



the Mail Buoy

A publication of the Association for Professional Observers
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NORTH PACIFIC COUNCIL NEWS

Dietrich Resigns from Advisory Panel (AP)
(excerpt from resignation letter to Chairman Benton)

It is with my deepest regret to have to inform you and the Council of my need to resign from the Advisory Panel (AP). I have enjoyed the opportunity to participate more than I could have imagined. However, my continued participation on the AP would be a great disservice to the Council, to observers and to the members of the public who supported my nomination. My obligation to graduate school has expanded beyond my initial prediction. I will continue participating in the Observer Advisory Committee process.

Although I cannot participate on the AP, I continue to believe observers are important stakeholders in the North Pacific system and have an important role to play in a well-balanced AP. I have recommended Tracey Mayhew as my replacement. I realize replacing an AP member is somewhat unconventional but hope the observer reputation doesn't suffer due to my inability to assess my personal situation.

Chairman Benton & the Council will determine whether a replacement is allowed at this week's Council meeting .

Observers Advisory Committee on March 23-24

The Observer Advisory Committee met to discuss a proposed 'no-cost' contract between NMFS and the contractors. Dan Ito, Task Leader for the Groundfish Observer Program presented a discussion paper and asked the OAC for commentary. The Discussion Paper is available from Dan Ito. For a copy of the full OAC minutes, see:

http://www.apo-observers.org/observer_report_March'01.pdf

NMFS-ALASKA REGION UPDATE

NOAA FISHERIES RELEASES ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERIES DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC EIS (From NMFS News Release 01-05-AKR)

A large-scale analysis of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries management plans is now available for public review and comment. Scientists with NOAA's

National Marine Fisheries Service examined the current groundfish fishery management regime, and evaluated effects of selected alternative management regimes on the physical, biological, and human environment to provide information on the environmental and economic impacts of the current fishery management regime, with comparison to several hypothetical regimes.

The range of issues examined includes the effects of the groundfish fisheries on marine mammals and seabirds, the effects of fishing gear on benthic habitat, excess fishing and processing capacity, and the effects of harvesting fish on the North Pacific marine ecosystem. Other notable issues include maintaining sustainable fisheries, reducing bycatch and waste, improving data gathering and enforcement of regulations, and providing economic stability for fishing communities.

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"With this large scale examination of our groundfish fishery management plans and their potential effects on the ecosystem," said Jim Balsiger, Alaska Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, "we have an excellent baseline for considering changes to management policy and potential management actions for groundfish fisheries off Alaska."

The analysis is of several programmatic policy alternatives, and include effects on the following: marine mammals, seabirds, target groundfish species, non-target groundfish species, prohibited species, essential fish habitat, social economics of the fishery, the marine ecosystem, and cumulative effects of the groundfish fisheries. Each of the alternatives is subject to four broad goals: (1) provide sound conservation of living marine resources, (2) provide socially and economically viable fisheries, (3) prevent human-caused threats to protected species, and (4) maintain a healthy living marine resource habitat.

The Draft Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (draft SEIS) for Alaska Groundfish Fisheries can be viewed at the NMFS Alaska region website at: www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/seis/intro.htm, or a Cd-rom version or printed copy can be obtained by calling Steve Davis at (907) 271-3523 or by sending an e-mail to steven.k.davis@noaa.gov. Public comments on the draft SEIS will be accepted January 26, 2001 through **June 25, 2001**. Send written comments to National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska

Regional Office, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau AK 99802 Attn: Lori Gravel, or fax to (907)586-7249 Attn: Lori Gravel.



NORTH PACIFIC OBSERVER PROGRAM UPDATE

Cadre Up & Running

As of December 2000, the Observer Cadre is officially up and running. Rob Swanson, Jennifer Watson, Russel Seither, Andrew Corcoran, and Brian Dixon are the first cadre members with more to follow subject to funding. All of the new cadre are prior observers. Congratulations! For more information see OTC Quarterly, Winter 2001, p.3.

Management Control Review Complete

Management Control Review of NMFS Observer Program/ Service Delivery Models has been released. Every federal observer program is included in the review. The MCR evaluates the internal controls associated with the following observer activities or "event cycles": staffing and recruitment; training; deployment and logistics; data collection; and debriefing, data

entry and editing. It focused on methods or service delivery models, that observer programs used in 1999 to provide and manage observer services: direct employment, contract to NMFS, NMFS-certified companies and resource funded third party agreement. The MCR also addressed 8 concerns or risks.

There are many recommendations in the MCR. The APO is looking for reviewers to brainstorm ways the APO can facilitate change and make further recommendations. Contact the APO for more information.

Get University Credit for Observing!

(submitted by Paula Cullenberg)

University of Alaska Fairbanks, School of Fisheries, approved observing as a practicum course a couple of years ago. The credit is for the work, not the training class so is open to all observers. It's called Fish 450: Practicum in Fisheries, Fisheries Observing, and carries 3 credits. Until recently, UAF charged full price for this - \$270. Due to low enrollment, UAF has lowered the price to \$30.

This is a pass/no pass course. Paula Cullenberg, OTC, is an affiliate faculty member of SFOS, and so has the faculty rank to sign off on the credit. This occurs after getting notice that debriefing went well. Credits at a 400 level are useful in starting a masters program, or in upgrading a resume (i.e. a couple of observers were using it to upgrade to a Fish Biol 1 with the state of AK). Any observer passing through Anchorage is welcome to come and register at the OTC. They can register at any time BEFORE observing (credit is not granted retroactively), and will receive the credit for whatever semester they complete their cruise in.

FISHERY OBSERVERS, RESEARCHERS AND GUESTS: STRATEGIES FOR THE SAFETY OF VISITORS ON BOARD written by Paula Cullenberg and summarize for MB by Matt Baron

Observing on commercial vessels in Alaskan waters, perhaps the most inhospitable in the world, raises an obvious concern – safety. In the last ten years, ending in 1999, 120 individuals died in commercial fishing related incidents in Alaska. The approximately 350 observers who spend over 35 000 days at sea annually are also at risk although not quite to the same extent as the essence of their work differs much from that of the fisherman's. As most observers are non-Alaskan residents lacking at-sea experience, a system has been implemented – partly by stakeholders in the observer programs in Alaska - to help ensure that the observer work environment is as safe as possible. The components of this system are prevention, emergency preparation, and protection in the event of an accident or injury. Training, vessel safety inspection, and insurance all help contribute to the hopeful achievement of the goals of this system. A recent study evaluated observer safety by assessing observer experiences revealed after the completion of their contracts. The analysis of 1065 Vessel Survey reports from the last quarter of 1998 through the first half of 1999 yielded the conclusion that a

National Observer Program UPDATE

NMFS National Observer Program Current Projects and Activities (February 2001)

large majority of observers experienced no safety problems or accidents. Approximately 82% of the surveys consulted revealed no observer safety problems, 10% had miscellaneous problems, while 8% had "other" problems. Of the 192 observers who reported miscellaneous safety problems fire (21%), loss of engine power (19%), loss of electricity (17%), and loss of steering (16%) were the main incidents listed in the survey followed by gas leaks (8%), cables parting (7%), flooding (5%) and man overboard (5%). "Other" problems or ones not listed on the survey included vessel icing, sanitation problems, sleeping at the wheel and unsafe sampling on the deck. Observer familiarity with safety equipment/procedures onboard was also assessed. Most observers knew how to access the vessel's liferaft capabilities (97%), its EPIRB (92%), Immersion Suits (96%), and fire extinguishers (98%). Crew provided orientations were fairly commonplace (83%) although the incidence of safety drills was low (28%).

