



the
Mail Buoy

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OBSERVER NEWS

NORTH PACIFIC COUNCIL UPDATE

Sharpen Those Pencils....

New Observer Survey Awaits Your Input

Keep your eyes open for a new survey specifically designed to assess the job-related needs and opinions of currently certified observers. The survey is the brainchild of long-time observer Suzanne Romain, who decided it was necessary to obtain a reliable summary of current opinions after hearing various views expressed by members of the Observer Advisory Committee (OAC) in January. Suzanne hopes that the information revealed will help her tailor an approach in another project she is tackling, a proposal for an improved Service Delivery Model for the Observer Program. "This survey is the first step in establishing what the priorities of observers are so that the APO, NMFS and I can know what needs to be worked on and how best to go about it", she explains, emphasizing that a strong response rate is necessary in order for the results to be statistically significant. Suzanne calls the survey a "grass roots effort", and is hoping that communications between observers will get the word out and encourage as much feedback as possible.

The APO is providing some support in the production of the survey, which will be available to observers both online and at the Anchorage training facility by the end of March. Suzanne is contacting Seattle folks as they travel through for debriefing. If enough people respond by June the preliminary results will be published in the June Mail Buoy and may be presented at the July OAC meeting. Surveys can also be obtained from the APO or directly from Suzanne, who encourages your questions and comments at sromain@hotmail.com (subject heading "Survey"), or at (206) 295-8298.



NORTH PACIFIC COUNCIL UPDATE

NPFMC February Meeting News

By Tracey Mayhew

The North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC) met in February to conduct an initial review of proposed regulatory changes to the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program. The Council requested various modifications to the Draft EA/RIR/IRFAA, and the revised document was released by NMFS for public comment on March 18, 2002. It can be viewed *Continued on page 2...*

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at the Council's website, <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/> (under Amendment Analyses in the Programs and Reports section). I

encourage you to review the proposed changes and make written comments to the Council before the April 3rd deadline.

Observer Program Authorization Expires in 2002

One of the issues facing the Council involves the fact that the authorization for the Observer Program expires on 12/31/02. Three options are being considered: The first, not a viable choice, would allow the program to expire and effectively end the Observer Program. The second would extend the current Observer Program indefinitely, with the understanding that amendments may be made as necessary. The third option, supported by the APO, would extend the authorization until December 31, 2007, at which time the program would have to be reviewed.

NPGOP is also proposing a host of changes that will affect observers and observer providers alike, many aimed at achieving compliance with the Administrative Procedures Act (APA). At the risk of getting too in-depth, I will focus on those that I believe would have the greatest impact to observers.

Modifying the certification and decertification process:

Currently when the Observer Program Office (OPO) decides to decertify an observer, the observer has the right to appeal the decision but must do so through an Appeals Officer residing in the OPO. A proposed change aimed at bringing the process into compliance with the APA would establish the Alaska Region Office of Administrative Appeals (OAA) as the Appeals Official. This should create an improvement by removing potential bias. Another move towards APA compliance would include reviewing observer applications for certification. It is currently undecided whether or not 'grandfather rights' would be granted to currently certified observers. If so, nothing would change for currently certified observers. If grandfather rights were not granted, then currently certified observers would have to reapply and might have to meet any new hiring standards adopted by NMFS.

Clarifying observer certification criteria and standards of behavior:

1) A criterion would be added so that an individual with a past criminal record would not be eligible to be certified as an observer. Two sub-options are being considered, one specifying that the crime be a felony, the other specifying that it be a crime of dishonesty.

2) Some Standards of Behavior would be modified. Examples are listed after the following introductory paragraph, which remains unchanged:

“Observers must refrain from engaging in illegal actions or any other activities that would reflect negatively on their image as professional scientists, on other observers, or on the Observer Program as a whole. This includes, but is not limited to:

- ❑ Violating the drug and alcohol policy established by the Observer Program;
- ❑ Engaging in the use, possession, or distribution of illegal drugs;

- ❑ Engaging in sexual relations with personnel of the vessel or processing facility to which the observer is assigned, or with any vessel or processing plant personnel who may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the observer's official duties.”

(The Observer Program is in the process of writing a drug and alcohol policy.)

3) The observer provider certification and decertification process would be changed to an APA compliant permitting process similar to that used for other NMFS Alaska Region permits;

4) Observer provider application criteria and duties would be modified to become APA compliant. The following include some of the proposals:

- ❑ Observer providers would have to ensure that observers were “fit for duty” at the time of embarkation. The definition would either mean being fully capable of performing assigned duties, or would mean that if an observer were sick or injured at the time of embarkation they must first receive a clearance to work from a licensed health professional before deployment.
- ❑ A deployment would be limited to four vessels total, including shellfish vessels.
- ❑ Observers would be required to complete in-person mid-deployment data reviews as required, unless specifically exempted by the Observer Program. While not a huge change, it gives NMFS the ability to insist on in-person reviews when they deem it necessary.
- ❑ Reports of observer harassment, or any prohibited action against observers, concerns about vessel or processor safety, any observer illness or injury that prevents them from completing their duties, and observer performance, standards of behavior and conflict of interest problems, would have to be submitted within 24 hours after the observer provider becomes aware of the problem. Again, not a huge change but a definite strengthening of the requirement.

Granting NMFS the authority to assign staff to fishing vessels and plants:

One important proposed change would grant NMFS the authority to place its staff and other qualified personnel (i.e. OTC staff) on fishing vessels and at processing facilities. This would allow individuals such as Cadre members and OTC staff to temporarily replace an observer or act as an additional observer at an assignment in order to troubleshoot challenging sampling situations. Sub-options to be considered by the Council include: 1) capping deployment days at 750 a year; 2) exempting vessels under 60' length overall; 3) exempting halibut vessels not currently required to carry an observer. This proposal would allow NMFS to send staff out on vessels to address problems identified by observers and would keep NMFS staff current to the realities of working at sea. I see this as another mechanism for observer support.



The final decisions on the Draft EA/RIR/IRFAA will be made at the NPFMC meeting in Anchorage this April. As things stand now, the Observer Program agenda will be reviewed by the Advisory Panel on Saturday, April 13th, and by the Council on Sunday, April 14th. Please remember that written comments must be submitted to the Council office by 5pm on April 3rd. If you can attend the meeting and wish to make public testimony you can sign up at the meeting anytime prior to the time that the item is brought up for discussion. Feel free to find me at or before the meeting, and I will walk you through the process. The Council wants and needs to hear more from Observers!

ADF&G UPDATE

By Shari Coleman

Bering Sea Crab Rationalization

The Council continues to work on rationalizing the Bering Sea Crab fishery, which will essentially set up an IFQ system for crab. Congress does not currently provide a mechanism for establishing IFQs, and the Council is preparing now so that when the mechanisms are in place the North Pacific will be ready to implement the program. One option being considered would include processor quota shares, which would ensure delivery of catch to certain processors.

Second only to the Bristol Bay red king crab fishery, the Bering Sea snow crab fishery, *Chionoecetes opilio*, requires the highest number of onboard shellfish observers for deployment in a single season. For the 2002 season, the mandatory shellfish observer program in Dutch Harbor briefed 23 observers, 12 of which were assigned to catcher vessels, 8 to catcher processors and 3 to floater processors. A total of 201 vessels registered, but due to a shortage of observers the department was unable to meet its goal of 10% catcher vessel coverage, as stipulated by the Crab Observer Oversight Task Force.

