

June: Dave Rennekamp (N33):

Dave Rennekamp was originally NEFOP trained in July 2015, and then later clam dredge certified in April 2016. He is an exceptionally professional and dedicated observer who consistently exceeds expectations through his work on deck and his paperwork. In recent months, he has performed as a stand out observer in the newly covered Clam Dredge fishery. Dave is likeable, genuine, and has had good interactions both on the boats and in house.

July: Carol Zemina (L09):

Carol was certified as an ASM in 2011, and gained IFS certification in 2012. Carol has been with the program for over 5 years, and has been a consistently solid observer for her tenure. She typically takes long scallop trips, many over 300 hauls, and they come back with very few formatting errors and blanks. Carol is great at communicating between trips and always calls her editor before heading out on a longer trip. She's consistent with her SVP requirements and is a pleasure to talk with. Carol uses her Marel scale on nearly all of her trips and gets actual weights for the majority of the catch. After being with the program for five years, she's earned this recognition for all her hard work!

August: Mike Radziszewski (M48):

Mike is a NEFOP observer homeported in Point Judith and has been reliable and hardworking since his December 2013 class. He is certified in HVF, ASM, Pot/Trap, and Clam Dredge, and has excelled at all of them. Even when not going on a gear type or fishery for a while, he still does a great job with gear characteristics and adapting his catch estimation to the vessel and crew with each trip. In July, Mike was the first observer since 2008 to observe a deep sea red crab trip. Only 6 have been observed from 2004-2008. Mike continues to have a good work ethic and great attitude, and attended the 8th International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference.

2016 Sea Day Schedule for SBRM

On June 23, 2016, NMFS published the final 2016 sea day schedule for our Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM). This year NMFS was able to fully fund the SBRM monitoring program (i.e., NEFOP sea day schedule) and the remaining funds will be used to offset some of industry's costs of the groundfish At-Sea Monitoring program. Any sector trip beginning on or after July 1 will be eligible for reimbursement of 85% of a sector's ASM or electronic monitoring (EM) cost. NMFS has worked with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to implement a reimbursement program.

NMFS anticipates that the available federal funding for offsetting industry's At-Sea Monitoring costs will not be enough to cover all of the industry's costs in fishing year 2016. Sectors and providers must still maintain the private At-Sea Monitoring contracts to meet the monitoring requirements in 2016 and future years. NMFS has worked with sectors and the providers to ensure an equitable reimbursement program administered by the ASMFC. Reimbursing each sector for a portion of its At-Sea Monitoring costs will maintain the infrastructure necessary for industry funding of at-sea monitoring.

NMFS considered using the available funding to increase coverage in other high interest fisheries, specifically the herring and mackerel fisheries. The New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, as well as environmental groups, have been interested in increasing observer coverage for the gears used in these fisheries (mid water trawl and small-mesh bottom trawl). However, because SBRM is fully funded in 2016, these gears will already have substantial increases in observer coverage through SBRM compared to 2015.

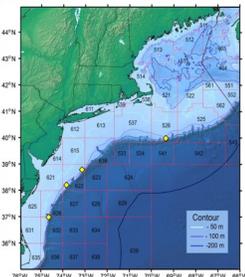
NMFS also considered using the remaining funding to help to fully fund the SBRM program for the 2017 fishing year. However, it is likely that there will be some carryover of unused observer sea days next year, so the potential benefit of saving this year's funding is unknown. Therefore, it was determined that the concrete benefits to assisting industry in funding their ASM costs this year outweighed the unknown benefit of using the funds to support SBRM next year.

Something fishy... Less common fish species seen by observers like you!

Highfin scorpionfish, *Pontinus rathbuni* (Scorpaenidae):

Overall red-orange color with darker spots along the lateral line and diffusely scattered on the body. Roof of mouth and throat yellow (may be faint). Pectoral, soft dorsal, and caudal fin with brownish bands of close set spots. Fleshy projections (cirri) located above the rear of each eye (typically not noticed, as they lay flat along top of head). Spiny dorsal fin with 3rd spine the longest but 2nd spine typically about 2/3rds as long. Dorsal spines with fleshy tabs at tips (easily damaged). On both sides of head, a bone just above mouth (lachrymal bone) has two spines that point horizontally backwards. Maximum total length to around 25 cm. Found in the Western Atlantic from New Jersey south to Guyana, including the Gulf of Mexico, typically in depths from 73 to 266 m. Spines are probably venomous so caution should be used when handling.