In light of all of these results, recommendations were made in the study to help limit the potential for observer injuries or emergency situations brought about by the extensiveness of observer coverage, the high turnover rate of observers, and Alaska's harsh work environment. First of all, the observer program can work with the industry to improve sampling stations for all observers and not just for a few select fisheries by ensuring proper lighting, ample room in which to work, and correct table heights are priorities among other things. Secondly, ensure that the program's training puts more emphasis on pre-event activities to prevent such ailments as sleep deprivation and back injuries, as well as post-event activities. In addition, refresher safety classes for experienced observers to maintain a level of safety training could be implemented culminating in an annual or biannual "safety at sea" certificate. Observers could also be required to enter safety check documentation in their logbook to encourage them to check the Vessel Safety Decal indicating that the vessel is in compliance with Coast Guard regulations. Safety drill requirements could be better met by Coast Guard's monitoring of vessels' safety drill regimes. Finally, the status of the observer, as he or she cannot be currently legally considered a "seaman", precludes inexpensive insurance claims. However, a judicial or legislative determination could revamp the observer status resulting in the considerable savings for industry, as they must foot the insurance bill for observers.

For a copy of the full document, **Fishery Observers, Researchers And Guests: Strategies For The Safety Of Visitors On Board**, contact Paula Cullenberg, North Pacific Fisheries Observer Training Center, University of Alaska Anchorage, E-mail: anpjc@uaa.alaska.edu.

[Editor's Note: Paula Cullenberg presented this paper at the International Fishing Industry Safety and Health (IFISH) Conference held on October 23-25, 2000, in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, USA.]



Budget - One of the National Observer Program's highest priorities is to outline and advocate for the funds necessary to meet the agency's scientific data collection objectives. In this capacity, we are involved in preparing documents as they relate to three different fiscal year budget cycles all at once (e.g., we are working on FY01/02/03 budget cycles currently), and also options for industry cost-sharing of observer programs (more on this below). Most of these activities are directed internally (NMFS, NOAA, and DOC), but we also provide information on observer program funding requirements/requests to external groups as appropriate.

Train the Trainers Workshop - This workshop is intended to bring together observer trainers from all NMFS observer programs to facilitate distribution and sharing of resources, to improve teaching methods, and to develop national training standards, where appropriate. This was a recommendation from an internal Management Control Review and the recent St. John's observer program workshop. The plan is to have the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association tailor their Marine Safety Instructors course for the workshop; 3 days of sea survival training and 2 days on methods of instruction. Although safety will be the focus of the workshop, we are also exploring whether there will be sufficient time to cover training in observer health and mental stress issues. Workshop participation will be limited to active observer trainers from each NMFS region, plus 1-2 trainers from the OTC. The workshop is scheduled for March 12-17, 2001, at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle, WA.

Insurance Workshop - This workshop is intended to bring together specialists in the insurance and labor industry and representatives from all NMFS observer programs to facilitate a better understanding and application of insurance and labor laws and regulations. The plan is to have discussions over a 3 day period that cover a variety of topics, such as: defining terms used in the labor and insurance industry as they relate to observer programs; explanation of the need for various coverage; differentiating between coverage needs for land-based and sea-going protection; how to determine what are appropriate levels of coverage; and the feasibility of extending coverage to vessels that carry observers. Participants will also discuss the implications of seaman or non-seaman status determinations. With respect to insurance coverage, the focus will be on providing sufficient compensation to injured observers so that their quality of life is not drastically diminished. With respect to labor, the focus will be on how base salary, overtime, and other supplemental pay (i.e., hazard pay) are calculated under various labor laws. Workshop presenters will include representatives from NMFS regional programs, NOAA, DOC, and DOL General Counsels, insurance industry representatives, labor relation

specialists, and observers. The workshop will be open to participation by observer contractors, union representatives, and other interested parties, including the APO (official notice of the workshop will be forthcoming). The workshop is scheduled for June 12-14, 2001, at NMFS headquarters in Silver Spring, MD.

Contracting Workshop - The objective of this workshop is to bring together contracting specialists and representatives from all NMFS observer programs in order to develop contracting standards and improve contract management. The main focus of the workshop will be the preparation of contracts that are clear, concise, and comprehensive and that reflect the goals of better observer support, as offered in the Observer Bill of Rights drafted at the recent St. John's observer program workshop, and improved contractor performance. The plan is to have presentations and discussions over a 3 day period with the goal of developing templates for generic Statements of Work and Evaluation Criteria that can be used as a starting point for all regions. Workshop participants will include contracting specialists from the NOAA Eastern and Western Administrative Support Centers, Contracting Officer's Technical Representatives from each NMFS region, and other NMFS observer program staff who are involved in writing Statements of Work (SOW) or evaluating bids. Agenda items may include (but are not necessarily limited to): the contracting process; labor law considerations; insurance and compensation; work statement preparation; incorporating standards to improve observer support (salaries, benefits, retention rates); incorporating standards to enhance contractor performance; developing objective evaluation criteria; and effective contract administration. The schedule for this workshop is August 1-3, 2001, at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle, WA.

Development of Observer Hiring Standards - The National Observer Program is developing national minimum hiring standards for observers that can be utilized by all NMFS regions to ensure that candidates are academically and physically prepared to collect quality scientific data. The hiring standards for observers are still in a draft stage, yet are expected to address such areas as education, experience, training, physical conditioning, standards of conduct, competence in scientific data collection, EEO guidelines, and citizenship. Each region will then be able to refer to these standards and expand on them as necessary to meet their unique situations.

Economic Feasibility Analysis of Industry Cost Share Arrangements - The National Observer Program is interested in identifying key indicators for determining if and when different fisheries can support or partially fund observer programs. Currently, we are working with NMFS economists to inventory existing sources of socioeconomic data and the extent to which these data have been used to reveal profitability profiles in various fisheries. This information will contribute to determining the feasibility of various cost share options. NMFS is also investigating whether certain regional observer program can be used as a vehicle for the collection of socioeconomic data in certain fisheries.

Electronic observers - The National Observer Program is interested in emerging technologies that can be used to supplement observer coverage by electronic means, such as video cameras, digital scanners, and vessel monitoring systems. A main focus is how to integrate the data collected from these technologies with traditional observer data. Although we have no specific projects underway, we are keeping an eye on recent developments.

Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act - Both of these acts are up for reauthorization in 2001 and amendments may impact how NMFS observer programs are executed. Key areas that we are focusing on are the authorization for NMFS to collect fees to fund observer programs and the status of observers for insurance and compensation purposes.

Sampling Design and Data Collection Protocols - We are actively inventorying the sampling designs/approaches that have been developed in various observer programs, both within NMFS and externally. Our objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of various general methodologies and use this evaluation to provide guidance in future program developments and observer placements.

