by the programme and 22 occurred independently.

All the environmental benefits of the programme was however not captured by the study as many fisheries start implementing improvements before entering full assessment against the MSC standard. The first step towards certification, called a pre-assessment, serves as a roadmap of improvements fisheries will need to make if they were to successfully enter full assessment. Improvements can therefore already be made after the pre-assessment stage, but before the fishery enters full assessment. Many of the improvements in certified fisheries are directly related to the role onboard observers play. Examples of observer programme inputs in certified fisheries are given below.

**South African Hake**
The SA hake fishery is a...
Observer Programmes and MSC Certification, cont.

very good example of observers playing an active role in data collection to meet some of the conditions of certification. Probably the most important result of MSC certification has been the reduction in incidental seabird mortalities by 86% from an estimated 18,000 deaths five years ago. When the fishery was certified only minimal information about seabird by-catch was available and the client received their MSC certification on the condition that research be carried out to find out more on seabird interactions with the fishery and that appropriate mitigation measures be implemented to reduce seabird mortalities. The Albatross Task Force of Birdlife South Africa and WWF South Africa were involved in placing seabird observers on the trawlers to investigate these incidental mortalities. The extent of the problem became apparent and the use of tori (bird-scaring) lines became mandatory. A high level of cooperation was reported from the industry, resulting in an immediate and significant decrease in seabird deaths. Since certification both WWF and BirdLife have reported a greater willingness from vessel operators to accommodate them on board and greater cooperation from skippers & crew in addressing incidental seabird mortalities. The Africa Coordinator of Birdlife’s Global Seabird Programme, Ross W anless, recently noted: “I would emphasise the key role that certification provided in incentivising the fishery to be proactive in addressing environmental issues. The seabird-trawl warp interaction is a classic example of how a fishery realised that they couldn’t ignore a potential problem, and took steps to investigate the nature of the problem before anyone else was jumping up and down and crying foul”.

Since certification observer’s onboard data collection has not only focused on the seabird issue, but specific protocols have also been developed to find out more on depth distribution of the two hake species (shallow water M. capensis and deep water M. paradoxus) and their occurrence in commercial catches. The two species are usually not separated in commercial catches and there’s previously been uncertainty of the ‘split’ between and relative importance of the species in different areas. There’s also been some specific work on by-catches and obtaining accurate information on conversion factors for the two species. Most of this research has been guided by conditions of certification.

South Georgia toothfish

The South Georgia toothfish is generally regarded as a very well managed fishery. All the fishing vessels operating in the fishery have at least one scientific observer onboard; and their work is guided by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) Scheme of International Scientific Observation.

Since the fishery was certified in March 2004 data collection protocols of observers have been modified to ensure that they collect the required data to meet the conditions of certification. These included (1) genetic and

Jay Lugar, Fisheries Outreach Manager - MSC Americas, explains:

“The MSC standard is based on three Principles that consider target stock health (P1), impact of the fishery on the ecosystem (P2) and effectiveness of the fishery management system (P3). A number of outcome and information based criteria under each Principle stipulate minimum acceptable practice. Within this rubric an MSC assessment employs 31 performance indicators to score a fishery. A successful fishery must demonstrate minimum acceptable practice for every indicator and must also pass a higher threshold for the average of all indicators within each Principle. An indicator that falls below the threshold becomes the subject of a condition that must be met within a span of one to four years.

The MSC assessment process uses independent third parties called certification bodies selected by the client fishery. Certifiers hire scientific experts and together make decisions according to the MSC standard. The certifier’s team considers all available stock assessment, scientific research and other information provided by the fishery representatives, the regulator, government and university scientists and other stakeholders who declare an interest in the fishery. The MSC process is transparent and encourages stakeholder involvement at all stages so that all valid perspectives and information about a fishery’s sustainability practices are considered. If successful, a fishery’s MSC certificate is valid for five years with annual audits to check progress on conditions and continued performance under the three Principles.”

www.apo-observers.org

A Patagonian toothfish is brought onboard one of the longliners fishing at South Georgia (Photo: Guillermo Moreno).
Observer Programmes and MSC Certification, cont.

