



Fishing Year 2018 Pre-Trip Notification System Changes

Expected Industry Questions

Fishing Year 2018 will introduce a major redesign of the Pre-Trip Notification System (PTNS). There are new features and significant changes to the user interface that industry will need to be aware of. This document was created to help explain the changes, the needs for those changes and address many expected questions. This document will provide information on the following topics: an overview of the PTNS changes, things you need to know about using the redesigned PTNS, features requested by industry and whether they were incorporated into the update, coverage and policy questions, and information on who to contact with questions/concerns.

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Overview of PTNS Updates

Why was the PTNS updated?

The PTNS was originally designed to meet observer deployment needs for the groundfish fishery as they existed in 2010. The primary goal of the PTNS redesign was to address the inflexibility of the current system. Significant database changes will allow the new system to better adapt to electronic monitoring, exemptions, EFPs, and a generally dynamic management system. The technical team took advantage of the necessary redesign to also incorporate as many user-requested features as practicable into the new system.

What changes will I notice in the new system?

There will be significant changes to the user interface in the new system. The new website will be much more mobile-friendly. There is a new look, but information collected for each notification will generally be the same. Day trips (where the selection status is valid for the calendar day only) and multiday trips (where the notification is able to be delayed) will now be entered on different pages. Notifications for day trips will be streamlined; trip characteristics can be entered for multiple notifications with a single submission. The updated PTNS will have a 2-step selection process meant to achieve greater equitability of coverage amongst vessels. The new system will look at the realized coverage of the sampling stratum, similar to the current PTNS system, and will now also consider the individual vessel's realized coverage rate before making a final selection. Closer to the system release updated vessel instructions and PTNS FAQ will be made available to industry which will cover all the changes to the system.

What system updates will I not notice?

The primary goal of the PTNS redesign was to address the inflexibility of the current system. A more flexible underlying database architecture was needed so that the PTNS could adequately handle the complex and ever-changing requirements induced by a complex and dynamic management regime (e.g., sector exemptions, EFPs, EM, provider assignments). The majority of the changes to PTNS were to the 'back end' of the system and will not affect how users enter and manage notifications. Other new features include updated cybersecurity features, enhanced system functionality for PTNS Coordinators, and a link between PTNS and the Observer Portal used by observer providers.

Why weren't all changes industry asked for incorporated into the updated PTNS?

PTNS staff have been accumulating requests from industry members to improve the functionality of PTNS since the original PTNS rollout in 2010. These requests were shared with the PTNS technical team who implemented as many of the requests as were feasible for this update. PTNS staff have created a list of all requested PTNS updates that we have received with explanations given as to why or why not the feature was implemented in the PTNS 2018 rollout. The explanations for the top requested features have been included in this document. PTNS staff will be able to offer explanations for other features requested by fewer individuals.

When will the updated PTNS go live?

The redesigned PTNS will be rolled out for use in the upcoming 2018 Groundfish Fishing Year beginning May 1, 2018. The new PTNS system will go live on April 22, 2018. All notifications entered for sail dates in May 2018 will need to be entered in the new system. The old PTNS website will have a link to the new site during the time when both systems are live. If you have any questions or issues during the 9 day overlap, call the PTNS coordinators at 855-347-4371 during business hours and they will assist you through the notification process.

Who can I go to for suggestions and/or questions?

For PTNS notifications, questions about the changes in the new system, or suggestions for updates contact the PTNS Coordinators, Sarah Cierpich and Maggie Heinichen, at 855-347-4371 (during business hours) or via email at nefsc.ptns@noaa.gov.

Using the New PTNS

Will the PTNS notification requirements change?

No, the rules governing PTNS notifications will remain. All vessels departing on groundfish trips using groundfish Days At Sea will still need to notify at least 48 hours in advance for their trips. Notifications can be entered through the website, phone, or email.

How does the PTNS selection work?

Trip selection will function very similarly to the original PTNS system. In both the original system and in the updated PTNS, when a notification is entered, it goes through the selection process immediately. The system works by having real-time realized coverage rates and a target coverage rate for a particular stratum. For ASM, a stratum is a combination of sector, gear/mesh, and fishing region. NEFOP stratification is based on gear/mesh and port region. The selection mechanism uses a 'linear selection logic' and randomized probabilities to determine the coverage outcome of each PTNS notification. Essentially, linear selection logic means that the further the stratum's coverage is below the target coverage, the more likely it is that the trip will be selected. Similarly, if a stratum is already at or above the target coverage rate, the notification has a low probability of being selected. In order for the selection to work properly, PTNS needs to have accurate trip counts in the system so that it calculates a correct realized coverage rate for the stratum at the time the notification is entered.

The updated PTNS will implement a 2-stage selection process. The 1st stage is what is described above. During the 2nd stage, PTNS compares the notification's selection in stage 1 to the individual vessel's realized coverage rate. The 2nd stage can act as a system override of the initial selection in stage 1 to ensure that a vessel's coverage rate remains within set thresholds. For example, if a vessel's coverage is below a low threshold and the trip was not selected in the 1st step, the 2nd step may result in the trip being selected for coverage. Conversely, if the vessel's coverage rate is above a high threshold and was selected in the 1st step, the 2nd step may result in the trip being waived of coverage.