Third Biennial Observer Program Workshop - In cooperation with the Canada Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans, the National Observer Program has the lead in organizing the next observer program workshop. As recommended by the St. John's workshop participants, we are expanding the scope of the next workshop to include more international participation. The National Observer Program has developed a survey for gathering comments on past workshops and to provide suggestions for the format and agenda of the next workshop. The authority to collect this information is being pursued via a Paperwork Reduction Act Federal Register notice (published Jan. 17, 2001); expected distribution date for the survey is this summer. In the interim, we are planning the venue and dates for the workshop. The fall of 2001 seems most likely, and the top venue du jour is New Orleans, LA, although we are also looking at Honolulu, HI, Tampa, FL, and Monterey, CA.

Implementation of the Management Control Review recommendations - The Management Control Review was a comprehensive document that described all of NMFS observer programs and tested management controls currently in place in each. Although the majority of the recommendations focused on regional observer program operations, there were several team-wide recommendations that were tasked to the National Observer Program for immediate implementation. Some of these are covered by the projects outlined above, others are in various stages of implementation.

Observer Support - Many of the projects outlined above have elements which should directly enhance observers' "quality of life" and recognition as professionals. The National Observer Program is especially interested in pursuing a national accreditation program for observers.

Outreach - This is an ongoing priority for the National Observer Program and is directed both internally, towards NMFS and NOAA leadership, and externally, towards Congress, constituents, observers and observer groups, observer contractors, fishermen and the fishing industry, the environmental community, other state/federal agencies, international observer programs, and the general public. Externally directed activities includes expanding the National Observer Program website, developing brochures and informational materials, participating in fishery trade shows and U.S. and international conferences, preparing Congressional briefings and testimony, attending Regional fishery management and protected species meetings and events, etc. We are also exploring ways to encourage external groups to take advantage of opportunities to get involved and provide feedback on observer program issues, such as the insurance workshop discussed above.

For more information about the National Observer Program and NMFS' regional observer programs, visit the website at <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/nop/>, or e-mail us at st1nop@www.st.nmfs.gov.

Victoria Cornish, National Observer Program, NMFS Office of Science and Technology, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, (301) 713-2328.

CONGRESS HEARS FROM FISHERIES ON MAGNUSON-STEVENS REAUTHORIZATION

On Wednesday, April 4, 2001, Bill Hogarth, Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, testified before the House Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans. The Subcommittee held its first in what is anticipated to be a series of hearings on the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Act and the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. A copy of Dr. Hogarth's testimony will be posted on NOAA Fisheries web at: www.nmfs.noaa.gov



APO ACTIVITY UPDATE

The APO weekly group discussions continued through the fall but have not occurred this winter. We would like to restructure them so that they are more action/goal oriented. Ideally, each meeting would have a focus and specific set of questions/topics. If you're interested in organizing one of these discussions or if you have ideas, please let us know. A schedule will be posted via email and at NMFS soon.

The APO has been asked to participate in an Insurance workshop sponsored by the National Observer Program.

The NOP will facilitate discussions on the applications of insurance and labor laws and regulations over a 3-day period, **June 12-14, 2001, in Silver Spring, Maryland.** Topics of discussion will include:

- defining insurance and labor terms as they relate to observer programs,
- explaining the various types of liability and compensation coverage,
- differentiating between coverage needs for land-based protection and seagoing protection,
- the definitions of seamen and non-seamen as they apply to observers under various insurance and labor laws,
- applicability of the Service Contract Act to contracted observers,
- understanding the roles of base salary, overtime, and other supplemental pay (i.e., hazard pay) calculated under various labor laws for the purpose of insurance compensation,
- providing sufficient compensation to injured observers so that their quality of life is not drastically diminished,
- defining the roles of the insurance agent, underwriter and claims handler,
- determining the feasibility of extending professional liability coverage to uninsured vessels that carry observers.

APO Joins/Withdraws from the AON (kd)

The APO joined the Alaska Oceans Network (AON) late last year. The AON is a voluntary association of fishing groups, Alaska Native organizations, conservation groups, and fishery Observers working together to restore and maintain healthy marine ecosystems in Alaska. Network activities are designed to sustain marine biodiversity, cultural and traditional food needs of Alaska Native peoples, and community-based sustainable fisheries.

The Network is an experimental collaborative effort seeking to utilize the fullest extent of the expertise of diverse groups that share a mutual concern about the deterioration of Alaska's marine environment.

For more information on the AON visit: www.alaskaoceans.org

Due to some important issues brought up by the industry as well as NMFS, the APO has now withdrawn from the Steering Committee of the AON. While the APO agrees with the fundamental goals of the AON (i.e. long term sustainability of fisheries and healthy oceans), it was NEVER our intent to compromise observer integrity or data quality. The APO was founded on the need for increased professionalism to foster a sense of responsibility and a sense of community among observers. Observers, not only in Alaska, but around the nation, tend to fall between the cracks when it comes to adequate support. To maintain quality people in an observer program (or in any employment situation), the employees need to know they will be backed up.

Probably the most serious problem with our involvement with the AON is the perception that observers will be biased and hence collect biased data. This perception, whether real or not, doesn't serve anyone involved--not industry, not the NMFS and not the environmental community. The whole premise of having observers for any extractive industry is to have an objective, neutral party collecting objective, neutral data.

We remain hopeful though. The APO would like to continue a dialog regarding data and data quality and how the AON can work toward achieving one of its objectives of a strong observer program. We are still open to sharing of knowledge with others regardless of their affiliation or which side of the line they think they fall on but in the future, this relationship will have to be less formal.

SEIS COMMENTS: The APO is committed to get its members mobilized for comment on the SEIS. Please contact the APO if you're interested in submitting written comments or at least copy us on comments you do submit.

ALASKA FISHERMAN'S UNION NEWS

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

Alaska Fishermen's Division-UIW
721 Sesame St., #1C
Anchorage, AK 99503
Ph: 907-561-4988
Toll free: 1-877-471-3425
Email: dukeworks2@aol.com

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

As new versions of the contract are negotiated and forwarded to the APO, they'll be converted to PDF format and re-posted.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES REGARDING NEGOTIATIONS (Survey designed by Mel Kahn & summarized by Larry Tardeweather)

On October 12, 2000, the APO posted (on their web page) a checklist of negotiating priorities for observers to provide input to the union electronically and in a somewhat consistent format. The main items of interest for negotiations were pay for waiting periods (i.e. non-deployed time), a health plan, and increased wages. Other items of significantly less interest were elimination of contract loopholes, pay period issues and better communication.

Personal comments were mostly concerned with financial issues including retirement, expense reporting and more per diem. In my opinion, it is noteworthy that a former field coordinator (and observer) feels that safety is of primary importance.