Tagging studies to confirm the stock identity (onboard observers did most of the tagging, although some tagging studies were also done by survey scientists; observers also collected tissue samples for genetic studies); (2) observer data collected to monitor fisheries impacts on rajid populations (this included species ID, sampling of morphometric data and taking tissue samples for genetic studies); (3) observer monitoring of discards of fishing hooks in fish heads after processing (seabirds ingesting these often cause mortalities at sea) and (4) observer data collection on benthos to monitor fishery impacts on benthic habitats (this included collection and ID of samples). Mapping of the occurrence of benthic communities was then done based on observer data collected at sea.

**Patagonian scallops**

Both fishing companies who participate in this fishery help fund research and provide 100% observer coverage.

As mentioned above, the assessment of fisheries in the MSC certification scheme is based on three principles. These are:

**Principle 1** - a fishery must be conducted in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of the exploited populations and, for those populations that are depleted, the fishery must be conducted in a manner that demonstrably leads to their recovery;

**Principle 2** - fishing operations should allow for the maintenance of the structure, productivity, function and diversity of the ecosystem (including habitat and associated dependent and ecologically related species) on which the fishery depends and

**Principle 3** - the fishery is subject to an effective management system that respects local, national and international laws and standards and incorporates institutional and operational frameworks that require use of the resource to be responsible and sustainable.

The observer programme of the Patagonian scallop fishery helped to address issues relevant to the certification of the fishery under each of the three Principles. Regarding the health of the target stocks, observers collect comprehensive and accurate information on the size composition of all catches of the target stock over the whole fishery. Discards of undersized scallops are estimated by bed and fishing mortality on individual beds is estimated from catch information calibrated by observer data. Regarding ecosystem impacts of the fishery, observers collect quantitative information on by-catch species. The 100% observer coverage also ensures that there is an accurate estimate of all discards.

Removal of adult scallops may well result in reducing recruitment of benthic organisms dependent on scallop shells for settlement. Analysis of the on board observer monitoring programme will detect any long-term change. Observers will also be able to detect impacts on protected, threatened and endangered species through fishing operations, allowing for the development of avoidance practices. Regarding effective management of the fishery, the observer programme provides very good information that contributes to management planning and decision making. It is therefore very unlikely that...
Observer Programmes and MSC Certification, cont.

the fishery would have been certified without the valuable inputs from the observer programme.

**Alaska Pollock**

There is 100% observer coverage in this fishery, with each vessel carrying 1-2 federal fishery observers to monitor and record catches and conduct scientific research; observers are also assigned to all pollock onshore processing facilities. Quotas in the MSC certified Alaska pollock fishery are set based on fish stock estimates compiled using state of the art data collection and modelling. Observers on boats relay real-time catch and by-catch data to ensure that these quotas are not exceeded. In addition, this information is shared among vessels in the Alaska pollock fleet so that vessel captains can act to avoid by-catch hotspots.

**Fisheries in the Southern African region**

Fisheries in the region range from fully industrial trawlers with sophisticated technology targeting deep sea resources to small-scale artisanal fishermen fishing in the near shore waters with traditional gears. Currently the South African hake fishery is the only certified fishery in Africa, but progress is being made to expand the program to other sectors, including small-scale and data deficient fisheries.

The octopus fishery in Tanzania has recently undergone a MSC pre-assessment, with W W F’s Eastern African Marine Eco-region Programme playing a very important role in helping the fishery become sustainable. Improvements in the management of the fishery are already planned and it is hoped that these improvements will help the artisanal octopus fishermen secure their livelihoods.