More detailed information on the linear selection logic can be found at:

Palmer MC, Hersey P, Marotta H, Shield GR, Cierpich SB. 2016. The design and performance of an automated observer deployment system for the Northeastern United States groundfish fishery. *Fisheries Research*. 179:33-46.

Why does PTNS select so many trips in a row?

PTNS is designed to randomly select trips for observer coverage. Through the random selection process it is possible that two or more consecutive trips will be selected in a row - just like it is possible flip heads on a coin two or more times in a row. However, the updated 2-stage selection process will now consider the individual vessel's coverage when making the selection determination. This is expected to make observer coverage across vessels more equitable. However, it is still possible for the system to select 2+ trips in a row and be functioning properly. It is also important to remember that the final coverage outcome is dependent also on observer availability. A vessel may get selected multiple times in a row, but that does not guarantee that there will be an observer on each of those trips.

Will my login for PTNS change?

No, vessels will still log into the new system with their permit number and PIN.

Will I see anything different when I try to enter my notifications?

Notifications will be entered similarly to the old PTNS. However, the upgraded system will have separate notification entry pages for day trips (bulk entry) and multiday trips. The features of day or multiday trips will remain the same as they have been. Day trips, those lasting 1-2 days in length, are governed by a different set of rules than multiday trips, those lasting 3+ days. Day trip notifications are tied to the calendar day; they are valid for the day of the sail date from 00:00 to 23:59. Up to a week's worth of day trips can be entered at a given time to ensure that a vessel has a valid

notification for the day they sail. Multiday notifications are for longer trips and are able to be delayed for things such as weather or minor repairs. If a vessel is delaying a multiday notification for more than 48 hours, please call the PTNS Coordinators to indicate that the notification is being delayed.

How will NEFOP Limited trips be selected in the new system?

NEFOP Limited days are tasked by the Protected Species Branch to document marine mammal interactions on gillnet trips. They are funded differently than standard NEFOP trips and have a different goal. As a reminder, because the observer does not collect kept or discard weights of fish species on a haul by haul basis, these trips do not count towards a vessel's or sector's groundfish coverage rate. The new PTNS will change the way NEFOP Limited trips are selected so that they will now be selected through the same process as the other coverage types, but using different stratification variables. NEFOP Limited days are allocated seasonally for different port region and gear combinations.

I've notified ASM-Exempt and now I want to fish ASM-Eligible, what will I need to do in the new system?

In FY 2018 fishing trips in Southern New England or Inshore Georges Bank with 10"+ (Extra Large Mesh) gillnet are exempt from ASM coverage. Notifying GNS-ELM in either BSA2 or BSA4 indicates a vessel's intention to fish under the Framework 55 ASM Exemption. If the notification needs to change from ASM exempt to ASM eligible or vice versa, you must contact the PTNS team at least 24 hours prior to sailing. Depending on when the trip was set to occur, the vessel may not be able to fish ASM-Eligible as there may not be time for the notification to go through the selection process again with the new characteristics.

When will I receive full instructions for the updated system?

In April, once the system is finalized, vessel instructions and Frequently Asked Questions documents will be available. The old and new PTNS sites will have these documents available once they are finalized prior to PTNS rollout.

Industry Requested Features

Will the updated PTNS have more features for equitable coverage among vessels?

Yes, there will be increased features for vessel equitability. The original PTNS did have several features to assist with vessel-level equitability. However, the features were not compatible with all sector exemptions and EFPs. Some of these features had to be turned off when some of the sector exemptions were introduced. One of the major improvements of the updated PTNS is a 2-stage selection process that incorporates information on the amount of coverage an individual vessel has received in conjunction with the amount of stratum-based coverage to determine trip selection outcomes. The 2-stage selection process is explained in more detail above in 'How does the PTNS selection work?'. Simulation testing of this feature indicates that it will improve the equitability of observer coverage each vessel is subjected to. Even with the 2-stage selection, it is expected that some variability in vessel coverage across a sector will remain.

Will the new PTNS be mobile-friendly?

Yes, PTNS will be much more mobile-friendly than the existing system. It will remain a webpage application rather than a mobile app as apps would require frequent updates by the user to be up to date with the newest features.

Will there be weeklong notifications (like the current Scallop system) for day boats?

PTNS uses internal calculations for selection use trip-based coverage targets, and therefore requires an accurate accounting of the total number of trips and observed trips in each sampling strata. The trip counts internal to PTNS must be correct in order to select vessels at the appropriate rate. Without the capability of PTNS to accurately identify

how many trips actually occurred in a given week, this type of notification process cannot be supported in a system such as PTNS. For this type of notification to be accommodated, there would need to be greater integration with other reporting systems (VMS, VTR, Start/End Hails, etc) to have faster, automatic feedback loops. Significant database changes would need to be made to many reporting systems before this would be likely to happen. If, and when, an integrated fisheries-dependent data collection system is developed (e.g., as discussed under the Fisheries Dependent Data Visioning, FDDV, initiative), this type of notification could be explored. A unique trip identifier that stays with a trip throughout all reporting requirements would make this notification feasible to be integrated into the PTNS. We do recognize that the entry of day trips can be burdensome. In an effort to address this we have streamlined the process for entering a block of day trips in the updated PTNS that will reduce the reporting burden.