There were 30 responders to the electronic survey. Most responses were received within the first 2 weeks. Observers were asked to choose their top 5 issues out of a list of 10. A summary of responses is as follows:

- More money! – 21 responses
- A "Real" health plan – 22 responses
- Retirement/pension plan – 6 responses
- Better living conditions at sea – 4 responses
- Pay for ALL waiting time – 23 responses
- Change of pay period (every 2 weeks) – 12 responses
- Better communications while at sea – 13 responses
- Safety – 6 responses
- Contract loopholes – 12 responses
- More pay grades – 0 responses
-

HAWAII UPDATE

Noaa Fisheries To Open Tuna Fishery - Federal Judge Modifies Injunction On Pelagic Longline Tuna Fishery In The Pacific (from FishNews April 3, 2001)

Last week in a new court order, Judge David Ezra of the United States District Court for the District of Hawaii, modified his injunction of August 2000 to allow Hawaii-based longline fishermen targeting tuna to fish in accordance with NOAA Fisheries' Environmental Impact Statement. According to the court, the injunction as now modified, strikes a "careful balance between the preservation of endangered species, in this case several species of sea turtles, while minimizing to the greatest extent possible the economic impact upon the fishing industry." This action follows successful agency completion of a National Environmental Policy Act analysis within an accelerated time frame required by the court. For more information, please contact Steve Leathery at (301) 713-2341. Note - The ban on longline fishing for swordfish by the Hawaii fleet remains in place north of the Equator.

Updates on the Hawaii Longline Observer Program by Liz Mitchell

In August 2000, U.S. Justice David Ezra issued a court order to increase observer coverage of the Hawaii longline fleet due to insufficient monitoring of the fleet's interactions with protected species. Since the early 1990's a NMFS administered federal observer program has been in place to monitor these fisheries. However, there had been numerous situations in the federal observer program where NMFS had placed observers in unsafe situations over the last several years, so NMFS should have been aware of potential conflicts that could arise with the required increase in coverage. As a result of concerns over safety and

other serious issues Federal observers voted to unionized but had been unable to reach a negotiated agreement with NMFS. During this negotiation process the federal union had filed several unfair labor practices against NMFS.

When Judge Ezra's ruling was handed down, the Association for Professional Observers (APO) became concerned when it appeared that the agency was switching to the contract system. Instead of having federal observers, the fisheries would be observed by observers contracted out by a private observer provider. In a letter to the director of NMFS, dated 7 September, the APO asked if NMFS would be, "...transferring over the responsibility of observer safety and other observer program responsibilities to a private for-profit business. This has the potential to further erode, not only observers' rights and safety, but the integrity of the program." NMFS rolled the current federal observers into staff positions, but in essence, busted the federal union. This action gave the appearance that NMFS may have chosen to contract out observer services to further remove themselves from any liability towards their observers.

Although NMFS has over 10 year's experience with contracting observer services through private for-profit companies, NMFS did not require observer service providers to provide housing or other critical elements necessary for a sound observer program. The first class for the contracted Hawaii Longline Observer Program began 12 December 2000 after Saltwater, Inc. was awarded the contract in early November. Within the first week of arrival in Hawaii, observers overwhelmingly (18 of 20 observers) voted to unionize because of misrepresentations about the contract from Saltwater, Inc. The terms of observer employment were changed once observers arrived in Honolulu and many observers were left without lodging. When Lono Kane, Inland Boatman's Union (IBU) representative, approached Saltwater, Inc. with the observers' vote to unionize and asked Saltwater, Inc. to voluntarily recognize the observers as a bargaining unit, Saltwater, Inc. refused. As training class continued, observers were left without housing and one observer stayed in a homeless shelter. Prior to arriving in Hawaii, observers were supposed to have a signed contract in hand. However, Saltwater did not provide them with a contract prior to traveling to Hawaii for training and many observers had conflicting interpretations of the contract terms. Observers had invested their money for travel and accommodations in good faith and then were "convinced" to sign the contract with promises that observers "who turned in their paperwork and contracts first would go out (be deployed) first". Contracts were signed "under protest" because observers had little resources for housing and had no time to contact a lawyer to secure their rights.

Why HI observers should unionize

When conflicts arose between Saltwater, Inc. and observers in the December class, Don Petersen, the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) said there was nothing he could do. This was reiterated by the Contracting Officer, Judy Jzyk, in a letter to APO the day after Christmas: "The first thing you need to realize is that the observers under this program are

not Government personnel. They are the contractor's employees and as such the Government can not take responsibility for them." Observers under the contract system find themselves in the unique position of being employed by a for-profit business, having this business be "responsible for providing a safe work environment" for them, being professionally responsible to the government and having none of the protection and benefits of a government employee. The plight of the Hawaii observers is similar to those in the NPGOP observers who were forced to unionize because there were no other protections afforded them. Observers unionized in Alaska to address high turnover rates and data quality issues that plagued the program due to inadequate financial support and overall program support.

How did this happen?

Although there was plenty of warning that service provider contracts need to be more specific and include ways for a contractor to retain experienced observers, NMFS did not include these considerations when selecting a contractor. Instead, NMFS went the standard contracting route that provides little consideration for the safety, well-being, and adequate payment to observers giving the impression that their sole purpose was to fill the court order with "warm bodies". Many interested parties wondered on what criteria NMFS chose Saltwater, since they had an inconsistent track record in the Alaska shellfish and North Pacific groundfish observer program. The conflicts that arose with the December class may have been avoided had NMFS' Source Evaluation Board conducted an adequate background check on the contractor they chose, as specifically required in the NMFS Request for Proposals (RFP). In section M.C.3, NMFS is required to examine past business practices on "the most recent four (4) contracts where similar work was performed.." The former Contracting Officer, Donald Wadhams, was proved past NMFS performance evaluations and summaries of observer surveys conducted by NMFS when the APO first became aware that Saltwater was bidding for the contract back in early September. When asked later the following month if they checked with the NPGOP, he said they were not required to do this, since Saltwater technically didn't have a contract with the NPGOP. Not only was NMFS provided relevant information, it appears they ignored their own requirement to check. The RFP further states, "It should be noted that the Government may use past performance obtained from **any available reliable source.**" NMFS NPGOP's evaluations should fall into this category as well as the 1998 and 1999 NMFS mandated observer surveys of their contractors' performance.

The NMFS NPGOP has ten years of performance history for this contractor. In 1997, the NPGOP gave Saltwater, Inc. a poor grading on hiring biases, possible conflict of interest, high rates of observer decertification, not informing NMFS of potential safety problems and inadequate accommodations aboard the vessel, among other problems. Observers themselves rated Saltwater harshly in 1998 and 1999 vessel surveys.

It's hard to imagine what NMFS officials were thinking when they awarded the contract bid to Saltwater, Inc. NMFS was

aware that their actions were being closely scrutinized and had received several letters of concern regarding the direction of this program from APO as early as mid-July when APO first became aware of the court order to increase coverage. Certain groups within NMFS were aware of the contractor's shortcomings in advance of their award decision and yet they still disregarded their own contracting rules.

Current situation in Hawaii

Observers did not go on strike. A new contract was drawn up with the second group of observers that afforded a reasonable housing situation (\$12.50/day), though there was no pay between vessel assignments. Observers voted the first week to unionize amongst themselves. The NLRB required a hearing to be held between parties (Inland Boatman's Union and Saltwater) to determine the eligibility of observers right to unionize under the Federal Labor Relations Act. Saltwater requested delays to present their "evidence". The hearing was held in January and more delays were requested by Saltwater for the final decision. On February 22, the NLRB sided with Saltwater, denying the observers' petition to unionize. Since the IBU represents observers as a group, observers are not allowed to protest this decision. Only the IBU and Saltwater are considered parties to the agreements. In both cases the decisions directly affect observer conditions. Below are the reasons presented by Saltwater to the NLRB on reasons why observers should be denied the right to unionize.

