

2007 OPWG Survey

Certain topics have occurred repeatedly at the International Fisheries Observer Conference (IFOC) meetings but may not have been directly addressed in the historical conference format. As a result, IFOC working groups have been established to provide forums for ongoing developments upon these topics.

The Observer Professionalism Working Group (OPWG) is tasked with producing an observer professionalism framework and recommendations to be presented at the 2007 IFOC. The intention of the 2007 Observer Professionalism Working Group (OPWG) Survey is to collect information from a broad level of respondents among all known worldwide observer programs. We intend to reach out to respondents among all of the various levels and perspectives of observer programs.

Survey items have been derived from the 2000 IFOC “Observer Bill of Rights” panel session and from other noteworthy observer employment issues raised at previous observer conferences and workshops. This survey is comprised of observer employment goals and initiatives that have been suggested to encourage the development of the Observer profession. As it may be quite difficult to quantify the results of this survey, we hope that the gathered information will help to set a baseline for haves, needs, and desires among programs to facilitate the growth and development of the observer profession. Details regarding the outcomes to this survey and the subsequent work group report will all be published in the conference proceedings.

Survey Respondent Identification:

Name: _____

Title/Organization: _____

Brief description of your experience in the Observer Profession:

If you wish to remain anonymous, please answer the following question:

My current involvement in the Fisheries Observer Profession is:

- A. as an Observer
- B. as an observer staff member for a governing body (e.g. NMFS, AFMA, DFO)
- C. as a staff member of an observer provider/contracting company
- D. as an observer data user (e.g. scientific analyst, NGO member)
- E. other (describe):

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This survey is comprised of four sections: I. **Definitions**- please define these terms based upon your own experience; II. **Multiple Choice**- please, choose only one answer and hold comments for the final section (please reference the answer, if applicable); III. **Short Answer**- these questions are designed to uncover and address some of the larger issues regarding Observer Professionalism. Please feel free to be brief or thorough- but, please keep these answers less than 500 words; IV. **Additional Comments**- please elaborate here upon suggestions regarding this survey's structure and content and upon any observer employment practice, either addressed or not addressed in this survey.

- I. **DEFINITIONS:** To help properly define certain fisheries observer program terminology in relation to specific observer program, please respond to each of these terms based upon your own experience and trainings. Please, be detailed yet concise- 1 to 3 sentences (50 words or less) should suffice:
 - a. Define "**Professionalism**" as it pertains to the observer profession
 - b. Define "**Professional Development**" as it pertains to observers
 - c. Define an "**Experienced Observer**"
 - d. Define a "**Professional Observer**"
 - e. Define a "**Living Wage**" (specifics in comparison to your local economy)

- II. **MULTIPLE CHOICE SECTION:** To indicate the level of fulfillment, need and desire for each of the outlined measures, please respond to each listed observer employment-initiative with one of the following multiple choice answers (please hold any comments regarding these initiative for section IV):
 - A. **Works Well**- from your experience, you find this initiative helps to promote the professional development of observers.
 - B. **Desire**- you have no experience with this initiative, but feel that it may be useful to the professional development of observers
 - C. **Other/ No Comment** - you either feel no other answer fitting to your situation or wish to remain neutral in regards to this initiative.
 - D. **Not Applicable**- you don't believe this initiative to be applicable to observer employment practices in your program or region
 - E. **No desire for**- you do not have experience with this initiative, but do not feel that it is needed for observer professional development.
 - F. **Doesn't Work Well**- you have experience with this initiative and feel that it is not needed for the professional development of observers

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*Please mark only one answer with a bold "X" for each						
	A	B	C	D	E	F
<u>Wages and Benefits:</u>						
1. Experience-based compensation system						
2. Performance-based bonuses and/or awards						
3. Experience transferability (from program to program)						
4. Paid trainings and debriefings						
5. "Stand-by" land-based pay						
6. Year-round employment						
7. Reimbursed/provided travel-to-vessel						
8. Reimbursed/provided food/per-diem on land						
9. Reimbursed/provided lodging						
10. Health Insurance for Observers						
11. Retirement Plan for Observers						
12. Paid Vacation and Holidays for Observers						
13. Disability and/or sick leave for Observers						
14. Dental Insurance for Observers						
15. Life Insurance for Observers						
	A	B	C	D	E	F
<u>Support and Opportunities:</u>						
16. Prioritized employment, graded by experience						
17. Grievance procedures						
18. Program and contractor performance evaluations						
19. Conflict resolution and harassment training						
20. Counseling options						
21. Career-advancement opportunities for Observers						
22. Professional development and training opportunities						
23. Support for observers to attend professional forums						
24. Observers provided with vessel profiles						
25. Policy set to allow observers to refuse a vessel						
26. Observers credited in final data publications						
27. Other Scientific opportunities (i.e. research cruises)						
28. Data-generated reports provided back to observers						
29. Observer performance evaluations						
30. Observers encouraged to help out in "the office"						
31. Drug and Alcohol education/training						
32. Support to encourage observer communications						

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	A	B	C	D	E	F
Employment Standards: (If questions 33-39 do not apply, please mark “D”. If they are applicable, provided documentation of your standards may help us understand them better)						
33. National training standards						
34. National debriefing (data accountability) standards						
35. National Code of Conduct standards						
36. National eligibility and competency standards						
37. National Observer "minimum wage"						
38. National observer program database standards						
39. National data-form and species-code Standards						
40. Rules for observers helping fishers with their duties						
41. Rules for vessel owners hiring their own observers						
42. Employment retention standards and evaluations						

III. **SHORT ANSWER SECTION:** These questions were designed to help uncover and address some of the larger issues facing worldwide observer employment practices. Please provide as brief or as thorough an explanation as you are comfortable with sharing, but please keep each response under 500 words. Following are “short answer” discussion topics:

- a. Prioritize your top three observer employment initiatives, when considering the development of the Observer profession? Please explain.
- b. May other observer programs or regions benefit from observer employment practices you have had experience with? What, specifically?
- c. Prioritize your top three eligibility and competency standards, when considering the recruitment and retention of “professional observers” (i.e. education level and experience level)?
- d. Can the program(s) you work with benefit from cooperation with other national and/or international observer programs, specifically regarding observer employment practices? What may be some possible benefits to the program(s) you work with?
- e. To what level should the governing agencies, the observer providers, and the observer advocacy and labor organizations support observers? Please prioritize these observer supporters in order (1-3) of desired responsibility to the future livelihood of observers and explain why.

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- f. How do you see observer programs evolving over the next 15 years, 30 years, and how does observer livelihood fit into all of this?

IV. **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:** Please feel free to comment here upon any observer professionalism issue addressed or not addressed in this survey. Please reference the section and/or question # when you are elaborating upon a topic that has been raised in this survey.