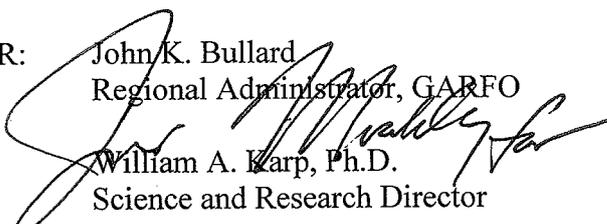




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026
April 23, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: John K. Bullard
Regional Administrator, GARFO

FROM: 
William A. Karp, Ph.D.
Science and Research Director

SUBJECT: Fisheries Observer and At-Sea Monitoring Coverage under
Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology Omnibus
Amendment and Current Funding Allocations

The recent memo from Eileen Sobeck (April 13, 2015, "Observer Funding Guidance to Support Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodologies and other Observer Requirements in FY15") confirms our current understanding of funding streams to support Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) under the region's Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology Omnibus Amendment, and the impact of that amendment on funding for at-sea monitoring (ASM) in the Northeast groundfish fishery.

In summary, the memo provides the following guidance:

- There are four sources for SBRM funding for the Northeast:
 - Two region- and fishery-specific PPAs: Atlantic Coast Observers and Northeast Fisheries Observers.
 - Two PPAs that are not region specific, but from which we are allocated funds: Reducing Bycatch-Observers, and National Observer Program.
- Region-specific PPAs and the Reducing Bycatch-Observer PPA must be used to support statutory SBRM requirements.
- Within the National Observer Program funding there are two categories: permanent and temporary funds
 - Permanent National Observer Program funding augments region-specific programs.
 - As interpreted by National Observer Program and General Counsel staff, permanent National Observer Program funding received in the Northeast would be applied to support SBRM.
 - Temporary National Observer Program funding (supporting high-priority observer program needs) will be allocated to regions according to historical practices.
 - As interpreted by National Observer Program and General Counsel staff the Northeast region's temporary funding would first be used to support SBRM.



- Temporary National Observer Program funding nationally will continue to cover the following non-SBRM requirements:
 - National Observer Program management
 - Protected species monitoring
 - Electronic technology development
- A minimum of 50% of temporary funds will be used to support SBRM, however more will be used if needed to fully fund SBRM requirements.
- In our region, in light of the impending rule-making, all National Observer Program funding (permanent and temporary, with exceptions noted above) is allocated to support SBRM. Funding from other sources (e.g., National Catch Share, Marine Mammal) will not be used to support SBRM requirements.

Thus, the memo does not provide any additional flexibility in funding allocated to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center for at-sea monitoring, and reinforces the allocations mandated under the SBRM Omnibus Amendment.

The implications for the region in Fiscal Year 2015 include:

- Increased coverage under the SBRM program, projected to be about 9,476 sea days in the next sea-day schedule, vs. 6,001 in the previous year's schedule.
- Continued NMFS subsidy of at-sea monitoring until funding obligated in contracts in Fiscal Year 2014 and limited funding in Fiscal Year 2015 is exhausted.
- Industry-based funding for at-sea costs of at-sea monitors obtained through certified at-sea monitoring service providers beginning late August, 2015.
- Minimal NMFS funding for at-sea monitoring infrastructure costs through the end of Fiscal Year 2015, and a few months into Fiscal Year 2016.

The implications for the region in Fiscal Year 2016, barring changes in funding levels or Congressional directives, include:

- Approximately the same SBRM coverage as in FY15.
- Industry funding of the at-sea costs the at-sea monitoring program for the 2016 fishing and fiscal years.
- Insufficient funds to cover Fisheries Sampling Branch support infrastructure for at-sea monitoring roughly after the first quarter of the FY (about \$368K in FY15).
- The total infrastructure cost to cover 4,400 at-sea monitoring sea days annually, is estimated at \$1.76M. Although the ASM requirement would drop if SBRM days increased in fleets that caught Northeast groundfish, we do not yet know how much.

We still require both short- (Fishing Year 2015) and long-term solutions for support of ASM infrastructure costs, beyond funding allocated to the Fisheries Sampling Branch from the National Catch Share line.

cc: S. Hunt
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