Essential Fish Habitat Committee Meeting

The Council's Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Committee will meet on March 25-27th at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle (Building 9) to review fishery descriptions, discuss potential adverse effects, and discuss mitigation tools/application. EFH is required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act to protect and conserve waters and substrates that are necessary for the spawning, breeding, feeding and growth to maturity of fish species managed by federal fisheries management plans. The goal is effective management through the conservation of habitats used by all life stages of these species. Observer data is used in defining EFH areas, general distribution and fishing effects. Ongoing work includes conservation and enhancement measures necessary to minimize, to the extent practicable, adverse impacts from fishing and non-fishing on EFH. Public input is very important and I encourage you to attend this meeting. Your opinion as an observer will be especially appreciated. For more information please check out the Council website at: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/Committees/EFH/efh.htm>.

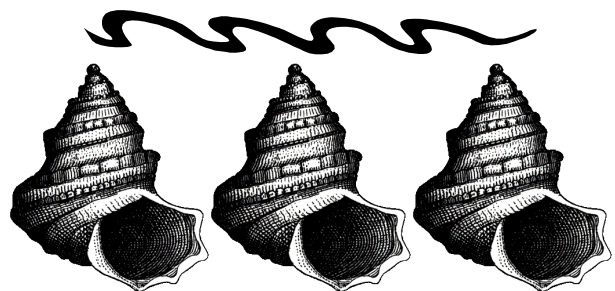
As of March 1st, three crab fisheries requiring observer coverage were open: Aleutian and Bering Sea golden king crab (100% coverage), and Bering Sea snow crab CDQ (two vessel coverage per CDQ group).

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the University of Alaska Observer Training Center in Anchorage have scheduled two crab observer training classes this year in an attempt to alleviate the observer shortage. The first will be held July 29 through August 9, 2002, prior to the opening of the 2002 Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery. The second class is slated for September 23 through October 4, 2002, preceding the 2002 Bristol Bay red king crab fishery.

ADF&G staff is currently preparing for the Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting in March. Topics will include proposed changes to regulations regarding observer certification periods, fishery pre-registration deadlines and review of the shellfish onboard observer program annual report. The meeting will be held in Anchorage and are open to the public.

There are many other issues on the table. I will continue to explain them to you as I figure them out. As always, it would be great to have your input so please feel free to contact me, especially if you are heading through Anchorage. I will to my best to provide you with information and answer any questions while getting feedback from you. Thanks for all your hard work. Tracey Mayhew, (907) 562-5122 or mayhewinak@yahoo.com

{Editor's Note: The APO's February letter to the Council is posted at http://www.apo-observers.org/letters/benton_1-31-02.pdf. We will be providing comments for the April meeting as well.}



Five Tips for Getting the Most From Your Short Term Medical Insurance

By Tony Novak, MBA, MT

Editor's Note: This article was forwarded by an observer who has used this coverage and recommends it; the APO has not looked into it yet but we encourage you to check it out and we welcome your feedback so that we can pass it on.

Short term medical insurance can be a fantastic buy for many people because it combines high quality "freedom of choice" type health coverage at much lower cost than traditional medical insurance plans. But knowing these few tips will help you get even more benefit for your money.

VALUE TIP 1: USE PPO NETWORK PROVIDERS

Although these insurance plans cover your treatment received from any doctor or hospital in the U.S. and Canada, it may pay you to use a participating network provider. You can find participating providers nationwide at <http://www.phcs.com>. There are three advantages to using a PPO provider; 1) your bill will be discounted under the negotiated network agreement, 2) you do not need to pay the provider at the time service is provided (you may wait until after the claim is processed), and 3) the provider handles all of the claim submission paperwork on your behalf saving you time and possible frustration.

VALUETIP 2: REAPPLY

Even though the policy expires after 6 months, you may re-apply as often as you wish. Don't be fooled by insurance company brochures that say you are no longer eligible for this coverage just because you had it in the past. If it is difficult to re-enroll online, then ask your enrollment adviser to manually handle your new enrollment.

VALUE TIP 3: DO NOT PAY MONTHLY

You will save up to 20% of the cost if you pay a single premium rather than opt for monthly billing. Even if you are short on cash, it pays to put the entire charge on your credit card and pay off your credit card over a few months.

VALUE TIP 4: PAY CASH FOR SOME OUT-OF-POCKET ITEMS

STM insurance plans do not cover expenses related to pre-existing medical conditions, so if you take an ongoing prescription medication or receive ongoing weekly outpatient treatments, these will not be covered under the STM plan. But often the amount you save in insurance expense is more than the cash cost of your current treatment, so it makes sense to pay this out-of-pocket. This may also allow you to feel more comfortable electing a high deductible policy to save even more in premium cost.

VALUE TIP 5: BUY WHEN YOU TRAVEL

If you happen to live in one of the few states that prohibit STM, it is completely legal to purchase insurance when you are traveling to another state. It only takes about two minutes to enroll online and the coverage is valid in your home state for all treatments you may receive after returning home. You can even have you

policy and ID cards delivered to your address in a restricted state as long as you list another state as the place of purchase. Also, if you are moving from a place with relatively low health insurance costs (the Midwest states, for example) to a place with high medical costs (California, for example) it is best to buy your coverage before you move. Once issue, the coverage is equally valid in all states and your premium rate will not increase on the policy after you move.

About the Author:

Tony Novak, MBA, MT, a compensation and benefits adviser, promotes low cost benefit plans and free 401(k) administration nationwide for thousands of small businesses and self-employed people nationwide. He can be reached toll-free at 1-877-529-7435, or at tonynovak@medsave.com.

<http://www.medsave.com> for low cost medical insurance and free Medical Savings Accounts.

<http://www.freedombenefits.com> for free 401(k) plan administration.

NORTH PACIFIC OBSERVER PROGRAM UPDATE

OTC Director Paula Cullenburg Takes New Position at UAF

Paula Cullenburg, who has served as Director of the University of Alaska's Observer Training Center in Anchorage since 1995, has been hired as Coastal Community Development Specialist and Associate Professor in the UAF Marine Advisory Program. Emphasis will be on rural economic development, community sustainability, and coastal conservation. Alaska community issues that Paula will likely address include beach and riverbank erosion, aquaculture expansion, marine recreation, and economic problems caused by fluctuating fisheries. She will start the job in April 2002.

Many thanks to Paula on behalf of the APO for her help in the past, and best wishes for future success!