(Code 6612, SCORPIONFISH, NK)



Congratulations!

Pot and Trap Fisheries, April 2015 – January 2016

Biological Data

American Lobster	
Month	Number sampled
April	4,363
May	8,266
June	15,150
July	20,229
August	29,631
September	17,660
October	19,393
November	17,724
December	7,281
January	5,856
Total	145,553

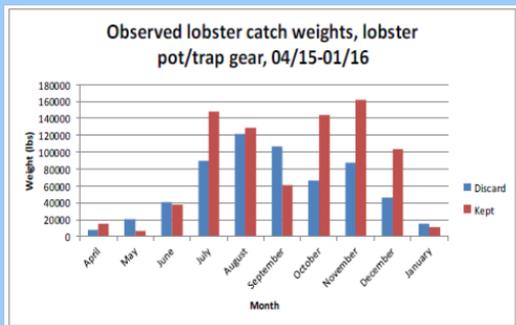
A total of 145,553 individual lobsters were sampled by observers on lobster pot/trap fishing trips between April 2015 to January 2016. August was the busiest month, followed by July and October. The fewest lobsters were measured in April, followed by January and December. Close to 30,000 Jonah Crabs were measured by observers during the same time period.

The busiest months for crab sampling were December, July, and November. The slowest months were September (2 records!), June, and August. Because the crab fishery is somewhat seasonal, there are several months with no sampled individuals.

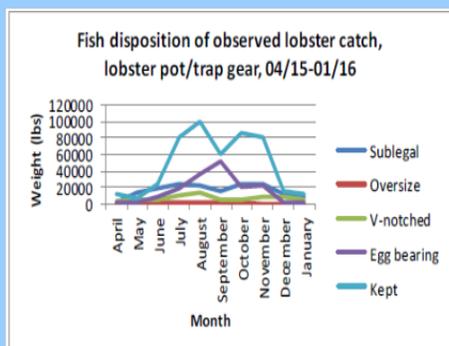
Jonah Crab	
Month	Number sampled
June	1,512
July	6,869
August	3,396
September	2
October	3,862
November	6,750
December	7,390
Total	29,781

Observed Lobster Catch

In the figure below, the catch weight is shown by month, broken into general kept and discarded categories. For most months, the observed kept lobster catch weight is greater than the observed discarded catch weight.



In the figure below the catch weight is charted for several fish disposition codes specific to lobster, in addition to kept lobster catch. Note the spike in observed catch of egg bearing lobster beginning in July through October and the corresponding dip in observed kept catch. Oversized lobster catch remains steady year round, while there is some variability in catch of v-notch and sublegal lobster during the year.



AOLA Tagging Study Summary

The Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association (AOLA) wrapped up a lobster tagging project in cooperation with the observer program, MRAG Americas, and New Hampshire Fish and Game. Several observers were trained to tag lobsters by NH Fish and Game staff, and completed a total of five tagging trips on offshore lobster vessels from July to October 2015. As many v-notched, egg-bearing, and oversized lobsters as possible were tagged by observers using equipment provided by AOLA and NH Fish and Game. A total of 2,611 tags were applied by observers during the course of the study.

Data from the tagged lobsters will be used to model movement, growth, and other factors for years to come. Lobster boats and observers have already reported a number of recaptured tagged lobsters. If you come across a tagged lobster, please release it with the tag intact and report tag number, date, location, and egg and v-notch presence to NEFOP via the IAL log. If the captain and crew prefers to retain the lobster and /or report the tag themselves that is fine.



Electronic Monitoring Progress in the Northeast

Electronic Monitoring (EM) has been tested in the northeast as a monitoring tool for the groundfish fishery for the past six years. Starting this year, select vessels will be able to use EM in lieu of at-sea monitors. In order to use EM, vessels must be part of an Exempted Fishery Permit (EFP) that is funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to further explore the use of EM. We anticipate a total of up to 20 groundfish vessels in the gillnet, longline, and trawl fisheries will participate. Participating boats will be required to modify their catch handling and will be responsible for recording regulated discarded groundfish on a haul basis. The data will then be used, in addition to EM video data, to determine discarded bycatch of regulated groundfish. This experimental program will test the feasibility of an EM program as an alternative to At-Sea Monitoring and will help develop some of the business practices required to support an operational EM program.