Another fishery which has recently undergone a pre-assessment is the deep water shrimp fishery in Mozambique. One of the issues that were identified as a potential obstacle to the fishery becoming certified was the lack of data on by-catches. W W F have since provided some funding to develop sampling protocols and deploy observers on some of the deep sea trawlers to collect catch data. This baseline information will provide a good platform once the fishery is ready to be assessed against the MSC’s Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing.

There is no doubt that observer programmes will continue to improve the sustainability of many fisheries all over the world and will lead to improvements in fisheries engaging with the MSC’s certification programme.

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Vietnam & Philippines

Observer Trainings in Vietnam and the Philippines

Joe Arceneaux; Pacific Islands Regional Observer Program; Honolulu, Hawaii

Vietnam and the Philippines held their first observer trainings in 2009. These two countries are working to increase their level of participation in the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). Both observer programs are focused on tuna fisheries; pelagic longline in Vietnam, purse-seine in Philippines.

The Vietnamese longline fishery is about 10 years old. High grade tunas are exported to markets in Korea and the U.S. The fleet of approximately 3,000 longline vessels operates primarily within the Vietnamese Economic Exclusive Zone. The main ports for longline vessels are in the adjacent provinces of Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, and Khanh Hoa. The main port, Tuy Hoa, is located in Phu Yen province.

The Vietnamese observer training class had 11 trainees. The course was held in Tuy Hoa. Some of the trainees had experience with maritime issues. And many had graduated from Nha Trang University. The Vietnamese observer program was initiated by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) as part of a sea turtle conservation project. One goal is to reduce sea turtle bycatch through the use of circle hooks. The other goal of the program is to secure market access for Vietnamese seafood products. In 2008, there was an observer program pilot program. The initial study had too few trips to clearly characterize the fishery. The reorganized program is designed to overcome the shortfalls of the original program.

Technical training provided by the PIR Observer Program covered animal identification, sea turtle handling and dehooking. Emergency radio procedures and may-day calls were also covered.

The initial data collected by the observers will be used by fisheries managers to better understand the species composition of the longline catches. Identification materials will be refined to be more appropriate for the Vietnamese fisheries and industry. They also plan to expand the safety training for the trainees.

The Philippines observer program held their first training in May and June of 2009. The agency in charge of the observer program is the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR). The Philippines observer program is intended to provide coverage for their purse-seine fishery. The WCPFC has a Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) to reduce the fishing mortality of juvenile Yellowfin tuna (Thunnus albacares) and Big-eye tuna (T. obesus).* During August and September of 2009, purse-seine vessels will not be allowed to fish on, or service Fish Aggregation Devices. This closure will require 100% observer coverage for purse-seine vessels fishing in waters under the jurisdiction of the WCPFC.

The training room is located in BFAR’s newly built MCS offices and training center in Navotas City, Manila. The first batch contained 30 trainees. Several of the trainees are BFAR staff members and scientists who will be program staff and trainers. The Philippines observer program has started off with a good view for future development. In addition to identifying observer trainees, folks with potential to become observer trainers were also identified and trained. The plan is to get all of the 2009 trainees some experience on the water, and use their experience in future trainings.

Future prospects for the Philippines observer program are good. BFAR will use the first phase of observer deployments on the purse-seine fishery as a practice run for expanded observer deployments in into other fisheries in 2010 and beyond.

Things are perking up observer-wise in SE Asia. All in all, Vietnam and the Philippines have taken successful first steps towards implementation of their fishery observer programs. Indonesia is planning to hold an observer training in October of this year. And our friends in Korea are working to expand and refine their national observer program.

*See www.wcpfc.int CMM 2008-01 for more detailed information on the measure.
Rationalization of the Shore-side Trawl Fishery on the West Coast, USA

Steve Eckert; Fisheries Observer; West Coast, USA

On June 13-18 2009, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) met in Spokane, Washington. The PFMC made decisions on habitat issues, halibut management, highly migratory species, coastal pelagic species and Groundfish management. Groundfish management discussions occupied the bulk of the meeting and culminated in the final decision to adopt Amendment 20 of the Fishery Management Plan. This decision is pertinent to observers because it will rationalize the shore side trawl fleet on the west coast and give each vessel an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ).