A Review of the Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

**Amy S. Van Atten, National Marine Fisheries Service,
Alaska Regional Office, Juneau, Alaska**

The primary goal of the Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program is to report on the number and condition of incidental

injury and mortality to marine mammals and sea birds occurring during the course of Category II commercial fishing operations in Alaska. The main objectives are to 1) obtain reliable estimates of incidental serious injury and mortality of marine mammals and seabirds, 2) determine the reliability of reports submitted by vessel owners and operators, 3) identify changes in fishing methods or technology that may increase or decrease incidental serious injury or mortality if necessary, 4) collect biological samples for scientific studies that may otherwise be unobtainable, and 5) record data on by-catch and discard levels of all species.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) requires NMFS to monitor and report on levels of marine mammal interactions with commercial fishing gear. NMFS will contract the service of approximately 15 observers for 2002 and up to 40 observers by the following two years (2003 and 2004). Approximately five percent of the fishing effort will be observed, staying relatively constant by month and area throughout the fishing season. The estimated observer sea days is 515 in 2002, 1824 in 2003, and 1309 in 2004. NMFS works with an observer Contractor and statistical consultant in determining which vessels/permits should be selected, how data will be processed, and address concerns of the fishing community. NMFS oversees the training, final debriefing, and data entry, among other things. Observers record scientific data on marine species, observe fishing operations, and collect biological samples. NMFS will prepare reports for use by state and Federal agencies and research institutions. For the next couple of years, the specific tasks of AMMOP are: 1) collection of data in 2002 and 2003 of the salmon set gillnet fishery around Kodiak Island, 2) outreach and logistical study in 2002 to initiate observer coverage of the salmon drift gillnet fishery in Southeast Alaska for the following season, and 3) collection of data in 2003 and 2004 of the salmon drift gillnet fishery in Southeast Alaska.

The observer contractor should be selected by April, 2002 to complete the listed tasks. Current news and additional information is available on the web, at:
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/observers/mmop.htm>

How Many Snailfish Are There Really? **Jay Orr, RACE Seminar-2/26/02** **Summary by Kim Dietrich**

Snailfish belong to the Family Liparidae and are dominated by three genera: *Liparis*, *Paraliparis*, and *Careproctus*. *Liparis* tends to be found in shallow waters in the Northern hemisphere and approximately 99 species have been described. *Careproctus* and *Paraliparis*, on the other hand, tend to dwell deeper on the continental slopes of the temperate and high Arctic and Antarctic regions and more than 250 species have been described. The number of deep-water snailfish species continues to grow. During the past two years, the RACE Division has caught several new species of snailfishes on the Bering Sea slope and Aleutian Islands in bottom trawl surveys. Dr. Orr attributes the sudden increase to a new net that is attached to the footrope of the

bottom trawl. This net was designed by Dave King and has an opening of less than a meter. The smaller net tends to collect fish that are delicate and would normally either slip through the regular trawl net or get totally mangled in the bigger codend.

As I listened I realized how little I knew about this family of fish. Dr. Orr described a suite of characters that differentiate the species. The pectoral fin comes in many shapes and forms, lobate to unlobed, with differences in ray shape & length. All snailfish have pelvic fins that have been modified into suckers, which also range widely in size and shape (some are even triangular), or may have been lost entirely. The position of the sucker and vent are important characteristics distinguishing species. Tooth morphology is also important in separating some of the more similar looking species.

Many of us (as observers) have seen a black-tailed snailfish (pink with a black tail) but I suspect some of these identifications are wrong since there are at least four species that are pink with a black tail. Collection of fish for species verification is always useful. The observer manual should list the information to put on a tag.



Snailfish biogeography could provide interesting evolutionary insights, especially concerning the deeper water species that are found in both hemispheres but which are distinctly more polar. One wonders if the more 'primitive' stock originates in the northern or southern hemisphere and how they have adapted differently to their respective environments.

For more information on snailfish see:

- Yau, C., M.A. Collins and I. Everson. 2000. Commensalism between a liparid fish (*Careproctus* sp.) and stone crabs (Lithodidae) photographed *in situ* using a baited camera. *J. Mar. Biol. Ass. U.K.* 80: 379-380.
- Able, K.W. McAllister, D.E. 1980. Revision of the snailfish genus *Liparis* from Arctic Canada. *Can. Bull. Fish. Aquat. Sci.* 208:1-52.
- Able, K. W. 1990. A revision of Arctic snailfishes of the genus *Liparis* (Scorpaeniformes: Cyclopteridae). *Copeia* 1990(2):476-492.

Stein, D. L., N. V. Chernova, and A. P. Andriashev. 2001. Snailfishes (Pisces: Liparidae) of Australia, including descriptions of thirty new species. *Records of the Australian Museum* 53:341-406

Andriashev, A. P., and D. L. Stein. 1998. Review of the snailfish genus *Careproctus* (Liparidae, Scorpaeniformes) in Antarctic and adjacent waters. *Contributions in Science of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County* 470:1-63.

Stein, D. L. 1978. A review of the deepwater Liparidae (Pisces) from the coast of Oregon and adjacent waters. *Occasional Papers of the California Academy of Sciences* 127:1-55.

Upcoming RACE 'Brown Bag' Seminars:

April 9th – “The History and Significance of the University of Washington Fish Collection”

Katherine Pearson, Collections Manager, UW Fish Collection.
12:00 to 1:00 pm, Observer Training Room, Building 4, NOAA, Sand Point, Seattle.



Sperm Whales and Longlining in the Gulf of Alaska

By Elizabeth Mitchell

Black cod longline season is just around the corner (mid-April or so) and, as many prior longline observers know, there are expected frequent interactions with sperm whales in the Gulf of Alaska. These interactions can range from entanglement to depredation of catch, or individuals may aggregate around the vessel with no apparent connection to fishing operations. The National Marine Mammal Laboratory (NMML) is continuing the Sperm Whale Interaction Special Project for observers this year. There will also be a separate special project to collect biopsies from sperm whales, which could contribute to stock identification. Anita Lopez continues to head up the project at NMML.

The Sperm Whale Longline Interaction Special Project has been in existence since 1997, when a pilot project was initiated by NMML. Since then, the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP) has expanded this project to all longline observers in the Gulf of Alaska. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a report in 1999 (P.S. Hill, et al, 1999) to summarize the findings of the Pilot Project. This project gave a peek into the dynamics of sperm whale/longline interactions but the results were fairly inconclusive—there was evidence of depredation (46.2% of the sets where sperm whales were present) but we weren't able to determine trends or amounts of catch loss due to depredation. Observer data did reveal evidence of entanglement on one occasion and entanglement has been recorded in other demersal longline fisheries in the South Atlantic (Ashford 1996). We initially looked at all sperm whale

sighting data (Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska). However, it became clear that sperm whale interactions were limited to the Gulf of Alaska. Interestingly, while longline fisheries in the Bering have had significant depredation by killer whales, they don't seem to present much of a problem for longliners in the Gulf. However, this is based on the observer data covered under the Pilot Project through 1998 and this behavior could possibly change over time.

