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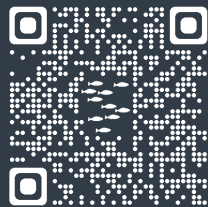
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Richard W. Spinrad
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere

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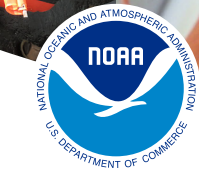


<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/about/fisheries-monitoring-and-analysis>

North Pacific Observer Program

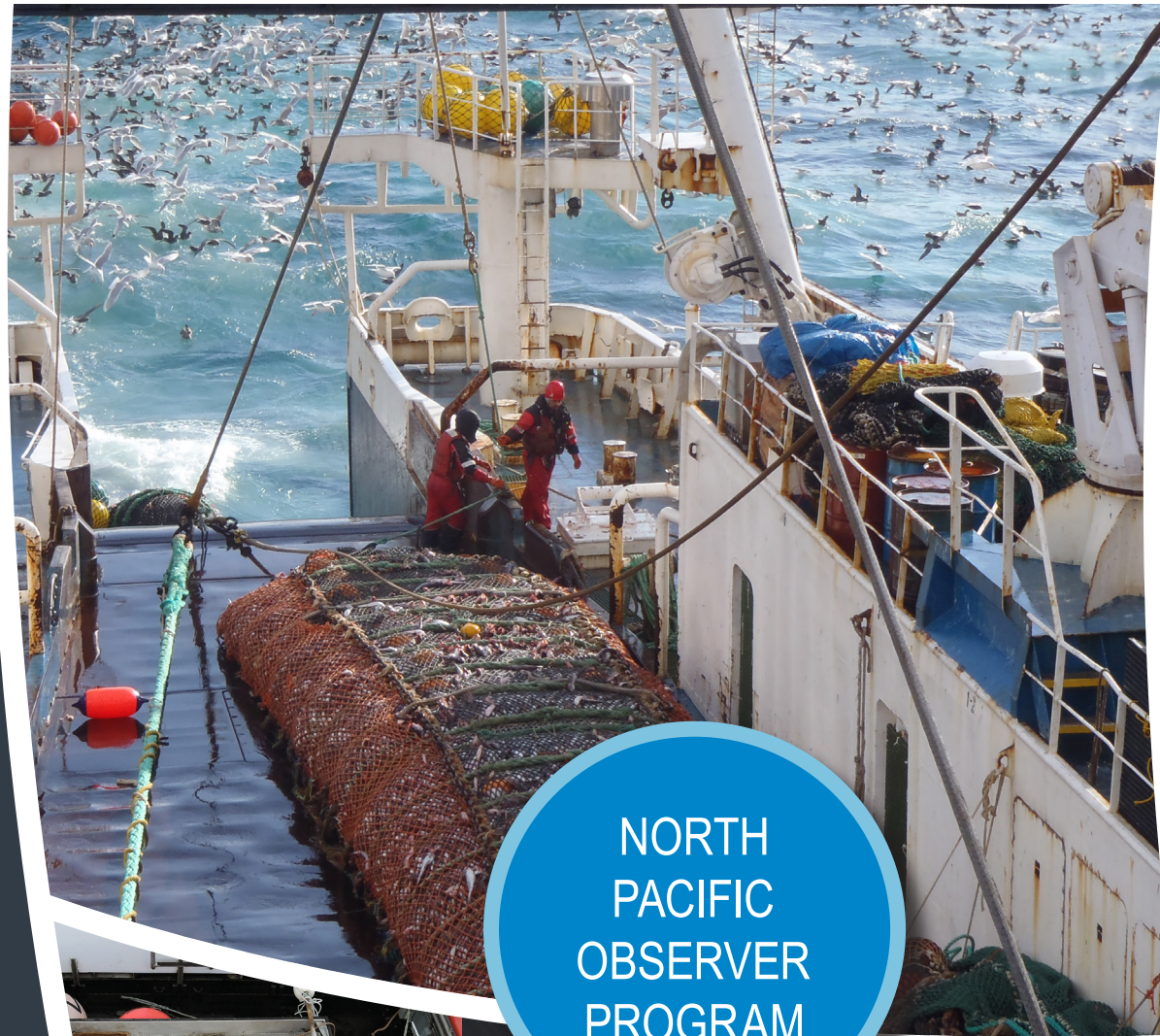
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Alaska Fisheries Science Center
Fisheries Monitoring and
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Healthy Stocks Mean Healthy Fisheries

To help ensure productive harvests now and in the future, scientists study the life history, population size and ecology of fish inhabiting US waters. Fisheries observers aboard commercial fishing vessels and at shore-side processing plants collect information that assist in these studies.

The Observer Program collects and provides fishery data to support management of the marine resources of Alaska. These data are critical for long term stock assessment.

Fishermen contribute valuable experience and insight to fisheries management. A cooperative effort between scientists, the fishing industry, and fisheries managers is needed to provide complete, sound, and unbiased data about our fisheries resources.



Observers and Fishermen Working Together

The North Pacific Observer Program (Observer Program) is the foundation of the Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. From foreign fishing vessels to domestic fishers and processors, observers have worked year round to ensure healthy fish stocks since 1973.



Electronic Technologies in Alaska

NOAA Fisheries and our partners are exploring how technologies like electronic reporting (ER), electronic monitoring (EM), and other tools that can help meet the ever-increasing need to improve the timeliness, accuracy, and cost-effectiveness of collecting and processing fishery-dependent data. In Alaska, electronic technologies are used to collect data for compliance monitoring and in-season management.



Fishermen Benefit from Observer and Monitoring Programs

Accurate data on fisheries and protected species populations are in the best interests of both fisheries managers and fishermen.

Without the information collected by observers, the size of fish populations may be under or over estimated, leading to premature fishery closures or overfishing, potentially harming fishing communities. Together, scientists and fisheries managers use the fishery-dependent data to assess fish stocks, evaluate marine mammal interactions with fishing gear, characterize fishing impacts on habitat, and provide data for fisheries and ecosystem research and fishing fleet behavior.

With cooperation from industry, good data collection programs can lead to healthier fish populations and sustainable fisheries. Good data can also lead to fewer restrictions and stronger fishing communities.



What Does an Observer Do?

Fisheries observers are trained biological samplers, not enforcement agents. However, they do report what they see on board and monitor compliance with federal fisheries regulations.

While the types of information an observer collects can vary depending on the fishery being observed, the general list of data observers often collect includes:

- Fishing effort, location, gear type and delivery information;
- Composition, size, sex, and weight for catch and bycatch;
- Biological samples, age structures, stomach contents;
- Incidental takes of crab, Pacific salmon, halibut, herring, marine mammals, and seabirds;
- Interactions with marine mammals and seabirds.

This information is valuable to understanding fisheries bycatch, and cannot be obtained through any other means.

What are the Responsibilities of a Fishing Vessel Owner/Operator?

When a vessel carries an observer, the vessel owner, captain and crew share some responsibilities:

- Prevent interference with the observer's data collection and harassment of the observer;
- Provide the observer with a vessel safety orientation;
- Provide access to all parts of the vessel, provide a safe working area for the observer, and provide space for the observer's equipment;
- Share requested data such as vessel locations, logbooks, and sample station and video monitoring certification letters;
- Notify the observer when fishing gear is being retrieved;
- Provide food and a bunk for the observer;
- Comply with coverage requirements and pay observer costs. Observers are trained to not obstruct fishing operations.

Meeting these responsibilities will ensure everyone's safety and will allow the observer to collect the most accurate data possible.