Amendment 20 is a controversial issue that the PFMC has been debating since 2003, when it decided to formally develop a trawl rationalization program in September, followed by the adopting of November 6, 2003 as the control date for trawl individual quotas. The council then began a public scoping process that ended in June of 2005 and began looking at alternatives to rationalization in an environmental impact statement. The alternatives to rationalization were addressed in meetings throughout 2006 to 2008, culminating in the council’s November 2008 decision of recommending trawl rationalization followed by a letter to the United States Congress in early 2009 containing a description of the proposal.

Since the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (W CGO P) started in 2001, there has been a random vessel selection plan. Fishing ports along the coasts of California, Oregon and Washington have anywhere from one to ten observers assigned to them dependent on the port’s fishing activity. Vessels are on an eight month selection cycle. When a vessel is selected for observer coverage, they are required to take an observer anytime they fish in the two month period, and do not need to have an at sea observer during the other six months. Currently it is unknown how many more observers will be needed to meet the needs of the IFQ fleet. However, it is known that vessels will have a 100% at sea observer requirement, including the possible use of cameras to augment observers, when fishing their permit. These changes in tracking and monitoring are one implication for west coast observers with the PFMC’s decision.

Furthermore, the Magnuson-Stevenson Act requires IFQ holders to pay the costs of managing and enforcing the rationalization program up to 3% of exvessel value. In addition, vessels may be required to obtain observers at their own expense. These changes represent another implication for observers working in the west coast fishery. A fee structure that allows for smaller vessels to share of observer costs with larger vessels may be developed. Funding for the observer program currently comes from the United States Federal Government.

The next step to occur before the rationalization is complete and quota shares are given out is for the package to been sent to the National Marine Fisheries Service for approval. Final Implementation is not expected until 2011. Once implemented, the council will conduct a formal review of the program within five years. Adjustments to the program will be made at that time. To stay informed on current and future council matters, their website is www.pcfFish.org.

Newfoundland, CA

The FV Monte Galieiro Sinks off Newfoundland

The FV Monte Galieiro a Spanish trawler went down in 20 minutes, after water began flooding the engine room, said its master, Mr. Ivan Soage Blanco, speaking through a translator at a press conference in St. John’s (Newfoundland, Canada), the ship, which departed from Vigo, Spain, was fishing on the Grand Banks just beyond Canada’s territorial limits when the crew heard explosions in the engine room.

“They heard two shocks in the engine room,” said the fishing vessel master, “They went down to the basement of the ship and they found it was in flames. They had a very short time to leave the ship and to call for help.” The Canadian Coast Guard Ship “Leonard J. Cowley” was patrolling the international fishing grounds under the regulation of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), Coast guard Capt. Derek LeRiche said he was considering a routine NAFO inspection of the Monte Galieiro -- but had not yet notified the Spanish
Monte Galineiro, cont.

Trawler that he might send a team onboard -- when the ship's distress call came in.

Twenty-two foreign sailors including the Spanish observer were rescued for the Canadian Coast Guard Sunday 22 February, many of whom were awakened from their bunks -- scrambled to escape their rapidly sinking Spanish fishing trawler following a pair of explosions in the ship's engine room.

The courage, strength and preparation in safety at sea of the biologist Tania Fernandez Vivanco, which was doing the fisheries observer work onboard, were very important for the survivorship with success of that high seas nightmare, she was rescued safe, the master said that the crew is "extremely lucky" that the coast guard was so close, "otherwise the situation could have been very dangerous ... thank you very much for everything."

Condensed from:

Sailors thankful after dramatic rescue from sinking trawler. In: www.nationalpost.com/related/


The fishing boat Mataco II sunk on May 05, at 40 miles to Punta Loyola (Rio Gallegos, Argentina), a crew was lost; the strong wind and swell did not allow it rescue.