In addition, the Science Center and Regional Office are working cooperatively to conduct a study to use EM in the mid-water trawl Atlantic herring and mackerel fisheries. The Atlantic herring and mackerel mid-water trawl fisheries have limited discarding because the contents of the net are pumped directly into the hold of the vessel. Therefore, the operation of these fisheries lends itself to using EM to verify that all catch are retained and brought to port where catch is sampled under an existing dockside monitoring program. Starting this summer, up to 12 mid-water vessels will be equipped with EM with the goal of improving catch monitoring and accountability for the fleet. Information learned through this study will help inform the Councils, Industry Funded Omnibus Amendment, and NMFS in the approval and implementation processes, if EM is deemed suitable as a monitoring tool in this fleet.

Both fisheries will still be subject to NEFOP coverage, which means observers may need to modify how and where they work up their samples on deck. Keep an eye out for memos, presentations in training, and new on-deck reference guides which will provide more information about sampling strategies. Contact Glenn Chamberlain (608)-495-2153 for any catch handling questions and Nichole Rossi (508)-495-2128 for any project management questions.

Remembering A Great Fishermen, Luke Gurney

On June 20, 2016, as the F/V No Regrets sailed out of Vineyard Haven, no one could have known that this would be Luke's last voyage of living out his dream. On this beautiful sunny day, the contrast was unimaginable, as the devastating news spread of the tragic death of Captain Luke Gurney. Luke and his first mate were setting out conch pots in Nantucket Sound, when Luke got entangled in the lines and swept overboard. The mate worked tirelessly to come to Luke's aid and did all he could, but Luke lost his fight. His family and friends are broken and aching with sadness. You did not need to know Luke long to see that he had a kind heart, and a personality bigger than life itself. He had a knack for catching fish, that by all accounts was quite amazing. His New Bedford childhood neighbors said Luke was "the kid with his head screwed on right", always with a fishing pole in his hand. Friends remark on his infectious smile and good spirit, his head tilted back with a deep belly laugh. He had the energy and strength that lifted you up. Even at 48, Luke still had a boyish curiosity in what he caught, and he shared this interest and passion with his wife and sons. Although fishing was also his hobby, Luke made it his livelihood and along with that came the responsibility and pressure to harvest to support his family. Luke would welcome observers for the few conch pot days that we had on the seaday schedule. At holiday gatherings, when I would run into Luke, our conversations always included his latest oddities of catch, climate change, and ecosystem processes. Whatever genetics or rearing made Luke special, it still carries on, in his supportive parents, siblings, and sons who all have this same passionate energy for life, people, and the environment. It was a fitting and wonderful gift from Dr. Greg Skomal, to name the first tagged great white shark of the season, a massive 12 foot specimen, "Luke" in his honor. Luke would have just loved that! Truly a person who should have no regrets, but one who we regret losing. - Amy Martins



Scallop News

Attention IFS Observers:

The Scallop Plan Development Team and the Scallop Industry had concerns that marketable scallops were being discarded on open area trips as well as closed area trips. These activities may increase mortality rates on the scallop resource and are therefore a major concern for industry and managers. There has been some confusion regarding disposition codes used for discarded scallops. These codes are defined below and may be found in Appendix M of the Data Entry Manual.

*Remember to use the code that most represents the captain's intent, and to ask follow up questions if you are unsure about his/her initial explanation for discarding scallops.

002 – No Market, too small. As in, “Those scallops are being discarded because they are too small to make me much money at the market.”

063 - Not target size, and are being discarded due to trip quota in effect. (To be used on Limited Access Multi-day Access Area trips {046/208}, and General Category day trips {047/any}). As in, “Those scallops are big enough to keep, but we are discarding them because we are now catching larger ones that are better, and we are only allowed to keep a certain amount of scallops on this trip because of quota regulations.” This disposition code should be used to specifically track the occurrence of “high-grading” on boats, when large, marketable scallops may be left on deck and eventually discarded because the larger/best scallops are shucked first. Observers may see this situation occurring at some later point in a trip, where previously the vessel was keeping all scallops that were marketable, and all discards would have fallen under the “002” code. If at that later point, the captain instructs the crew to only shuck scallops over a certain size, the discards would then become “063” because only the largest, most lucrative sized scallops are being actively selected in order to fill the remainder of their quota. While this code can easily be confused with “002,” it is important to ask the captain clear questions about why they are discarding certain scallops.