There are still no estimates of the number of sperm whales in Alaska. What may appear to be "sperm whales everywhere" (causing frustration for some fishermen), may in fact be the same individual(s) following the vessels and moving from one vessel to another, even over great distances over the entire season. Fluke shots are the standard for the purpose of photo "recapture" of sperm whale individuals. However, I was able to identify two recaptures from 1995 to 1998 using facial scars and unique dorsal fins. During the original Pilot Project in 1997 & 1998, five "recaptures" were obtained from just a handful of observer photos when matched with photos dating back to 1995. This is an extraordinarily high recapture rate, possibly indicating a small subset of sperm whales having learned this behavior. Two people on separate boats photographed the same individual within days of each other in 1998, and it was also photographed in the same region in 1995. I got three recaptures just from my own photos when I was randomly assigned to vessels! Since the longline fishery is limited to Spring, Summer and Fall, and research in the winter is rare, no data is yet being collected on Alaska sperm whales in the winter. Matches of Alaska's sperm whales with catalogs in other regions would be extremely valuable information because it is yet unclear whether or not sperm whales that interact with Alaska longline vessels are permanent residents of Alaskan waters. Sperm whale interactions with demersal longline fishing operations are also being monitored in Chile, and other demersal longline fisheries in sub-Antarctic waters

What's interesting is how fast the phenomenon of sperm whale depredation developed and how its increase appeared to coincide with the implementation of Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) in the black cod/ halibut fleet. Before IFQ, all longliners went out on short openers. For sperm whales that meant they only had a limited amount of time to eat off the lines and/or learn to improve their longline foraging skills. Some vessels reported depredation but it wasn't widespread. Discarded offal most likely reinforced the behavior over time and probably continues to do so. When I was out in 1995, the whales seemed to aggregate off the stern and it appeared that they were eating the offal only. The observational notes in the Observers' Marine Mammal Sighting Form 11 indicated this also. Fishermen generally did not appear threatened by them and in fact seemed quite amiable to their presence. Nobody could fathom how such a large mouth could gingerly pick off fish and this still remains a mystery. Then IFQ was implemented and suddenly the fishing season expanded to 9 months and whales could go from vessel to vessel, honing their skills almost all year long. It seemed like there was a shift in attitude when I talked to fishermen in 1997. The fishermen I

spoke with saw it as a potential problem but didn't appear annoyed.

In 1998, it was a different story. Fishermen that I spoke with were frustrated and very interested in finding a solution, but several were rather hopeless, because of the sperm whales' patience and persistence. Some wanted to implement acoustic deterrents. However, sperm whales have proven to be resistant to acoustic deterrents (André 1997) and the level of acoustics that would be required to deter a sperm whale long term could possibly inflict permanent damage on the whale. Also, the questions remain: What population-wide impacts would result from the wide spread implementation of this type of measure and what would be the effects on surrounding marine life?

What many fishermen would like to know is how much loss of catch is resulting from sperm whale depredation. Some fishermen have expressed concern that the amount taken from the catch could be significant and that this is not being included in removal estimates (since quotas are fished until filled). If there is a subset of sperm whales in Alaska that have become adept at foraging off longlines, it may be possible to estimate how many are depredating and to develop estimates to determine overall loss of catch. Some fishermen have expressed an interest in having the option to return to pot fishing to catch their quota, which would also decrease seabird bycatch.

Some related sperm whale reprints available in the NMML library:

André, M. 1997. Sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) behavioural response after the playback of artificial sounds. Report of the International Whaling Commission 47: 499-504.

Ashford, J.R., P.S. Rubilar and A.S. Martin. 1996. Interactions between cetaceans and longline fishery operations around South Georgia. *Marine Mammal Science*, 12(3): 457-464.

Hill, P.S., J.L. Laake and E. Mitchell. 1999. Results of a pilot program to document interactions between sperm whales and longline vessels in Alaska waters. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-AFSC-108.

Kasuya, T. and T. Miyashita. 1988. Distribution of sperm whale stocks in the North Pacific. *The Scientific Reports of the Whales Research Institute*, No. 39. Far Seas Research Laboratory, Japan.

Whitehead, H. 1987. Social organization of sperm whales off the Galapagos: implications for management and conservation. Report of the International Whaling Commission No. 37.

Whitehead, H. 1990. Assessing sperm whale populations using natural markings: recent progress. Report of the International Whaling Commission (Special Issue) 12: 377-382. (maybe available at NMML Library).

Whitehead, H. 1994. Investigating structure and temporal scale in social organizations using identified individuals. *Behavioral Ecology* 6(2): 199-208

Whitehead, H., J. Christal, and S. Dufault. 1997. Past and distant whaling and the rapid decline of sperm whales off the Galapagos Islands. *Conserv. Biology* 11:1387-1396 (maybe available at NMML Library)



National Observer Program UPDATE

**By Vicki Cornish
March 19, 2002**

Observers Working on Detail with the National Observer Program

Juan Levesque, an observer with the Southeast Pelagic Longline Observer Program based in Miami, has been on detail working with the NMFS National Observer Program office in Silver Spring, MD on observer safety issues. His primary focus has been the drafting of an Interagency Agreement between the National Marine Fisheries Service and the United States Coast Guard on observer safety and support. The purpose of the Agreement is to:

- Promote the effective utilization of personnel and facilities through a joint effort.
- Define the nature and extent of the services, systems, and facilities each agency will provide.
- Provide the timely exchange of information to allow for proper planning, communication, assessment.
- Ensure interagency relationships continue to be maintained.

Juan has been working with personnel from the various NMFS Regional Observer Programs, the USCG and NMFS Enforcement. His seven years' of observer experience on small vessels have given Juan an excellent perspective on the needs for improved observer safety measures. Juan completes his detail and returns home to Florida at the end of March.

Gillian Stoker, an observer with the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program, will be joining the National Observer Program in April and May to draft a report on the Development and Current Status of NMFS Fishery Observer Programs. This report will be used as the basis for developing a national plan for NMFS fisheries observer programs, and will be a comprehensive report and past, present, and future NMFS observer activities.

International Fisheries Observer Conference – Reminder

The 3rd International Fisheries Observer Conference will be held November 18-21, 2002 in New Orleans, LA. All observers are encouraged to attend. Limited funding may be available from NMFS for covering travel costs for some observers to the conference (more on this in future *Mail Buoy* articles). The Conference Steering Committee is meeting to draft the agenda on

April 2 and 3, and a call for presenters will be issued shortly thereafter. For more information about the conference, check out the conference website at <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/observerconference2002>.

Fisheries Observer Logo T-Shirts Available

Ray Troll (of “Spawn Til You Die” fame) and Karen Lybrand have teamed up on a new “Fisheries Observer” logo, designed especially for NMFS observers (see the logo at <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/nop/>). A limited number of t-shirts are being distributed by NMFS to long-term observers in appreciation of all the hard work and dedication that observers demonstrate in performing their job. Additional t-shirts with the “Fisheries Observer” logo are also available for sale at the web site <http://www.promoplace.com/6266/stores/NOAA>. (The site also includes NOAA caps and keychains for sale).

For more information about the NMFS National Observer Program, contact Vicki Cornish or Margaret Toner at 301/713-2328, or go to <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/nop/>.



APO ACTIVITY UPDATE

APO Represented at NPFMC Meeting

Irene Dorang and Matthew LaCroix represented the APO at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings in Anchorage this February. Many of the proposed changes have been covered in this issue by Tracey Mayhew in her Council Update, and the entire draft EA/RIR/IRFAA is available at the NPFMC website, <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/>, under “Amendment Analyses”. The APO’s stance on some of the main proposals is outlined as follows:

The APO expressed support at the meeting for extending authorization for the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (which expires 12/31/02) until 12/31/07, which would ensure a reassessment of the program by that time. It appears that NMFS and the majority of the Council members favor extending the program indefinitely, their philosophy being that they mean to review the program anyway so it will probably be done before then.

The APO was in favor of NMFS creating guidelines for contractors regarding applicant interviewing, and setting minimum standards for contractors’ drug and alcohol policies, including making possession of illegal drugs a violation. We asked to see the policies up for review when completed.