1. "...the temporary nature of the work of the observers" (*All observer work is temporary to a certain extent.*)
2. "the imminent closure of the fishery" (*This shouldn't preclude the existing observers from exercising their employment rights for even one day of employment.*)
3. "the imminence of a ruling by the U.S. District Court..regarding the fishery." (*Ditto number two. Also, fisheries are always under scrutiny and under potential threat of closure if managers find it necessary to do so.*)
4. "...observers are guards within the meaning of the [Federal Labor Relations] Act. [which would bar them from unionizing]" (*Observers are not guards. They don't hold badges or guns, nor do they have the right to alter any aspect of a fishing operation or exercise any authority whatsoever. Also, the observers in HI are no different than the observers in AK.*)
5. "...the Employer is acting as an instrumentality and agent of the Federal Government in employing the observers and that any bargaining would be severely restricted due to the pervasive Federal control of wages, hours, work duties and funding. (*Federal control of wages? The federal government holds no responsibility toward contracted observer wages. Even if they did, the only restrictions they could have enforced would be to keep Saltwater from hiring below federal standards. Work duties and hours are under federal control but observers have never asked to change this. Observers were only asking for a similar*

contract to the one in the North Pacific program, which includes pay, housing and food stipend in between trips while they are on standby unable to take other work. When I telephoned Saltwater to apply, I was told that I would get paid the same regardless of whether or not I was on a boat. This is completely contrary to what actually occurred.)

As it stands, Saltwater remains on stand-by. The old observers are likely to move on and there will again be employment opportunities with this contractor to hire a whole new batch of new, unsuspecting observers when the fishery reopens sometime in late May or June. Saltwater's contract is up for renewal in December of this year. If observers decide to go the route of unionizing to protect the rights of themselves and of future observers, it will be interesting to see what "evidence" Saltwater will present to avoid these unionization efforts. If observers in Alaska can do it, Hawaii observers should be able to do it! Imagine the power of an observer union that shared previous court decisions about observer rights to unionize in Alaska with other observer programs and unions in the country. Let's start talking!

[Editor's Note: The APO highly advises all observers in ANY program to have a signed contract in hand before traveling to training, briefing or a deployment station.]



OP-ED

OBSERVERS IN PARADISE

Have you heard the one about the contractor who asks a group of prior observers to write a letters of recommendation for them to get a government contract? This takes place a week or two before the observers travel to "Paradise" to train for an expanded federal observer program.

Well, the prior observers arrive in Paradise (along with a larger group of new observers), and the majority of them suddenly find out that things aren't exactly the way they were led to believe:

Observer # 3: "Hmmm! That's not what they told me, what did they tell you?"

Observer # 9: "Hmmm! That's not what they told me, what did they tell you?"

Observer # 14: "Hey, How come we're here in Paradise, but there's still no contract for us to look at?"

Adding insult to injury, (the small group of prior observers had done the contractor a favor by recommending them.) - the contractor proceeds with several renditions of what in my opinion amounts to "Lie, Steal and Cheat" the observers. Observers don't need food, a place to stay, or money, not to mention things like truth and details, right?!

Too late, the observers are trapped in Paradise, at Christmas, when Paradise is even more expensive than usual.

But wait, - the observers wise up fast, and refuse to sign the contract (or contracts) shoved in front of them. All Hell breaks loose! The observers threaten to (*Horror*) – Unionize!

Yikes! This wasn't in the contractor's/government's original game plan!!! What a creative idea! (The contractor must have thought originally) - We'll go over there, and in essence, the suckers (oops, observers) – will basically finance our new venture in Paradise - *because we're not paying them, ha, ha - at least for as long as we can put that off!*

Great joke! Huh? An observer takes rain gear out to sea to protect them from rain and slime, ear plugs to protect them from loud engine noise, a survival suit to protect them from the boat sinking. But how does an observer protect himself or herself - from a contractor? Through the government?

Bsszzttt! Wrong answer! If observers have to get through training without being paid (or anything else), - then maybe certain contractors should be required to pass a basic ethics course and/or lie detector test before doing business.

No, for protection from a contractor, an observer needs a Union or their own personal lawyer. The difference is - a Union covers everyone in the Union!

(Editor's note: Some of the problems that initially haunted this contract (like timely payment) have been resolved but others are still unsatisfactory to many prior observers.

Regarding NMFS' responsibility in dealing with observer/contractor disputes, the NOAA Contracting Officer for the HI contract said the following: "The first thing you need to realize it that the observers under this program are not Government personnel. They are the contractor's employees and as such the Government can not take responsibility for them."

The observer who submitted this piece wishes to remain anonymous due to fear of repercussion from the employer.)

Letter To the Editor:

With dismay I have witnessed a transition of the contents published the Mail Buoy a Publication of the Association for Professional Observers. The Mail Buoy has gone from "APO for Observers" to "APO for Politics and Demagogy". I still recall when an Observer or a former Observer wrote every single article published in the Mail Buoy. The Mail Buoy was a forum of self-expression...it was a conduit for an individual Observer to communicate with other Observers and/or to share experiences or points of view with the rest the Observer Community.

The section "Letters to the editor" by far have been always my favorite and more captivating section of the Mail Buoy...It represents an opportunity to know if what happened to a fellow Observer was good or bad or if anything happened at all. I find very hard to believe that only three people per issue (or ONE in

the last Mail buoy) have written letters to the editors. In reality I believe that more political motivated articles have replaced Observers opinions and/or points of view. Quite frankly I don't believe that most Observers read most of the Mail Buoy articles, most of the information published in the Mail Buoy can be found in the NPFMC and NMFS WebPages anyway. Understandably, the APO directors must be striving to make good impressions with the "Big Wigs" of the fisheries community. At some point the APO will need to be able to obtain grants from them, maybe the APO will become a sort of mini-council that will represent the interest of NMFS and the Fishing Industry. We were APO low in resources but very effective and I believe that we can still obtain support from diverse organizations (Environmental and Human and Civil Rights Organizations as well a for example) without steering away from our main Objective: Observers First.

What ever happened to the aggressive but caring lady that wrote, "is like a slap in the face [from the NMFS]" in a Mail Buoy article titled "Do the crime deserve the punishment"? She may be long gone...but her memory still live in my heart.

Quite obviously I don't expect the editors of the Mail Buoy to publish this letter; believe me when I tell you that I did my best to write it with CONSTRUCTIVE criticism only. However, I would like to ask the Mail Buoy Editors to please take a step back and look at the big picture. Long experience has shown me that because we are Observers the NMFS Observer Program will NEVER listen to us alone. Please, let us go back to our roots. Let's make the Association for Professional Observers represent the Observers once again.

Sincerely
Felix Canez,
A certified and a very "Active" Observer

PS At the heart of the first amendment is the recognition of the fundamental importance of the free flow of ideas. Freedom to speak one's mind is not only an aspect of individual liberty but essential to the quest for the truth and the vitality of society as a whole. In the world of debate about public affairs many of the things that are with motives that are less than admirable are nevertheless protected by the first amendment. Justice Rhenquist, United States Supreme Court

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The APO also maintains an informal electronic mail list for jobs. If you want to be added to the list or know of any jobs observers may have an interested in, contact kdiet@aa.net.