064 - Vessel retaining only certain size for best price due to price difference. (To be used on Limited Access multi-day, open area trips {046/000}) There is no trip quota on these trips, but the vessel may elect to keep only those scallops that will fetch the largest price. Again, this disposition code was established to specifically track the occurrence of “high-grading” on boats, especially during the summer months when large, marketable scallops may be left on deck in the heat and eventually discarded because the larger/best ones are shucked first. Observers may see this situation occurring at some later point in a trip, where previously the vessel was keeping all scallops that were marketable, and all discards would have fallen under the “002” code. If at that later point, the captain instructs the crew to only shuck scallops over a certain size, the discards would then become “064” because they are actively selecting the largest, most lucrative species, over what they previously kept, in order to receive the best price.

If you have any questions regarding the use of these codes please contact us! We'd be happy to explain it in further detail!

Chad Keith -(508) 495-2067
Lacey Bluemel – (508) 495-2188
Tyler Staples – (508) 495-2129
VCIC Cell – (508) 560-3550

Industry Funded Scallop Observer Program Coverage

The 2016 scallop fishing year began on March 1, 2016. FSB was tasked with providing different coverage levels for the fleet across the different fishing areas and fleet types (Limited Access Multiday Trips or Limited Access General Category Day Trips.) Coverage rates are determined based on anticipated fishing effort modeled from the previous year's scallop populations and future scallop access area openings. The table below compares the target observer coverage rates we try to achieve, the actual assigned coverage rates, and the achieved observer coverage by fishing area and fleet type. Assigned coverage is the number of scallop trips selected for observer coverage divided by the total number of scallop trips fished. Achieved coverage is calculated by dividing the total number of scallop trips taken by the number of trips carrying an IFS observer.

Achieving each target coverage rate every month can be difficult because of cancellations, weather, seasonal fishing effort, and the number of available observers. When assigning vessels coverage we must select at a higher rate than the target level to account for cancelled or waived trips. Even still despite our best efforts, sometimes we don't meet our mark!

<u>AREA</u>	<u>FLEET ID</u>	<u>ASSIGNED COVERAGE</u>	<u>TARGET COVERAGE</u>	<u>ACHIEVED COVERAGE</u>
Mid-Atlantic Access Area	047 (LAGC)	16.6%	10%	12.5%
Mid-Atlantic Access Area	046 (LA)	50.0%	14%	3.2%
Open Area (Georges Bank or Mid-Atlantic)	047 (LAGC)	14.6%	10%	7.5%
Open Area (Georges Bank or Mid-Atlantic)	046 (LA)	39.4%	14%	7.1%
Nantucket Lightship Access Area	047 (LAGC)	58.9%	20%	9.7%

*All coverage rates were averaged over a three month period between March 1, 2016 and May 31, 2016.

Recent Outreach Events

In April, FSB attended the 2016 Commercial Marine Expo which was held at the State Pier in New Bedford, MA. The Expo draws in a large crowd every year, and organizers have made many improvements to bring the commercial fishing sector together prior to the start of the groundfish fishing year.

In May, FSB attended Ocean Fun Days in New Jersey. This was our third year at this event, and thousands of people attended on May 21st and 22nd. On the first day we traveled to Island Beach State Park in Seaside Park, a beautiful island barrier beach, where we shared tables with NMFS staff from Sandy Hook, and Cape May's Port Agent Josh O'Connor. (FYI, Port Agents are great resources for observers, and you may recognize them as contributors to the bi-monthly Fathoms reports sent to field staff. You can find contact information for your local Port Agent at: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sed/portagents/portagents.html> and also in your handy Regulatory Compliance folder!)

On Sunday, we were stationed outside the offices of the James J. Howard Marine Lab in Sandy Hook where we displayed observer gear and talked about the vast amounts of data collected by observers and how it is used. We met many recreational fishers and local residents that were happy to learn about our programs and our mission of science and stewardship of our ocean resources.



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Field Debriefings

FSB staff had the opportunity to meet with a number of Mid-Atlantic observers during field debriefings. We were able to go over protocol changes covered in the new program manuals, update electronics, check safety gear, and calibrate scales. It was an excellent opportunity for FSB staff to engage with a large number of Mid-Atlantic observers and discuss their questions and concerns, which can be quite different from their colleagues from New England. One observer even took the time to meet with the Coastal Ecology Branch Chief, Dr. Vince Guida, to discuss science and career opportunities.

Other Exciting Outreach Events That Happened This Summer:

- **Woods Hole Science Stroll (August 6th)**
- **Boston Seafood Festival on the Boston Fish Pier (August 7th)**
- **Viking Village Dock Tours in Barnegat Light, NJ (August 12th)**

Thanks for reading!

Please submit any stories, thoughts, or suggestions to:
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