Will it be easier to enter a block of day trips in the new PTNS?

One of the major improvements of the updated PTNS is a bulk load feature for entering day trips. This will allow a week's worth of day trips to be entered in a single block, rather than individually as done with the existing system. One set of day trip characteristics may be entered for multiple sail dates if desired then the entire block is processed with one submission.

Will I be able to notify for trips > 9 days in advance in the updated PTNS?

No. The notification window will remain 48 hours to 9 days in advance of the sail date. PTNS selects trips using a selection logic dependent on the coverage rates calculated at the time of trip entry. Entering trips further out would mean that they would be selected based on a coverage rate that may no longer be accurate when the trip actually occurs. The 9-day window has provided a balance between vessel flexibility to enter many trips while keeping the selection logic as real-time as possible.

Will I be able to see my selection status >48 hours in advance in the updated PTNS?

No, a vessel will be informed of their final selection status between 48 and 24 hours prior to PTNS sail time. A vessel is informed of their final selection status no less than 24 hours prior to PTNS sail time. A vessel will see a trip as 'pending' until the final selection status is determined. Then 'no coverage' or the coverage type for the trip will be shown. Selection status is not shown prior to 48 hours so that vessels do not make their fishing plans based on their observer selection. It also allows for vessels to change their notifications >48 hours prior to sail time without impacting an observer provider's plans.

Will multiday vessels still need to deal with overlapping trip errors in the updated PTNS?

PTNS will generate fewer overlapping trip errors. In some situations, vessels will still need to modify estimated trip duration for a previous trip in order to enter a new trip. The upgraded system will not include trips on which an observer has been deployed in the overlap check. This means that a vessel will no longer receive any overlapping trip errors if they are still out with an observer.

Coverage and Policy Questions

Are there plans to add other fisheries to PTNS?

The goal of the redesign was to make PTNS more flexible and compatible with other fisheries so that, should the need arise, other fisheries can be incorporated into the PTNS with minimal changes to the system. There is the potential for other fisheries that currently have a notification system, such as herring or scallop, to eventually be moved to PTNS, but there is not a firm time table.

What will the coverage targets be in 2018?

For fishing year 2018, the total target at-sea monitoring coverage level is 15 percent of all groundfish sector trips. Federally funded observer coverage provided by the Northeast Fishery Observer Program to meet the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) requirements will partially satisfy the 15-percent coverage requirement. Sectors will therefore actually pay for at-sea monitoring coverage on less than 15 percent of their groundfish trips; however, the total will depend on the SBRM coverage levels, which will not be available until early spring.

How are coverage rates set?

Coverage rates are set by the Greater Atlantic Regional Office based on protocols established in Amendment 16 to the Northeast Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan, and later clarified in Framework 48, and further adjusted in Framework 55. The coverage rate is set to achieve a certain level of precision (30% coefficient of variation) on stock-level discard estimates.

NMFS staff worked with the New England Fishery Management Council before the 2016 fishing year to develop a set of reasonable modifications to the ASM program that make the program more cost-effective while still reliably monitoring the groundfish catch. Certain sector groundfish trips, those using gillnets with 10-inch or greater mesh in Southern New England and Inshore Georges Bank, are excluded from the ASM requirement due to their low catch of groundfish species. This further reduces the portion of sector trips subject to industry-funded monitoring and better focuses monitoring resources. Accountability in the groundfish fishery remains a key focus program staff continue to work with the New England Council to review the existing monitoring program for this fishery. With the experience and data from 6 years of monitoring, it has been determined that a 15-percent coverage level will allow for effective sector monitoring and discard estimation in Fishing Year 2018.

Will there be any reimbursement for ASM trips in FY 2018?

NMFS was able to reimburse 85 percent of sector's at-sea monitoring costs in 2016 and 60 percent in 2017. NMFS awaits the enactment of a final Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations bill from Congress to determine what funding may be available for the upcoming fishing season.

Contact Information

Who can I contact for more information regarding the PTNS updates and notification policies?

PTNS Coordinators: Sarah Cierpich and Maggie Heinichen, Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB)
855-347-4371, nefsc.ptns@noaa.gov

Who can I contact with questions about my vessel's coverage and the observer program in general?

PTNS Coordinators or Katherine McArdle, FSB Groundfish Lead
508-495-2377, katherine.mcardle@noaa.gov

Who can I contact about future coverage rates and fisheries policy?

Liz Sullivan at the Greater Atlantic Regional Office (GARFO).
978-282-8493, liz.sullivan@noaa.gov.