We agreed with NMFS that quality mid-cruise data reviews were important, but asked for clarification regarding acceptable time

frames and possible exceptions to the requirement for all mid-cruises to be in person.

The APO strongly supported granting NMFS the authority to place its staff and other qualified personnel (i.e. Cadre and OTC members) on fishing vessels and at plants. This could provide valuable troubleshooting opportunities while keeping debriefers current with observers’ working conditions.

The APO spoke out in favor of giving contractors a greater role in ensuring vessel safety by verifying that a vessel has a current USCG safety decal, although we pointed out that ultimately the observer should have the option of approving the decal. We also asked for the Council to consider doing something not proposed in the regulatory packet – improving the annual safety training given to prior observers. The Council agreed, and in its list of modifications to be made before the document could be released for public comment they included an option for expanded safety training.

Our sincere thanks go out to Matthew LaCroix, who made himself available on short notice to give public testimony on behalf of the APO.

January APO Meeting Notes

The APO held meetings on January 2 and January 9 in Seattle, attended by a total of 23 observers, four NMFS staff and one union representative. The discussions focused primarily on possible changes to contractor regulations, proposed by NMFS in October of 2001 in the Preliminary Draft EA/RIR/RFAA and reviewed by the Observer Advisory Committee (OAC) at their meeting in Seattle on January 7 and 8. Observers also discussed some of the changes proposed in the October draft that were not included in the January version, along with some of their own ideas for improving the Observer Program.

Editor’s Note: The draft was again revised after the February NPFMC meetings – pertinent revisions are noted where applicable.

Changes currently being considered:

Requiring that all mid-cruise reviews be conducted in person: Observers reported mid-cruise experiences ranging from detailed, in-depth reviews to comparatively informal discussions that might not necessarily have uncovered data quality problems. One suggestion was for the mid-cruise to be set up to be an intense review similar to a debriefing, possibly requiring an evaluation by the observer. NMFS staff pointed out that they are usually under substantial pressure to complete the reviews in a short time, and that observers sometimes put off scheduling their mid-cruises until the last minute. A bonus for scheduling a timely mid-cruise, or some kind of penalty for not doing so was suggested. Overall, the opinion appeared to be that mid-cruise evaluations are valuable as long as they include a detailed review of data, as they are meant to, but that it would be useful to know how many reviews are typically conducted by phone and fax, and

of these, what proportion typically have data problems that are discovered at debriefing compared to observers who had an in-person mid-cruise. Thirty days as the deadline to have a mid-cruise was generally considered unrealistic, since so many boats stay out for over a month at a time.

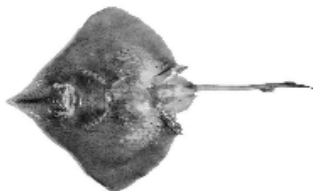
Making contractors responsible for verifying that vessels have current USCG decals: Observers generally were in favor of this, mainly because it would eliminate the contractor's ability to simply put a new observer on a boat that the observer first assigned to it had found did not have a current decal. Since there are some logistical problems associated with the contractor being responsible for all verification (last-minute assignments to boats with no access to fax machine, etc.), a suggestion was made to allow some leeway for observers to verify the decal, and to create some other mechanism to prevent contractors from being able to replace one observer with another on boats that do not have a current safety decal.

Not allowing individuals who have been convicted as an adult of a crime involving dishonesty or false statements within the past ten years to be certified as an observer: *Note: The revised draft does not contain the ten-year time period, and also includes a separate option that would instead make ineligible those individuals who had been convicted of a felony.*

This topic brought up more questions than answers. What constitutes a crime of dishonesty? Why should someone with a record of criminal violence be more eligible for certification? What is the standard for people applying for federal employment? Since the agency and contractors would not be conducting background checks but simply asking for this information on the applications, how could the success of this procedure be monitored? Observers at the meetings agreed that maintaining integrity in the observer work force is definitely an important issue, but felt that there are probably more effective ways to approach it.

Replacing the current contractor certification process with a permitting system: Observers were concerned about the fact that each permit would be valid indefinitely, and suggested that contractors be required to demonstrate periodically that they are meeting certain standards in order to have their permits renewed. There was strong approval for the idea of NMFS evaluating contractors before switching to a permitting system, and continuing to provide this information to the observer work force on an annual basis.

Limiting vessel assignments to 4 per cruise: This idea met with approval, especially since it leaves observers the option to work on shellfish boats during a groundfish cruise as long as they don't exceed their boat limit.



Changes no longer being considered:

Assigning only prior observers to flatfish factory trawlers: This change was included in the original Working Draft of proposals and then dropped from the January version discussed at the OAC meeting. Observers definitely had mixed feelings about it. Some felt that it would be a reasonable change, while one observer whose first assignment was a flatfish factory trawlers said she had been able to adjust, although in the beginning her data probably suffered. NMFS staff pointed out that there are specific boats of various gear types that are known to have very difficult sampling situations, and suggested that just those vessels be designated for priors only. Another suggestion was to have two observers on those boats and/or on flatfish factory trawlers, since the work load is usually heavier. Everyone agreed that deploying Observer Cadre members on challenging boats to troubleshoot and set up sampling protocols is a great idea, and also that observers should remember to take advantage of the information presently available from Vessel Surveys.

Requiring observers to have signed contract addenda before starting training or briefing: This change was also dropped from the January version of the Draft. There appear to be many instances of new observers traveling to Seattle and Anchorage and starting training without ever seeing a contract. It was agreed that trainees should have proof of a signed written agreement with their contractor before being allowed to start their classes.

Changes proposed by observers:

Mandatory annual or biennial safety training: Observers who had worked for programs such as the Halibut Commission described mandatory annual training including donning survival suits in the water, and pointed out that an observer working today who trained in 1993 could easily have taken his or her last safety class at that time. The general consensus was that NMFS should require a safety training day once every year or 18 months, and that time should not be a limiting factor in committing to this decision because if the four-day briefings were organized differently they could easily convey the same information in three or fewer days.

Yearly evaluation of contractors by NMFS: Observers were overwhelmingly in favor of NMFS conducting an annual review of contractors based on criteria including timely payment, housing issues, number of complaints, observer approval from post-debriefing questionnaires and other factors relating to employee satisfaction.

Support network for observers: This topic covered a range of issues, the basic idea behind them being that it can take a while to gain the proper perspective in one's observing career, and a little advice from the right person can go a long way. Several people gave examples of new observers who experienced significant harassment on their first vessel and simply thought that that was typical treatment until they were able to talk to prior observers about it. Suggestions included having prior observers make themselves available to field questions from training classes;

providing some kind of medium and protocol for observers to report grievance issues involving not only vessels but contractors, the agency, or any other source; educating people that bringing up a problem does not necessarily mean having to write up an affidavit; and reminding all observers that support is readily available through a call to the Observer Cadre.