List of Dredge Observer Contractors (researched and submitted by Duncan Newberry):

Gregg Gitschlag, NMFS, Galveston Laboratory
4700 Avenue U, Galveston, TX 77550

409-766-3517
Fax: 409-766-3508
Gregg.Gitschlag@noaa.gov

Christopher Slay, President Coastwise Consulting
(Environmental Consultants - Land, Sea, Air)
173 Virginia Avenue, Athens, GA 30601
706-543-6859
cslay@att.net

A.I.S. Inc., (P.O.C. Arv Poshkus)
19 Camden Street, P.O. Box 421
Stoughton, MA 02072-0421
800-230-8032
Fax: 781-297-7669
ARVIDAS1@juno.com

Dr. James Richardson
Institute of Ecology University of Georgia
Room 103, Ecology Building, Athens, GA 30602
706-542-2968
Fax: 706-542-6040
rainforestry@earthlink.net

R. Eric Martin, Ecological Associates, Inc.
P.O. Box 405, Jensen Beach, FL 34958
561-334-3729, Fax: 561-334-4925
eai@gate.net

Richard Alboth, Tiny's Marine Environmental Services
7 Rogers Street, Randolph, MA 02368
Cellular: 321-431-6502
tinysvc@aol.com

Mary Jo Barkaszi, Director Ecological Programs
ECOES, Inc.
7341 Glenwood Road, Cocoa, FL 32927
321 635-8477
Fax: 321-635-8449
maryjo@eco.es.com
www.ecoes.com

Trish Bargo, REMSA, Inc.
2829A Jefferson Ave., Suite 108
Newport News, VA 23608
757-833-7160
Fax: 757-833-7213
Cellular: 757-286-2070
jglass@remsa.remsainc.com

Andrea N. Balla-Holden, Marine & Marine Life Consulting
5988 SE Kelsey Court, Port Orchard, WA 98367
360-769-5934
Fax: 360-769-4195
Cellular: 206-295-3990
MarineMarineLife@aol.com

MISC. NOTES & TIDBITS

NEW MEMBERSHIP: if you want to become a member of the APO, please write, email or call Kim Dietrich. An annual donation of \$10 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).



The Digital Observer by Matt Barron

An ever-changing observer program may take a quantum leap into the future in the form of a digital observer, but not for a couple of years. Mark Buckley, a "longtime commercial fisherman and fisheries writer," is currently spearheading a grant-funded effort to create a technological alternative to the status quo, one that could appeal to longline fishermen frustrated by such problems as high coverage costs and increasing labor shortages.

Although the digital observer (DO) remains years from achieving reality, as there are technical and political hurdles to jump, one aspect of it has been in use in Canada since 1991. Archipelago Marine Research based in British Columbia already leases a strictly regulatory system, endorsed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, to members of the Sablefish coalition. However, the DO in Canada does not collect biological data or document bycatch. The technology required to complete these tasks is available, according to Mr. Buckley, but its full potential and the means by which it can be tapped are still in need of further investigation and experimentation. The research team having been granted \$400 000 by the Alaska Technology Foundation and a branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Since May of 2000, they have been testing software and hardware systems which could result in such a digital observer in Kodiak.

I attended the NMFS Brown Bag Lunch seminar, held on Halloween, to hear Mr. Buckley's presentation on how he proposes to overcome certain glaring problems in order to create a functional, reliable "smart machine." I also went to hear why he feels that a digital observer is of any benefit to the fishermen to whom he hopes to sell it, and to the observer program itself. Most important, however, is the question of whether or not it will uphold the agency's mandate to ensure high data quality.

Everyone in attendance, including NMFS officials, debriefers, and observers alike, seemed equally interested in hearing what he had to say.

The digital observer is a two-system animal. The first - virtually identical to that used for regulatory purposes in western Canada - includes a video camera mounted on the vessel's mast and overlooks activity on the deck. The camera is endowed with a wide-angled lens and, along with a GPS unit and a VCR, are housed and protected from the elements in sturdy, tamperproof boxes. Snapshots are taken every ten seconds and the time, date and location designated on the screen. Time-lapse photography supposedly renders the fishermen relatively anonymous as the fishing activity is sped up 300 times. Theoretically, this results in a lessening of the "Big Brother" aspect of observing, blurring the all-seeing eye slightly to maintain a semblance of privacy while ensuring it sees what is deemed necessary by NMFS (or respective agency) for the interests of fishery management.

The 2nd system has yet to be fully worked out even theoretically. The team, however, isn't navigating by dead reckoning either. In order to conduct normal observer duties, namely species composition sampling and taking sexed-lengths of target fish, identification success will be obligatory. A fairly recent software application called Neural Net has potential as it "can detect commonalities among objects over time if it is first shown many variations of the objects." The team has recently tested a setup involving a digital camera, perched above the rollerstation, which will take 5 pictures of the hooked fish on the chute as they are individually retrieved, of which the best will be selected for identifying. Five images will be taken for each fish in order to compensate for the fact that the fish will be flopping and twitching and not necessarily laying flat on the chute. Neural Net or a program similar to it will analyze the chosen image to determine the species of a given fish and if a given fish cannot be recognized then the picture will be saved to disk for later examination by a NMFS biologist. All data will be transmitted by the vessel's communication system to NMFS in Seattle on a timely basis. All in all, the system has flashes of potential, yet, as most researchers know all too well, a gargantuan gap lies between potential and success.

After Mr. Buckley finished his presentation arms in the audience shot up. Addressed were certain potential pitfalls of the DO and questions were fielded with an honesty and straightforwardness not lost on the audience. First was the question of the system's survivability in the face of Alaska's notorious winter conditions. Buckley maintains that both of the DO's components are weatherproof but a means of heating the system will be needed in the winter. How the digital observer will account for drop-offs was another question. The team has proposed to capitalize on current inexpensive sonar or laser technology to detect dropoffs; the sonar or laser may be positioned directly below the roller, perhaps underwater, so that it can sense and account for fish as they fall or sink. Yet another question: Will five images be enough to identify fish flopping and jerking on the hook? Apparently, an identification success rate of roughly 90% has been achieved during recent experiments in Kodiak using the

proposed setup, the DO is currently able to identify six species. The rate dropped during extremely overcast days as a result of the camera eye's difficulty in separating the fish from the poorly illuminated chute onto which it is landed. This problem has been overcome by adding a fiberglass insert.

The question of identification success may prove the sticking point in the "selling" of the DO to NMFS as it depends on the agency's criteria for success. Assuming that the Neural Net will be able to identify around 90% of a given vessel's retrieved fish - is that really enough? Would its implementation set two standards for the program, one for humans and one for computers? After all, the system would not be mandatory for all longline fishermen, leaving them free to choose which option meets their needs. Additionally, what about seabirds, specifically the Short-tailed Albatross? Could a computer conceivably recognize a tangle of matted feathers on a hook? Mr. Buckley isn't sure. If seabirds cannot be identified, even if the images are sent to NMFS analysts, could the project still go forth? Might this test the agency's resolve to act in accordance with the stipulations of Endangered Species Act, or at the very, very worst result in another Zilly ruling by which NMFS is forced to either shut down the fishery until it proves not having the means to identify the short-tailed albatross and other endangered species is justified, or scrap the DO altogether and go back to regular observers?

