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# North Pacific Observer Program Update

Freezer Longline Coalition Symposium  
May 8, 2023

# 2022 – 2023 COVID Constraints



- Observer deployments returned largely to “normal” for the 2022 fishing year
  - Some precautionary quarantine periods were still required for observers when close contact concerns arose or to match vessel protocols
- FMA has returned to in-person training in 2023
- Briefings for experienced observers are in person for the first annual briefing, and virtual for intra-annual briefings
- All NOAA COVID mitigation measures will end on May 12, 2023. FMA is committed to working with the fleet to match their measures as closely as possible.



# Observer Recruitment and Retention



- Nationally, observer provider companies are noting difficulty in recruiting and retaining observers
- In Alaska, this has been reported more acutely by full-coverage providers than the partial-coverage provider
- NMFS is working to increase awareness of observing through career fairs, outreach to universities, and increased web-based materials (“day in the life” stories; videos)
- FMA has increased flexibility in demonstrating minimum standards for using dichotomous keys and registration requirements for recent graduates
- FLC and Alaskan Observers worked with FMA to institute a voluntary second observer program to help more observers qualify for their Lead Level 2 qualifications

# Enforcement and Compliance Data

- A “statement” is a potential violation reported to FMA and OLE
  - Each statement submitted by an observer may contain multiple occurrences of potential violations.
- The frequency of potential violations is based on a rate of occurrences per 1,000 deployed days.
- OLE Priority: Inter-personal is calculated occurrences per assignment rather than deployed days.
  - OLE prioritizes any activity that may pose a threat to an observer and their data.
- OLE takes reporting trends into consideration when planning outreach, patrols, and other operations.



# Trends in Reporting

OLE Priority: Interpersonal (unwanted, unwelcome behavior)

## Sexual harassment

- CP/MS NPT BSAI A80; MS/CP PTR BSAI AFA; CP/MS HAL BSAI OA; and CV HAL GOA OA **each** had a rate of 0.07 per assignment
- Multiple incidents involve repeated unwelcome advances towards observers that persisted after requests for the behavior to cease.
- NOAA has recently released a Notice which reiterates that owners and operators may be charged jointly and severally liable for incidents involving sexual assault and sexual harassment of observers.
- Occurrences of Sexual Harassment per assignment declined from 2022 to 2021 by 33%.

NOAA's Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program can provide training in your workplace!

Contact Lori Newell ([lori.newell@noaa.gov](mailto:lori.newell@noaa.gov))



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# Outreach letters & Meetings with Industry

- Outreach letters
  - Observer Work Environment
  - Impacts to Observer Data
  - CP Operational Requirements
- Voluntary Online Training – Ensuring a Safe Work Environment for Observers
- OLE meetings with vessel companies
  - 22 meetings in total – discussions focused on current issues detected in the fishing fleet in general and in specific sectors.



# Looking forward to 2024

- Pacific cod stomach sampling?
  - Fixed-gear stomach sampling is complicated, but we are looking into options!
- Greenland turbot using strung-pots?
  - Pot sampling is notoriously difficult for observers
  - FMA will be happy to provide pre-cruise meetings for observers and crew using this gear type



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# Questions?



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