The rescued crew (43 of 44) arrived on the following day to shore, the vessel sank due the consequences of a strong storm. The crews in three rescue boats were rescued for the "Beagle I" which was at 2 hours and half at the moment of distress.

The crew including the fisheries observer arrived safe onboard the Beagle I to the harbour of Punta Loyola and from there were evacuated to Rio Gallegos through a helicopter of the Argentinean Coast Guard (Prefectura Naval Argentina).


Argentina

FV Mataco II sinks in Argentina

The Mataco II were a processing trawler, launched in 2003, with 58.19 m of length and 11 of width, he was departed to high seas from Puerto Madryn.

www.apo-observers.org
South Georgia Island

**FV Insung 22 caught fire in South Georgia Waters**

The Korean longliner, Insung 22, which is property of the Insung Corporation and licensed to fish in South Georgia waters got a fire onboard on June 16, 2009, the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) was notified at approximately 1400hrs local time.

Insung 22 was located at approx. 54.27S and 34.42W, 60 miles east-north-east of the Island. The boat was assisted for the FV Argos Froyanes, located 70 nautical miles from Insung 22, reaching the vessel in evening of the 16th. By the time FV Argos Froyanes arrived the Insung 22 had lost engine power so it towed the vessel towards Cumberland Bay.

Information from Government House indicates that the fire is believed to have started in the rear of the accommodation section of the vessel.

The Insung 22 has 40 crewmembers, consisting of eight Koreans, thirteen Vietnamese, fourteen Indonesians, four Filipinos, one Chinese and one British fisheries observer, there were no reported injuries.

The onboard fisheries observer Mr. Anthony Donnelly was rescued fine and prepared for other deployment in South Georgia.


Insung 22 Photo from the CCAMLR web page (CCAMLR License notification).

Spain

**Wives of Fishermen in Spain asked for the control of Fisheries Observer Workday**

The Association of wives of fishermen “Rosa dos Ventos” claims to the Spanish government the control of the workday onboard fishing vessels to avoid the abuse on work and fatigue. This is a pilot experiment in which fisheries observers would be responsible for monitoring not only the common duties onboard also the working day.

The Association “Rosa dos Ventos”, comprised mostly of women from O Morrazo in Galicia says the seaman were injured by the violation of their rights, partly due to economic competition existing there. “Masters, defending the interests of owners often abuse of crews, with an excess of working hours in long stays at sea, causing fatigue and causing accidents, those which by its nature and situation, they tend to be very serious."

The association is aware of the difficulties on the control of the working day, because of the remoteness and difficult access for inspections. However, this group of women, held four meetings in a workshop with the Government, which addressed this problem, which they consider very serious. One of the possibilities being looked at and that principle was later rejected, was the installation in the factory of each vessel an IP camera, using a black box and transmitter, to control the working day, this solution was dropped based in constitutional issues, in this situation the Government has proposed a pilot project, which will consist of assigning a dual role of fisheries observers on trawlers fishing in distant waters which are required to carry an observer on board. According to this group, these professionals could be recording in addition to the daily catches, the hours worked by the crew, the type of work and if any abuses, and once on land, after the report, the authorities would take action in case they were needed.

Women find that the management of fishing is necessary, but it is more the control over the work done on the boats, “which sometimes leads to abuse and major accidents, and so the Administration should be careful, improving, this thus, at least, the hard working day the workers."

According to the association, which must try the new skills of the observers would not be more pressure for these professionals, so they only take confidential data, as currently performed for fisheries.