Personally, I hope none of these hypothetical possibilities come to pass. I think, in theory at least, the digital observer could be beneficial to the program and, by extension, a benefit to fisheries management. For instance, data could be more uniformly collected thereby rendering the data more statistically sound and consequently, more legally defensible. If the program's standards are not compromised too significantly, the smart machine could not only prove a valuable management tool but a friend of his human counterpart. If I understand correctly, the DO will be in operation 100% of the time. While an observer would be deployed only a fraction of that time. The observer will be free to conduct what many priors call "real" biological duties. Special projects may no longer be special and, perhaps, marine mammal and seabird duties could be extended or intensified. The question of equitable distribution of management costs remains, however.

Of course, the system would foremost benefit fishermen. Buckley cites a drop in observer coverage costs for those in British Columbia using the regulatory-DO from \$10 000 Can to \$2 000 for a 30-day trip. In addition, observer availability would presumably no longer be an issue, and the federal presence on vessels minimized. Mr. Buckley has run into difficulty convincing potential DO users that the latter advantage is indeed legitimate as most feel that the option is not unlike a surveillance camera perched in the corner of a bank peering for violators of the law. However, after pointing out the theory that the system utilizes time-lapse photography, he has met with less hesitation and has found some fishermen willing to try it once it becomes operational. Fishermen might also hedge at the proposed mandate to head back to port if the computer fails, but is this really so

different than halting fishing momentarily because of a chronically seasick observer?

The actualization of the digital observer and its eventual implementation seem much more plausible in light of Mark Buckley's openness and willingness to accept criticism and feedback. He has proven wise in bearing such latitude given the political climate of the observer program, the technical obstacles inherent in mechanizing such a dynamic process as biological sampling and bycatch documentation, and the glacial nature of legislation, especially when it pertains to the politically - charged fisheries. Current research projects include further experimentation with fish ID software and hardware systems while the creation and testing of a "dropoff sensor" remains an up-and-coming project. Ultimately, success will rest on the digital observer's ability to collect data of a quality comparable to that of its human counterpart. Only time will tell if the currency of potential can translate into such success.

[NOTE: Thanks to Steve Barbeau at the NP Observer Program, Mark Buckley's Presentation "Digital Observer Project" is on the Observer Program Web Page. The entire presentation is now in Streaming video and should be accessible at any speed connection. The entire presentation is 51 minutes long. The quality of the presentation will depend on your connection speed. The link to the presentation page is: <http://161.55.80.8:8080/ramgen/refn/observer/digiobs.rm> The 2000 Report can be found at: http://www.apo-observers.org/DigitalObs_2000.pdf

ADF&G has created a web page for information on Steller sea lion issues, including meeting minutes and other products of two state-sponsored committees, the Stakeholder Committee and the Alaska Steller Sea Lion Restoration Team (ASSLRT). The site is: http://www.state.ak.us/adfg/geninfo/special/ssl/ssl_com.htm

This site includes related correspondence, reports, and links associated with Steller sea lion issues as they relate to commercial fisheries in Alaska.

Book's of interest:

The Last Great Sea: A Voyage through the Human and Natural History of the North Pacific Ocean by Terry Glavin

Of all the world's oceans, the North Pacific has held the greatest mystery. It was the last place on the planet to find its way onto European charts, and it is commonly perceived to have been empty of people and civilizations until relatively recently. Today the mystery continues as salmon fail to return to their natal streams, huge drifts of dead pilchards provide feasts for seals and sea lions, and the bizarre-looking lancetfish shows up where it doesn't belong. What is happening?

In this compelling journey around the North Pacific Ocean, Terry Glavin takes us to the world's earliest fishing villages, where people lived according to rigid customary laws; developed a taste for fish eggs, sea urchins, and seaweed; and enjoyed an elaborate economic and ritualized

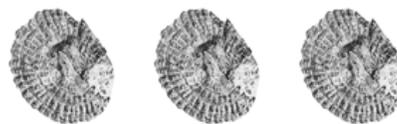
relationship with salmon. As we drift through time, from one side of the ocean to the other, we see the salmon return from their Ice Age refugia to create a relationship with the coastal forests that is unique on earth, providing food for many animals, such as bears, mink, weasels, and gulls, and nutrients for the great forests of North Pacific.

We also float through the imaginary North Pacific Ocean, where centuries ago Asian mariners may or may not have crossed the sea, Russian voyagers searched for a lost colony of their countrymen in Alaska, and European explorers looked in vain for the fabled Northwest Passage. We wander through the industrial sea of the fur trade, whaling, and the cannery culture, and we witness the devastation of high-seas driftnetting, the extirpation of whales and sea otters and sea lions, and the collapse of numerous fish populations. The voyage ends on the ocean of today, where dramatic changes are taking place and the old ways of thinking are collapsing, but where hope most certainly resides.

Purchase information is available from the publisher: <http://www.indigo.ca/cgi-bin/bookrec.cgi?bn=1550548093#top>

The Great Gulf: Fishermen, Scientists, and the Struggle to Revive the World's Greatest Fishery by David Dobbs, Shearwater Books/Island Press, 2000

In the late 1980s, the fishery that had sustained New England coastal communities for nearly 500 years began to collapse from overfishing and poor management. In the face of this crisis, the fishermen and scientists who know this ocean best have become locked in a strange, bitter conflict over how to count the fish that remain. The gulf of distrust between them, which hauntingly echoes deeper discords in our culture, threatens to destroy any chance at recovering our nation's first bounty.



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/test/st1/nop/index.html>

NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation Launches New Web Page Featuring Essential Fish Habitat

NOAA Fisheries' Office of Habitat Conservation recently launched a new web page featuring extensive background information on the Essential Fish Habitat provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and implementation of the EFH requirements by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and regional Fishery

Management Councils. The EFH site may be accessed through the EFH link on the Office of Habitat Conservation's web site:
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/index.html>.

NOAA Fisheries Website Offers Research and Literature About Effects of Fishing Gear on Fish Habitat (Alaska Region) NOAA Fisheries, through the Alaska Fisheries Science Center Auke Bay Laboratory, recently published a new website that highlights the variety of studies underway to help fisheries managers better understand fish habitat and the effects of fishing gear on both habitat and fish. The site includes a searchable literature database that provides easy access to an extensive body of scientific and popular literature on the effects of mobile fishing gear. The site also provides early access to new information from ongoing research activities related to fishing gear effects and fish habitat studies. The page is available at:
<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/abl/MarFish/geareffects.htm>.

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

Observer data being used....

Witherell, David and Cathy Coon. 2000. Protecting Gorgonian Corals off Alaska from Fishing Impacts. The paper is available on the North Pacific Council website and is being submitted for a special volume of the Proceedings of the Nova Scotian Institute of Science. It was presented as a poster at the First International Symposium on Deep Sea Corals, July 30 - August 2, 2000.]