APO Board of Directors Meeting Minutes Election of Officers & Ratification of Bylaws March 2, 2002

Conference call: 8:30 am Pacific

Participants: Brad De Noble, Elizabeth (Liz) Mitchell, Kimberly (Kim) Dietrich, and Kelly Van Wormer
RE: ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONAL OBSERVERS

Agenda

- 1) Call meeting to order;
- 2) Directors sign waiver of notice;
- 3) Elect temporary chairperson to preside (nominate, second, vote);
- 4) Elect temporary secretary to keep minutes (nominate, second, vote);
- 5) Read waiver of notice and order waiver appended to minutes;
- 6) Elect officers (nominate, second, vote);
- 7) Review and discuss bylaws; approve bylaws as is or with specified changes (vote);
- 8) Discuss other business
 - a. resolution giving Kim authority to sign on behalf of/bind APO;
 - b. status of 501(c)(3) application;
 - c. anything else; and
- 9) Adjourn meeting.

8:30 am –

Brad De Noble gives brief introduction, asks Kim to lead meeting.

Election of temporary chairperson – Liz nominates Kim, Kelly seconds motion. Kim is temporary chair.

Election of temporary secretary- Kim nominates Kelly, Liz seconds motion. Kelly is temporary secretary.

Kim calls the meeting to order. Kim reads the “Waiver of Notice”:

“Pursuant to Washington Statute 24.03.460, we, the undersigned, being all the directors of Association for Professional Observers, hereby agree and consent to waive notice of the telephonic organizational meeting of the board required by

Washington Statute 24.03.155 to be held on the date and at the time stated below for the purpose of electing officers, adopting bylaws, and the transaction thereof of all such other business as may lawfully come before said meeting.”

Kim, Liz, and Kelly agree to sign the “Waiver of Notice”

Kim, Liz, and Kelly sign “Resolution of Association”

All participants are notified to change the date on the “Wavier of Notice” form 10:00 am to 8:30 am.

Formal Election of Officers

Kim nominates Liz as the president, Kelly seconds. Liz is president.

Liz nominates Kim as the vice-president and treasurer, Kelly seconds. Kim is vice-president and treasurer.

Kim nominates Kelly as secretary, Liz seconds. Kelly is secretary.

8:55 am Participants agree to go through the Bylaws and discuss any changes.

Brad questions the timing of the Annual meeting. The current bylaws state that the third Tuesday of every year is the Annual meeting. Brad expressed concern that for many non-profits this is a time to write and submit grants and could be very busy. Liz, Kim, Kelly agree to keep the date to encourage observer participation (pre- A season).

Brad and Kim discuss the rationale behind the observer membership dues and the supporting membership dues. All participants agree the fees are acceptable.

9:15 am Discussion about the general timeline for nominations and election of officers. The current bylaws state that the nominations must be made by November, the APO would prepare a Mail Buoy with ballots and the observers would vote by January 10. There was concern that this timeline was too short. All participants agreed to change time line to members nominating officers by June, ballots mailed to observer members by September and votes completed by January 10.

Explanation of quorum.

Discussion ensued over the wording in Article III, Section 1, a. It was agreed by all participants to change the wording from “...have collected data for the National Marine Fisheries Service or other federal agencies” to from “...have collected data for the National Marine Fisheries Service or other federal, state, or international agencies”. This change was necessary to include observers that may collect data for state or international agencies, including commissions.

9:45 am Amended Bylaws were signed by Liz, Kim, and Kelly. Brad explains that the signing of the bylaws completes the 503(3)(c) paperwork.

9:50 am Meeting adjourned.

The full bylaws are posted on APO's website: <http://www.apo-observers.org/bylaws.pdf>.

Addendum from the VP: The passing of more detailed and in-depth bylaws has been a major benchmark for the APO as an organization. This allows us to apply for "official" non-profit status with the IRS as well as apply for grants with additional foundations to keep us active and working toward our goals and objectives. (KD)

ALASKA FISHERMAN'S UNION INFO

For any union or contract related problems or questions, please contact Duke Bryan or Harold Holten at:

Alaska Fisheries Division-UIW

721 Sesame St., #1C

Anchorage, AK 99503

Ph: 907-561-4988

Toll free: 1-877-471-3425

Duke Bryan in Tacoma: 253-272-5551 or 253-272-7774

Email: dukeworks2@aol.com or haroldholten@ak.net

The latest versions of the 3 union contracts can be found at the following URL. Eventually, this domain will be the permanent home of the APO but for the time being, it's definitely under construction.

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



WEST COAST PROGRAM UPDATE

By West Coast Program Staff

Hello All,

Spring is in the air, but the winter weather is still beating the coast. We are now seven months into the program and so far, it has been challenging and exciting! While not at the originally estimated levels for each observer, the total number of sea days is impressive nonetheless (809 sea days as of February 28, 2002). The program is off to a positive start, mainly due to the commitment of the observers trained in the class of July 2001. The 20 year-round observers have weathered the growing pains of the program with tenacity, forethought, and candor. As the observers learn more about the fishing activities in their ports, we expect to not only increase the number of days spent at sea but also move into other fisheries, like open access. The expansion of the program would be not possible without the diligence and professionalism of our observers.

In January 2002, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) sponsored the first WCGOP meeting in Portland, OR.

Five months into the program, PSMFC and the NMFS felt it was important to learn first hand what the observers thought. This meeting provided the chance for observers to get together as a discussion group to share their ideas, viewpoints, questions and opinions about the program. It created a unique opportunity for observers to discuss their participation in the West Coast Groundfish Fishery, the sampling design of their work, and to meet representatives of other user groups in the fishery.

The two-day meeting served many purposes from additional training for observers to brainstorming on how to increase safety. All parties expressed appreciation for the meeting and encouraged yearly sessions. PSMFC has begun planning for a meeting in November or December of 2002.

In February, eight more highly qualified observers successfully completed two weeks of training. They are now settled along the coast, augmenting coverage levels in high activity ports. They are just in time to aid in covering fishing activity that is expected to increase in the summer months.

Currently, the program has two full time NMFS coordinators, a NMFS database administrator, a NMFS fishery biologist, a NMFS team lead/coordinator, a PSMFC contract manager and 28 active observers!

For any additional information about the program, please visit our website <http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/fram/Observer/> or call us at 1-866-780-8064.

Sincerely,

West Coast Groundfish Observer Program Staff

The WCGOP maintains a web site (<http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/fram/Observer/>) a toll free number (1-866-780-8064) and an email address (NWFSC.observerprogram@noaa.gov). If you have any questions about the WCGOP, please use one the above avenues to speak with us at the WCGOP.



OP-ED

By Irene Dorang

Last weekend a group of other observers and I were sitting around trying to figure out why it is that when there's a safety incident involving a boat you often hear afterwards that everyone knew it was an accident waiting to happen. Granted, some of those comments probably fall into the "hindsight is 20/20 vision" category, but by the end of the conversation we had almost all

ended up admitting that at some point we had been on boats that we felt were unsafe, and had not mentioned it in the vessel exit survey.

So why would anyone neglect to do that? Obviously not only is your own safety involved, but that of the crew and every observer to come after you. Well, some of the times it was simply ignorance. I can remember being in a factory when a sump gave out and a foot and a half of water accumulated on the floor. I knew it was a problem, but didn't really have the kind of idea I do now of how fast a boat can roll. What bothers me more in hindsight was the reaction of the crew. Everyone in the factory continued working, and only the engineer really got upset. Six weeks later when I completed debriefing I wasn't really thinking about it and it never got mentioned. But a few years later a less casual observer documented problems that were considered significant.

