

October 8, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR: AIS Observers

FROM: David Potter
Branch Chief, FSB

SUBJECT: Sampling and Recording During Herring and
Mackerel Pair Trawl, Mid-Water Trawl, and
Purse Seine Trips

Please read this memo prior to doing any herring and mackerel pair trawl, mid-water trawl, and purse seine trips. The sampling and recording procedures detailed here must be implemented **IMMEDIATELY**. Observers being deployed on these trips must call their editor prior to making these trips to ensure that sampling and recording procedures have not changed. It is **CRITICAL** to follow these sampling procedures and comment abundantly on the method used to observe these trips.

This memo will stress that a minimum of 10 fish baskets must be sampled from each haul. Orange fish baskets have been stored at the docks or a nearby facility for the observers. **Twelve baskets should be taken by each observer for these trips.** The Area Coordinators (AC's) know the current storage location of the baskets, currently in Portland, Gloucester, and New Bedford. If additional baskets are needed, relay this to the AC's, the program can purchase more. Notify your AC if any baskets are missing or were lost or broken so we can replace them.

The memo will also describe how to record data and sample during pair trawl trips when there is one observer or two observers.

These sampling guidelines may be updated and improved over time. Please keep the most current version (this one dated October 8, 2004) in your Training Manual and discard any older versions.

Thank you for your continued attention to these details.

For additional information, please contact Amy Van Atten at 508-495-2266 or Joe Mello at 508-495-2110.

Thank you.

Attachment: Sampling the Herring and Mackerel Pair Trawl,
Mid-Water Trawl, and Purse Seine Fisheries.

Northeast Fisheries Observer Program. As these fisheries are considered pilot programs, these instructions are continually updated and subject to change.

Sampling the Herring and Mackerel Pair Trawl, Mid-Water Trawl, and Purse Seine Fisheries

Sampling

- Sampling of bycatch species (especially groundfish species) is of high priority and should include obtaining length measurements. Length frequencies of bycatch shall be a priority over the target species lengths.
- A minimum of 10 baskets of fish should be sampled throughout the hauling process, as it is possible for the catch to become stratified in the net.
- Subsamples should be taken at the beginning, middle, and end of each haul and set aside until the entire codend is emptied and observed. When possible the collection of fish should take place prior to the fish going through any type of grate or sorting device.
- The basket sample composition and weights should be extrapolated out to reflect the entire catch.
- If bycatch of large fish are being sorted, or picked out by hand, with or without the help of the crew, this catch should be set aside for the observer to weigh and measure. If it is all weighed, this portion would not be extrapolated out.
- Observer must detail in **COMMENTS** how they were able to sample for each tow, including how many basket samples were obtained, how the bycatch was picked out, and if they were able to watch the flow of fish prior to going into the hold.
- If the catch is pumped onboard sampling should be done at each of the openings to the various fish holds on the vessel.
- **Notify the captain prior to hauling that the catch needs to be observed regardless of whether it is being brought onboard the vessel or not.**
- If the net cannot, or is not, brought onboard then the observer should clearly **COMMENT** on how the observer estimated the catch. It is important to observe the catch from the entire codend.
- During the towing, the observer should be in the wheelhouse, watching the bottom depth, depth of the headrope and the distance between the

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pair trawl vessels. **COMMENTS** should be recorded if the net comes in close proximity with, or contacts, the ocean bottom.

- Observers should continue to record any marine mammal sightings and record any interactions with the fishing gear as they would on any observed trip.
- If possible, the observers of the paired vessels should debrief their trips together to verify that all fields are complete.

Record Keeping on Pair Trawl Trips

Some of the pair trawl trips have had 1 observer and some have had 2 observers (one on each vessel). This summary covers some of the situations that have come up so far and how they should be recorded on the logs.

- Vessel & Trip Information Log
 - 1 observer – be sure to each record the vessel name and hull number of the paired vessel
 - 2 observers - be sure to each record the vessel name and hull number of the paired vessel. And record the associated trip identifier in COMMENTS.
- Vessel & Trip Information Log – # of Nets Onboard
 - 1 observer – only record the number of nets onboard the vessel on which the observer is deployed.
 - 2 observers – each observer records the number of nets on their vessel.
- Gear Characteristics Log
 - 1 observer – record the gear characteristics for the gear used during the trip, whether or not it belongs to the vessel you are on.
 - 2 observers – gear **MUST** be described for each net that is partially or completely hauled by either vessel **AND** included in both trips. Therefore, both observers will have the same gear described in their trips.
- Gear Characteristics Log – Weights
 - Record the combined weight for all weights on the net regardless of which vessel they originated from.
- Haul Log – Numbering
 - 1 observer – record the catch for the two vessels combined for each haul regardless of which vessel the catch is loaded onto.
 - 2 observers – each observer fills in a haul log regardless of which vessel the catch is loaded onto (observers from the two vessels

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should have the same number of hauls at the end of the trip if no hauls were made with a third vessel or independent gear).

- Haul Log – Times and Locations (Haul Begin & Haul End)
 - 1 observer – record the time and location at which the first component of the net is deployed (*i.e.* net hits the water and cable begins to be paid out) and the net is retrieved to the surface (*i.e.* legs retrieved and aboard both vessels).
 - 2 observers – the observer on the vessel from where the net is originally set records the time and location at which the first component of the net is deployed (*i.e.* net hits the water and cable begins to be paid out) and the net is retrieved to the surface (*i.e.* legs retrieved and aboard both vessels). The observer on the vessel that originally did **NOT** set the net records the time and location when the warp is passed to their vessel for the haul begin. The end of the haul would be the same for both observers.

- Haul Log – Depth
 - The Depth Range of the Headrope should be obtained by the observer who is on the vessel that is deploying the gear.

- Haul Log – Species Section
 - 1 observer – record catch for the two vessels combined on each haul log (Use Fish Disposition code = 110 for the part of the catch that is pumped/transferred to another vessel).
 - 2 observers – each observer records the catch brought onboard the vessel they are observing **only**. Therefore, the sum of the catch from both observers should equal the total catch for that haul.

- Haul Log – If there are 2 observers and the catch is all brought onto **one** vessel and you can visually observe the entire catch:
 - One observer – record CATCH = YES, HAUL OBS? = YES and species records.
 - The other observer – record CATCH = YES, HAUL OBS? = NO and COMMENT that “catch was loaded onto the other vessel.

- Haul Log – If the catch is pumped onboard the vessel and it **cannot** be visually observed then it should be recorded as UNOBSERVED.

- Haul Log – If the catch is dumped before it is brought onboard one of the vessels it should still be recorded on the haul log as discards, the haul is marked as **UNOBSERVED** and **COMMENTS** should be recorded to clearly document the situation.

- **INCIDENTAL TAKES** – must be recorded and **not** in duplicate

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- 1 observer – record all incidental takes in the net, whether the net is brought to the vessel you are on or the other vessel. You must notify the other vessel that they must communicate to you if any takes of marine mammals, turtles, or birds occurred that you were unable to see. This may be sensitive information to relay over the radio, so work out with the captain how that information can be relayed in an acceptable manner. Detail in comments if you witnessed the takes or if the take was reported by the crew on the other vessel. All incidental takes must be recorded regardless of which vessel to which it was hauled.
- 2 observers – record any incidental takes that occur on the vessel which you are on. Incidental takes should not be double counted – they should only be recorded by the observer whose vessel to which it was hauled.

Gear Terminology



Codend (“brailer”) = **green** mesh; Liner = **white** mesh; Strengtheners = **red** rope
Colors are **NOT** representative of all of the gears but are pointed out in this photo to assist in identifying important net features.