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

- 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.fish.washington.edu/people/arnima/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
- Invasion Ecology Seminar. Talks will take place on Mondays, at 4 pm in Hitchcock 132 (UW). A schedule of the talks can be found at <http://depts.washington.edu/botweb/invecol.htm>
- **Symposium on Deep-sea Fisheries** that is to be held in Havana, Cuba between 12 and 14 September 2001 in conjunction with the NAFO 23rd Annual Meeting. The

meeting is sponsored by NAFO, ICES and CSIRO and the co-convenors are J.A. Moore (NAFO-USA), J.D.M. Gordon (ICES UK) and T. Koslow (CSIRO - Australia). The first announcement can be found below or at the NAFO website (www.nafo.ca - look under 'upcoming events').

- **Fish Briefs** is a "plain language" summary of the latest scientific papers about fish with a focus on their interactions with habitat. It is distributed every three months by American Oceans Campaign and is peer reviewed by a volunteer scientific panel to ensure that the scientific results are not lost in the translation.

Fish Briefs is an experiment in translation of technical research papers for those who are trying to apply the information. Our audience includes fishermen, fishery managers, scientists, conservationists, government officials and others.

American Oceans Campaign is a national environmental organization dedicated to safeguarding the vitality of the oceans and our coastal waters. AOC is committed to scientific information in advocating for sound public policy. We are equally committed to developing partnerships with all entities interested in protecting the environment.

You can view Fish Briefs on the Web by visiting www.americanoseans.org/fish/fb.htm

- "Saving Our Seas" Is Theme of Ocean Forums

A series of three ocean forums in March, April, and May brings together prominent speakers on ocean issues under the theme of "Saving Our Seas." The forums are presented by Friends of Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation, and the California Sea Grant Foundation; they are hosted by Julie Packard, executive director of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and facilitated by Dr. Brock Bernstein, president of the National Fisheries Conservation Center. All three take place at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, with the following themes and featured speakers:

April 18 Back to the Future: True Tales of Past Abundance. Reviews historical accounts of the abundance of ocean species, and "builds a case for replenishing the ocean's bounty." Speakers include: Dr. Milton Love, University of California, Santa Barbara; Dr. James Estes, University of California, Santa Cruz and U.S. Geological Survey; and Jim Lichatowich, Fishery Biologist and author of *Salmon Without Rivers*.

May 2 New Approaches for the New Millennium. In which leading ocean thinkers interpret both the strengths and limitations of new ocean conservation tools, and describe what it will take to save our seas for future generations. Speakers include: Dr. Rosamond Naylor, Stanford University; Dr. Callum Roberts, University of York; and Dr.

Daniel Pauly, University of British Columbia. For Further Information: For reservations call Friends of Moss Landing Marine Labs, Tel: (831) 633-6565. For program information: <http://www.mlml.calstate.edu/friends/friends.htm> or www.montereybayaquarium.org

Contact: Lisa Uttal, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories. Tel: (831) 631-4418. E-mail: luttal@mlml.calstate.edu.

Ichthyology: The Biology of Fish Kodiak Island Field School
With Dr. Gilbert Bane, University of Alaska Anchorage

Distance: April 16th-May 5th, 2001
Kodiak: May 7th-25th, 2001

BIO A423 301, 4 credits

Cost:

- Tuition + \$65 Special fees
- Optional Housing available for \$300.
- Ferry to Kodiak \$49 each way

This Ichthyology Field School offers the unique opportunity to study the biology of fish in Kodiak, the largest fishing port in the United States with Dr. Gilbert Bane. After 3 weeks of internet based distance education, April 16th-May 5th, 2001, students will assemble at Kodiak for three weeks of intensive laboratory and field experiences, May 7th-25th, 2001.

Students will visit fish processing plants, research laboratories and go on short sea trips to gain first hand information on fisheries research and management. Students will learn major fishery themes and issues as they closely observe on-going fisheries related projects at Kodiak research laboratories. There will be multiple opportunities to do hands on research and study.

Housing will be in dormitories of St. Herman's theological Seminary. The Seminary is conveniently located to the school, has separate bedrooms and bathrooms, and a large shared kitchen. Costs for the field portion of the trip will be kept to a minimum by sharing rides, meal preparation and duties. Students will carpool to the Homer ferry terminal together and ferry to Kodiak Island on the day before and back again after the course on May 26th.

For more information contact Professor Bane, Kodiak College, at (907) 486-1222 or gbane@kodiak.alaska.edu or go www.uaa.alaska.edu/summer.

UAA Summer Sessions

3211 Providence Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99508
(907) 786-6740
(907) 786-6749 fax
Summer@uaa.alaska.edu

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OTC 907-257-2770
NPFMC (Council) 907-271-2809
Chris Oliver Chris.Oliver@noaa.gov

UPCOMING MEETINGS

April 9 --North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/>

April 16-20 -- "George Wright Society Biennial Conference on Research and Resource Management in Parks and on Public Lands." Denver, Colorado, USA. Conference will focus on parks and protected areas, including themes that deal directly with marine protection issues. Web: www.georgewright.org/2001.html.

April 24-27-- "1st International Congress on Marine Science and Technology." Pontevedra, Spain. The theme of this conference is "Oceanology and Human Development Between the Coastline and the Continental Margin." Web: www.fomar.org/.

May 14-15 -- "1st Workshop on Integrated Coastal Zone Management." Santiago de Cuba, Cuba. Co-sponsored by a team of Cuban and Canadian government agencies and academic institutions. Official languages will be English, French, and Spanish. E-mail: vallejo@mercadu.uo.edu.cu.

May 21-24 -- The 52nd International Tuna Conference, sponsored annually by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, will be held at the University of California's Lake Arrowhead Conference Center in Lake Arrowhead, Ca. The conference is an international meeting of persons with scientific or commercial interest in tunas and tuna fisheries. It is a forum for discussing progress in research on all aspects of tunas and other large pelagic marine species. For more information, go to: <http://swfsc.nmfs.noaa.gov/tunaconf/TC52Ann1.html>. Written requests should be sent to: mmaunder@iattc.org or shunt@iattc.org.

June 4 --North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Kodiak, AK

June 18-20 -- "CoastGIS 2001: Managing the Interfaces." Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. This is the fourth international

symposium on GIS and computer mapping for coastal zone management. Web: agc.bio.ns.ca/coastgis2001/.

June 21-26 -- "Second Symposium on Marine Conservation Biology." San Francisco, California, USA. Co-sponsored by the Marine Conservation Biology Institute and the Society for Conservation Biology. E-mail: juliem@selway.umt.edu.

July 15-19 -- "Coastal Zone 01." Cleveland, Ohio, USA. The world's largest gathering of coastal resource management professionals. Web: www.csc.noaa.gov/cz2001/.

August 27-23 — "Putting Fisher's Knowledge to Work". Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

International conference on how fisher knowledge can improve fisheries management; sponsored by the Fisheries Centre of the University of British Columbia. Web: www.fisheries.ubc.ca/Announce/FKnowledge.htm.

Nov 4-7 6th International Conference of the Aquatic Ecosystem Health Society. Web: <http://www.aehms.org/msie.htm>

Briefing/Training Schedule

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

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

Volunteers needed--talk to Kim. 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 25, 2001**.

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 Matt Barron, Lin Bennett, Mel Kahn, Larry Tardaweather, Paula Cullenberg, Gillian Stoker, Vicki Cornish, Liz Mitchell 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)