This February I spent a week in Anchorage representing the Association for Professional Observers at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings. One of the issues that came up was the possibility of increasing the current level of safety training given to prior observers. Since then, I and other APO members have been trying to gauge from observers what improvements they think are necessary and/or desirable (not always the same thing – apparently many people find the possibility of perishing at sea less formidable than the thought of adding an extra day to the four-day briefing).

It does seem to boil down to one thing though - catching observers coming and going. By that, I mean that we were looking at how to prevent two undesirable situations that are pretty typical in the current observer corps - one being the kind of example mentioned above in which a vessel with problems goes unnoticed, and the other being an observer going out on deployment when he or she has not been in the water (to say nothing of righting a liferaft) in a survival suit since training many years ago.

We realize that there are many people at NMFS who take safety very seriously, and I've heard from trainers and observers alike that the classes have improved in recent years. However, it seems reasonable for the observer training schedule to be closer than it is now to that of ocean-going RACE division employees, who typically spend far less time at sea than observers do. Their required courses include Remote Duty First Aid (12 hours), followed by First Aid Refresher (4 hours) every two years; Oxygen Therapy (3 hours) every five years; and Survival at Sea (6 hours) every five years (yes, this involves survival suit time in the water).

Another area that might be made more useful in flagging problem vessels is the exit survey. After talking with other priors about the things we learned to look for after spending years on boats, it seems that very specific questions about a number of potential circumstances are more likely to provide impartial information

and present a realistic picture of safety conditions than the general "any other problems" question. With all due respect, I've met people who had some pretty funny ideas about what constituted a problem on a boat. At certain points in my career I suppose I'd have to count myself among them.

So in the end, it's true that you'll never be able to prepare for every situation, and observers probably will never be able to assess their boats with the eye of a structural engineer. You do your best and hope that the crew is responsible, the boat is seaworthy and that you stay fortunate. But when there does appear to be room for improvement it makes a lot of sense to move in that direction sooner rather than later. The stakes are pretty high.



How You Rated Contractors in 2001

The following information was derived from observers' answers to exit survey questions in 2001. We converted the response data into percentages for purposes of comparison. *[Editor's Note: Results were rounded up or down to the nearest full percent; as a result the column totals occasionally equal 99 or 101. There was no data available for Frank Orth and Associates in 2001]*

Who was your contractor for this deployment?

	AOI	DCI	NWO	SWI	TSI
Percent of All Responding Observers	37	7	11	43	2
Total Number per Contractor	119	24	37	140	5

Was this your first deployment with this contractor?

	AOI	DCI	NWO	SWI	TSI
% Yes	34	29	46	29	60
% No	66	71	54	71	40
Total # of Responses	119	24	37	140	5

How would you rate your contractor in their ability to describe the observer job and the terms of your employment or provide necessary information to you during your training or briefing?

	AOI	DCI	NWO	SWI	TSI
% Excellent	45	38	30	16	20
% Good	34	46	38	55	40
% Acceptable	17	17	24	27	40
% Marginal	3	0	8	2	0
% Poor	2	0	0	0	0
Total # of Responses	119	24	37	140	5

Responses					
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How would you rate your contractor in their ability to provide salary, benefits, insurance and personnel services to you?

	AOI	DCI	NWO	SWI	TSI
% Excellent	36	21	22	14	20
% Good	43	50	46	38	80
% Acceptable	17	17	16	36	0
% Marginal	2	13	8	9	0
% Poor	3	0	8	4	0
Total # of Responses	119	24	37	140	5

Did your contractor ask you to do anything that was contrary to your judgment or training?

	AOI	DCI	NWO	SWI	TSI
% Yes	0	4	5	1	0
% No	100	96	95	99	100
% Maybe	0	0	0	0	0
Total # of Responses	119	24	37	139	5

How would you rate your contractor in their ability to provide logistics support, including travel arrangements, housing and per diem during your contract?

	AOI	DCI	NWO	SWI	TSI
% Excellent	51	42	43	18	20
% Good	34	33	38	36	80
% Acceptable	11	13	16	34	0
% Marginal	2	13	3	9	0
% Poor	3	0	0	4	0
Total # of Responses	119	24	37	140	5

How would you rate your contractor overall?

	AOI	DCI	NWO	SWI	TSI
% Excellent	44	33	22	14	20
% Good	45	54	57	50	80
% Acceptable	9	8	16	32	0
% Marginal	2	4	3	4	0
% Poor	1	0	3	1	0
Total # of Responses	119	24	37	139	5

AOI = Alaskan Observers, Inc.; DCI = Data Contractors, Inc.;
NWO = Northwest Observers, Inc.; SWI = Saltwater, Inc.;
TSI = TechSea, Inc.

How would you rate your contractor in their ability to maintain communications with you while you were deployed, including the availability of contractor staff to help with your questions and needs, 24 hours a day?

	AOI	DCI	NWO	SWI	TSI
% Excellent	34	38	27	29	20
% Good	43	42	46	46	60
% Acceptable	20	17	16	22	20
% Marginal	2	4	8	3	0
% Poor	1	0	3	1	0
Total # of Responses	119	24	37	139	5

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Alaskan Observers, Inc.

West Coast Groundfish Observer Program

Alaskan Observers, Inc. (AOI) provides observers to the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program. AOI is currently recruiting observers to enter training in early June 2002.

Description of Work:

The vessels operating in this fishery range in size from 35 feet to 100 feet. Observers will sample on a variety of gear types, including trawl, longline, pot, and shrimp trawl. Trips will generally be one to five days in length. The project offers observers the opportunity to work twelve-month or longer contracts (as opposed to the typical three-month contract in the North Pacific). Observers can expect to be sampling at sea approximately 15 to 20 days per month, gathering fishing effort and location information, sampling for species composition, and collecting biological data from both prohibited and target species. Observers can also expect to work 5 to 7 days per month on shoreside tasks which will include making dock rounds, entering and editing data, debriefing, performing safety reviews, and contacting vessels to be observed.

How would you rate your contractor in their ability to help you with any problems that you experienced, including problems with logistics and travel, as well as any problems with observer harassment or concerns that you may have had about vessel safety?

	AOI	DCI	NWO	SWI	TSI
% Excellent	28	33	27	17	20
% Good	50	50	35	52	80
% Acceptable	20	13	27	29	0
% Marginal	1	4	8	2	0
% Poor	1	0	3	0	0
Total # of Responses	119	24	37	139	5

Contract Information:

Contracts for observers in the June, 2002 training will be approximately four months in length.

Location of Work:

Following training, observers will be required to relocate to a home port in Washington, Oregon, or California for the duration of their contracts.

Compensation:

The compensation package will be a combination of a base salary, which observers will receive regardless of how many days in a month they are deployed to vessels, plus additional pay for at-sea days. Basic medical insurance will also be provided. In addition to the compensation outlined below, observers will receive up to \$350.00 for relocation expenses, will be reimbursed for meal expenses incurred during travel to and from deployments, and will be compensated for mileage driven during deployment related travel (observers must provide their own automobiles).

General compensation information:

All Washington and Oregon ports and Eureka, CA: Base salary = \$2058.42 per month; total compensation (based on average of 17.5 deployed days per month) = \$3301.62 per month.

