



NOAA's National Marine
Fisheries Service
(NOAA Fisheries Service)

Office of Science and
Technology

U.S. Fisheries Observer Programs



All federal fisheries observer programs are authorized by one or more of the following federal mandates:

Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA)

The MSA requires Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for all U.S. fisheries in federal waters and provides regional fisheries management councils with the authority to require observer coverage as part of an FMP.

Observer programs support the MSA by:

- ✓ Ensuring that bycatch is controlled while meeting FMP rebuilding targets by providing data necessary to monitor fisheries regulations, such as total allowable catch levels
- ✓ Collecting data used by NOAA Fisheries' to monitor fishery performance and complete stock assessments

Fisheries monitored under the MSRA include:

New England Groundfish, North Pacific Groundfish, and Northwest Groundfish

Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)

The MMPA authorizes placing observers on board vessels engaged in commercial fishing operations that incidentally take marine mammals.

Observer programs support the MMPA by:

- ✓ Monitoring fisheries for interactions with marine mammals
- ✓ Providing data used in developing Federal Take Reduction Plans

Fisheries monitored under the MMPA include:

Kodiak Set-Gillnet (AK) and California/Oregon Pelagic Drift Gillnet, Mid-Atlantic Gillnet

The Endangered Species Act (ESA)

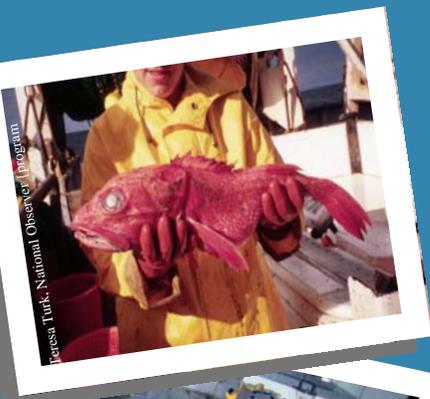
Although there are no direct ESA requirements to monitor fisheries using observers, observer programs and observer data are often a component of ESA evaluation and monitoring processes.

Observer Programs support the ESA by:

- ✓ Collecting information on the performance of bycatch reduction devices
- ✓ Monitoring fisheries for interactions with endangered and threatened species

Fisheries Monitored under the ESA include:

North Carolina Pound-Gillnet, Mid-Atlantic Scallop Dredge, and Hawaii-Based Pelagic Longline



Since 1972, NOAA Fisheries Service has deployed fishery observers to collect catch and bycatch data from foreign and U.S. commercial fishing and processing vessels operating in the U.S. EEZ and on the high seas.



How many federal observer programs are there?

The National Observer Program supports the activities of 10 regional programs, which observe a total of 42 fisheries:

Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program

Northeast Fisheries Observer Program

Pacific Islands Regional Observer Program

Shark Bottom Longline Observer Program

Southeast Pelagic Longline Observer Program

Southeast Shark Driftnet Observer Program

Southeast Shrimp Trawl Observer Program

Southwest Observer Program

West Coast Groundfish Observer Program



Southeast Fisheries Science Center



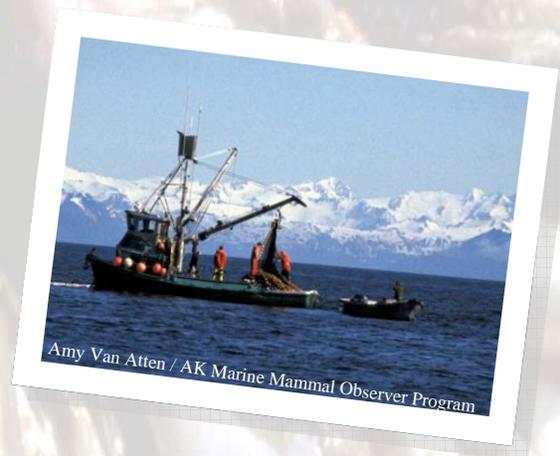
Southwest Regional Office

The National Observer Program

The National Observer Program's mission is to provide a formalized mechanism for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) to address observer program issues of national importance and to develop policies and procedures to ensure that federal observer programs are fully supported.

The National Observer Program was established in March 1999 and is based in NOAA Fisheries Service's Office of Science and Technology in Silver Spring, MD. The objectives of the National Observer Program are to:

- ✓ Develop and support national standards and policies to create high quality, cost effective, efficient, and productive observer programs;
- ✓ Characterize and quantify the activities and resources of NOAA Fisheries' observer programs and advocate for full support;
- ✓ Communicate and advocate the mission of the National Observer Program and each regional observer program;
- ✓ Coordinate the National Observer Program Advisory Team.



Amy Van Atten / AK Marine Mammal Observer Program

For more information on the National Observer Program, contact us at:

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