

Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Fishery Monitoring and Research Division Update

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Introduction: Mission and Organization

The [Division](#) focuses on the collection and use of information from commercial fisheries to inform fisheries science and management. We manage the observer and monitoring programs in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. In addition, Division programs foster engagement between the NEFSC and industry in the development of technology and data products to improve fisheries reporting and availability of data to fishermen, scientists, and managers. The Division includes four Branches: Fisheries Monitoring Operations, Training and Data Quality, Data and Information Systems, and Cooperative Research.

Data Review Process

The [Training and Data Quality Branch](#) ensures that all data collected by observers meet the high standards required to inform fishery management decisions. This requires a rigorous quality assurance/quality control process, which we continue to improve and streamline as new technology emerges. Due to staff attrition and other impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we faced difficulties in maintaining our typical data processing timelines.

After evaluating our data quality review process, we implemented a tiered data review approach and improved automated audits. Under this Optimized Review Process, all trips are reviewed at the “Tier 1” level with ~1700 automated checks, incidental take, age structures, and observer comment review. A subset of trips are selected to be reviewed at the more extensive “Tier 2” level with additional debriefing, focused on trip types that commonly need extra attention (e.g., observers’ first trips on a certain gear type). This strategy allows us to take advantage of technological solutions and focus limited resources where they are needed most. Since implementing these changes and returning to a full complement of staff, we have tracked significant improvement in data processing timelines for all programs. Please refer to the slides for more details.

Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM)

The SBRM Omnibus Amendment for all NEFMC and MAFMC FMPs requires an annual discard report utilizing information obtained from the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) and Industry-Funded Scallop Program (IFS) for 14 federally managed species groups and sea turtles. Because of impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, no statistical analysis was conducted for SBRM year 2022. The results of the 2020 SBRM statistical analysis were used in conjunction with the 2022 budget information and the 2022 scallop compensation rate analysis for the observer sea day allocation for April 2022 through March 2023. A statistical analysis will be conducted for SBRM year 2023.

Of the calculated 7,803 sea days needed to monitor the 15 SBRM species groups in SBRM year 2022, 6,481 sea days are needed for agency-funded NEFOP fleets, and 1,322 sea days are needed for IFS fleets. Available agency funds are estimated to provide support for 3,844. Based upon the 2022 observer set-aside compensation rate analysis for IFS, there is industry funding for 2,063 days. Hence, 5,907 days are available for observer coverage for SBRM year 2022. The prioritization process is described in the full report. We accomplished 88% of agency-funded sea days in the first SBRM quarter (April-June), and we have accomplished 40% of agency-funded sea days at the midway point of the current quarter (July-September).

Summary of Coverage Accomplishments

Please refer to the slides for tables and figures detailing coverage accomplishments for fishing years 2018-2021.

Cooperative Research Update

[Cooperative research](#) is the partnership between the fishing industry and the science community. We work together to improve our understanding of ocean ecosystems and support sustainable fisheries management. Active programs include: Gulf of Maine Bottom Longline Survey, Study Fleet, Environmental Monitors on Lobster Traps (eMOLT), Industry-Based Biological Sampling Program, Collaborative Shortfin Squid Research, and a number of special projects. We invite the Council to request an additional presentation if you would like more information on cooperative research in the Northeast.

Questions?

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