Fort Bragg south to Monterey, CA: Base salary = \$2255.50 per month; total compensation (based on average of 17.5 deployed days per month) = \$3617.70 per month.

Morro Bay, CA and south: Base salary = \$2198.83 per month; total compensation (based on average of 17.5 deployed days per month) = \$3526.03 per month.

Qualifications:

Qualifications include a Bachelor's degree in the biological sciences, and at least 30 days of prior experience at sea as a fishery observer.

For more info, please call David Edick or Pam Gale at AOI's Seattle office (1-800-483-7310 or 206-283-7310).

MRAG Americas Seeks Fishery Biologist

MRAG Americas, Inc., a small consulting firm in Tampa, Florida, seeks an experienced quantitative Fishery Biologist to work on fish habitat issues for environmental impact statement (EIS) projects. MRAG Americas will offer a one-year contract, possibly renewable, to the successful candidate. Employment would begin as soon as possible.

Responsibilities

The successful candidate will have a variety of responsibilities depending on the range on current contracts. Initially, the candidate will assemble information regarding fish utilization of habitat by life stages, where information is available, and help develop ecologically-justifiable groupings of species without adequate information, for which known species will serve as proxies. The successful candidate will help analyze environmental consequences and cumulative effects on fish

habitats of a series of proposed alternative actions.

Qualifications

The ideal candidate will have research experience with utilization of habitats in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea by various fish life history stages. Predator-prey relationships are an important component of the habitat utilization. The candidate should have the ability to formulate concepts, conduct analyses in data-poor environments, and write clear and concise reports. The successful candidate should have a recent Ph.D., be near completion of a Ph.D., or have a Masters degree with several years of experience. Salary and benefits will be commensurate with experience and qualifications.

MRAG Americas, Inc., a U.S. subsidiary of the Marine Resources Assessment Group (MRAG Ltd), is a unique and highly motivated group of specialists dedicated to the promotion of sustainable utilization of aquatic resources. MRAG's long and productive history has involved designing and implementing integrated resource management systems in marine, estuarine, riverine and floodplain environments. Founded in 1986, and a leader in this field, MRAG's core staff includes more than 25 full time specialists with a wide variety of expertise and practical and technical experience. MRAG has worked successfully in more than 60 countries for government and international agencies, international and regional fishery commissions, non-governmental organizations, and private sector companies.

For further information, please contact Ms. Heidi Lovett, Projects Manager, 813-639-9519; or by email, heidilovett@compuserve.com

The Alaska SeaLife Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to marine research, rehabilitation, and public education is seeking applications for the following:

Research Education Coordinator

This position is responsible for serving as liaison between the research and education departments and working with staff to develop new programs, courses, and outreach products for the science program at the Alaska SeaLife Center. Responsibilities include working with researchers to gather information and prepare text and graphics for newsletters, interpretive posters, web site, exhibits, and other outreach materials; developing and presenting educational materials based on current research; assisting with organizing symposia and conferences; and coordinating and assisting with interpretive training.

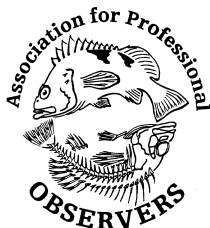
Requirements include: Bachelor's degree in a natural science, education, or related field, master's degree preferred; and experience in interpretation of research to a variety of audiences, a background in field and/or laboratory research in biology or marine science, and experience in teaching, curriculum development, or other aspects of marine science education. Skill in written and verbal communication, experience giving public presentations and/or working with various age groups in

an educational setting, ability to understand and interpret research in progress and general marine science topics or concepts, and ability to work independently. Experience with Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access.

This is a regular, full-time position with benefits, salary DOE. Applications must be received by Friday, April 12, 2002. Apply at Seward Job Service or send Alaska SeaLife Center application (downloadable at www.alaskasealife.org) and resume, including references, to Yvette Welsh, Human Resources Officer, Alaska SeaLife Center, PO Box 1329, Seward, AK 99664-1329, fax 907.224.6320, or email yvette_welsh@alaskasealife.org. The ASLC is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

MISC. NOTES & TIDBITS

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



APO T-SHIRTS are available. Size options: L or XL. Color options: Black, Teal, but others can be ordered. The price is \$15 (sales tax included).

WEBSITES OF INTEREST:

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

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

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

ObserverNet (Dave Wagenheim's site):
<http://www.observernet.org/>

Alaska Fisheries Science Center Species ID images website:
<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/images.htm>

Links to other observer program websites:
<http://www.pond.net/~pcffa/obs.htm>
<http://www.habitatmedia.org/>

THINGS TO DO (if you're a Fishhead):

ComFish, Alaska's largest commercial fisheries trade show, will be held on the island of Kodiak at the U.S. Coast Guard Integrated Support Command from April 4-6. The ComFish 2002 Show marks its 24th year by hosting national and international exhibits showcasing the industry and providing cost effective solutions for a changing marketplace. The 2002 show will feature more than 115 booths and provide attendees with a broad range of products and services. For more information visit <http://www.comfish.org>, or contact the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce at (907) 486-5557.

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

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

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

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Essential Fish Habitat Committee
Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Building 9
7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA
March 25-27, 2002

North Pacific Fishery Management Council:

Anchorage, AK, April 10-17, 2002

<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/>



Observer Advisory Committee Meeting:

Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Building

97600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA

July 18-19, 2002

Association for Professional Observers:

Seattle, WA, March 27, 2002, 6:30 pm at Dante's Grog & Restaurant, 5300 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle

(206) 235-347 or apo_obs@hotmail.com

<http://www.apo-observers.org>

05/02	1-day	Seattle
05/10	1-day	Anchorage
05/13 – 05/31	3-week	Anchorage
05/17	1-day	Anchorage
05/20 – 05/23	4-day	Anchorage
05/24	1-day	Seattle
05/28 – 05/31	4-day	Seattle
05/28 – 05/31	Level 2	Anchorage
05/31	1-day	Anchorage
06/03 – 06/21	3-week	Anchorage and Seattle

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



BRIEFING & TRAINING SCHEDULE

03/25 – 03/28	Level 2	Anchorage
03/25 – 04/12	3-week	Anchorage
03/29	1-day	Anchorage
04/08 – 04/11	4-day	Seattle
04/12	1-day	Seattle
04/15 – 04/18	Level 2	Anchorage
04/19	1-day	Anchorage
04/22 – 04/25	4-day	Anchorage
04/26	1-day	Anchorage

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

Volunteers needed--talk to Kim or Irene. We're always looking for extra help with letter writing/editing, insurance research, grant writing, database The **SUBMISSION DEADLINE** for the next issue is **June 1, 2002**.

The APO continues to be interested in your ideas - if you have an idea for an article or story, would like to respond to a previous article, or think the APO has overlooked some issues, drop us a letter or call any time. Contributions from all sectors are welcome. Thanks to Tracey Mayhew, Matthew LaCroix, Suzanne Romain, Shari Coleman, James Orr, Vicki Cornish, Duke Bryan, Jonathan Cusick, Janell Majewski, John LaFargue, Jim Benante, Kristen Moynihan, Amy Van Atten, Liz Mitchell, Kelly Van Wormer, Gillian Stoker and Kimberly Rand for your articles/comments, your prompt answers to questions, requests for information in electric format, and/or your editing contribution. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. (KD, ID)