

## **NORTHEAST FISHERIES OBSERVER PROGRAM**

National Marine Fisheries Service · Northeast Fisheries Science Center · 166 Water Street · Woods Hole · MA · 02543

<http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/fsb/>

Program Information at 508-495-2266 · Office of Law Enforcement at 508-495-2147

### **AT SEA MONITOR DUTIES: WHAT TO EXPECT DURING AN OBSERVED TRIP**

**(Monitors should provide this sheet to the captain at the beginning of an observed trip.)**

#### ***Monitors shall perform the following duties, at a minimum:***

Conduct a pre-trip safety inspection;

Communicate with vessel personnel about monitor duties and data collection needs;

Ask the captain and/or owner of the vessel for some economic information, such as trip costs (price of fuel, ice, etc.);

Collect information on fishing gear, such as size of nets, mesh sizes, and gear configurations;

Collect tow-by-tow information, such as wave height, and location and time when fishing begins and ends;

Record all kept and discarded catch (fish, sharks, crustaceans, invertebrates, and debris) on observed hauls and record kept catch on unobserved hauls, which includes species, weight, and disposition reason;

Collect actual weights of catch whenever possible, or estimate or extrapolate weights by sub-sampling;

Collect length frequencies of kept and discarded catch;

Collect information on interactions with protected species, such as sea turtles, porpoise, dolphins, whales, and birds (also called incidental takes).

#### ***Monitors should not:***

Provide advice about fishing regulations;

Accept any gifts or direct payment in any form from the vessel operator, owner, or crew;

Participate in commercial fishing activities during the trip, such as dressing fish, or standing wheel watch;

Hinder or slow fishing operations unless necessary to obtain critical discard or incidental take information;

Use personal recording devices, such as camcorders, cameras, cell phones, and diaries;

Use the vessel's communication equipment for personal purposes;

Discuss the observed trip with anyone other than program staff; nor

Handle the EPIRB in any manner, including removing housing.

***The Captain's legal responsibilities include, but are not limited to:***

Ensure the vessel has a current U.S. Coast Guard Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Examination decal and other essential non-expired safety devices, provide the monitor with a safety orientation, and maintain a wheel watch throughout the trip;

Cooperate with the monitor in the performance of the observer's duties;

Provide the monitor with living quarters, meals, and amenities comparable to a crew member;

Allow the monitor access to areas of the vessel and gear necessary to conduct observer duties,

Assist the monitor in obtaining EPIRB expiration dates mandatory for the Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist;

Allow the monitor access to communication and navigation equipment as necessary to perform their duties;

Provide true vessel locations by latitude and longitude upon request by the monitor;

Provide the monitor with VTR Serial Numbers;

Notify the monitor when commercial fishing operations are to begin and end;

Bring aboard marine mammals, sea turtles and sea birds that were killed during fishing operations if requested by the monitor; and

Provide refrigerated storage space for monitor-collected specimens within reason.

***It is illegal for Captains and Crew to:***

Assault, harass or sexually harass, intimidate or attempt to influence monitors;

Interfere with or impede monitor duties;

Ask monitors to stand watch or help with fishing operations; and

Fish without a monitor on board the vessel after the owner or agent of the owner has been selected by NMFS or the monitor provider to carry a monitor.

***Monitors should bring the following, along with other scientific gear:***

C.P.R. Card, personal identification, and proof of insurance; immersion suit and Personal Floatation Device; appropriate clothing, such as boots, raingear, gloves; length frequency board for finfish; spring scales; scientific calipers and tape measure; buckets and/or baskets to sample; and work-issued digital cameras, logs, manuals, and field guides.

***At the completion of a trip, Monitors should provide the Captain with the following:***

Meal Reimbursement Form for multi-day trips;

Fishermen's Comment Card with pre-paid postage;

Data Release Form.