Observer Professionalism Workshop at the 6th IFOMC

Keith Davis; Fisheries Observer/APO; U.S.A

Concurrent with the Thursday morning plenary session (8:30 - 12:00 am) at the 6th International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference (IFOMC), the Observer Professionalism Working Group (OPWG) will conduct a workshop exploring observer employment practices from around the world in order to construct a more solid foundation in regards to the Group's four areas of study: Wages and Benefits, Support and Opportunities, Employment Standards, and Social Equity. We hope to build off of our prior investigations, and gather more focused, detailed, yet broad-scope information in regards to certain highlighted Observer Professionalism topics. This stage of information gathering is centered about conducting “Focused Interviews” with the overall theme of: Outlining Avenues that Foster the Recruitment and Retention of a Professional, Equitably Employed, Workforce of Observers.

Workshop Proceedings:

- The OPWG-coordinated Observer Professionalism Workshop at the 6th IFOMC is scheduled to commence in the morning of the 3rd day of the conference - from 08:30am to 12:00 (noon/lunchtime) on Thursday, July 23rd.
- This workshop is being run currently with the plenary session and will be in a separate location (Somerset and Oxford rooms) than the main conference room- Signs will be posted.
- 08:30am to 09:00am: will consist of a brief orientation of the Workshop and an audience-participant discussion.
- 09:30am to 12:00: The OPWG Workshop room will be arranged with separate stations for each of the four areas of study of the OPWG - Wages and Benefits, Support and Opportunities, Employment Standards, and Social Equity. This time is designated for OPWG Workshop participants to walk about to the station(s) of their choice, providing their feedback (via interviews) to the workings of those specific OPWG committees.
- If someone does not get a chance to participate or complete an interview at the Workshop and would like to participate, arrangements can be made to complete interviews either during the remainder of the conference or soon thereafter.

Scope of Interviewees:
The main focus group for OPWG Employment Standards Committee interviews are active and prior Fisheries Observers, though other stakeholders (i.e. management-agency personnel, observer provider/contractor personnel, Observer data end-users, Observer Union personnel, fishermen, industry personnel, NGO’s) are also encouraged to participate.

Interview Techniques:

- Plans are available by way of the IFOMC website www.ifomc.com so that it may be referenced and considered prior to interviews or by linking directly to the OPWG Webview. See how and upon what subject matter you would like to participate in an interview.
- The primary techniques used for conducting interviews will be via: in person, on-line correspondence, telephone, or post. Interviews may be digitally recorded.
- Interviews may be conducted over multiple correspondences.

OPWG Focused Interview Outputs:

- An overview of all OPWG work leading up to and at the 6th IFOMC will be published in the 6th IFOMC Proceedings document.
- Complete findings from the Group's “Focused Interview” stage of information gathering will be available within a year following the 6th IFOMC. This will be a separate output from the 6th IFOMC Proceedings document.
- The OPWG will also follow-up with all interview participants following the conference, ensuring that they have received these findings.

For this stage of our information gathering, we seek quality rather than quantity. We hope to strike a balance among all stakeholder perspectives important to gaining a broadened vantage of each outlined objective. Some interviewees may wish to provide feedback to the entire set of interview questions, while others, may be approached by one committee and asked to complete only a portion of the questions.

The workshop introduction (from 08:30am to 09:00am) will help to orient you to the proceedings of the workshop and then you can come in and out to participate as your schedule permits through the rest of the half-day. If you are attending the 6th IFOMC and observer professionalism is an important topic to you, do check out the Observer Professionalism Workshop!
Poem: “Watching the Ocean One Day”

Ethan Brown; Fisheries Observer; USA and International

Sometimes I sits and sits and thinks
I sits and thinks, all kinds of things

like... what if jelly fish had wings,
and birds had 6 foot dingalings

I sit and think
I sit and stink

I sits and thinks these stinkin' things!

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**Links**

**APO website**
www.apo-observers.org

**ObserverNet (on-line observer forum)**
www.observernet.org

**National Observer Program**
www.st.nmfs.gov/st4/nop

**Intl. Fish. Observer and Monitoring Conference**
www.ifomc.com

**AMSEA (Marine Safety Instruction)**
www.amsea.org

*** **Submissions** for the forthcoming **Fall Mail Buoy** are due by **September 31, 2009**. 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:**