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**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR
HANDLING OF TAG RETURNS**

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**Bureau of Commercial Fisheries
Biological Laboratory
Woods Hole, Massachusetts
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STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR
HANDLING OF TAG RETURNS

S. L. Cogswell

The following is the standard operating procedure for Port Agents and others providing assistance to the Tagging Unit of the Woods Hole Biological Laboratory of the U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.

TAGS RECEIVED

Port Agents are instructed to receive all tags and markers recognized as such, regardless of their origin, from fin fish, shellfish, drift bottles, and bottom drifters. They may originate from the research activities of state, federal, and private laboratories as well as those of foreign countries. These are to be promptly processed and sent, with the required information, to the Tagging Unit of the U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole unless otherwise directed.

INFORMATION WITH TAGS RECEIVED

Forms

Two types of tag return forms are provided, each requiring essentially the same information. One is a 4" x 6" card, the other is a paper form of standard letter size. The card is used for all flatfish, drifters, and drift bottles; and the paper form for all other returns.

Fin-fish data requirements

The following information is required for fin fish:

1. Tag number (including any letter designation shown with the number).
2. Species name. Scientific as well as vernacular.

3. Locality where caught.

(a) As given by source (e. g. , latitude and longitude, loran bearings, "name" fishing ground, as "5 fathom rip"). Include all three, if given.

(b) Standard unit areas and IBM code of statistical areas, (IIJ, 42-66, A-6) (523 = IIJ)

If more than one area was fished, and it is not known which area produced the tagged fish, additional areas should be listed as above, along with any opinion the agent may have as to the area which produced the tagged fish.

4. Date when caught. If the date is not known (as when the trip is of several days duration), show the dates of the beginning and end of the trip.
5. Water depth. Indicate depth in fathoms. Give depth of each area fished if it is not known which area produced the tagged fish.
6. Length of fish. Fish with tags intact should be measured, on the measuring boards provided, to the nearest millimeter.
7. When seen (when caught? when bought?) - This category will be clarified on the next shipment of forms. It has been confused with the "time" element. Should read "place of detection (i. e. , noticed on deck by fisherman, in processing plant by worker, etc.)".
8. Gear used in catching fish. Otter trawlers are designated OT. If the tonnage of the trawler is known, the designation should be given as follows:

0 - 50 tons - OTS

51 - 150 tons - OTM

151 - 630 tons - OTL

Designation for purse seiner is PS.

Designation for line trawler is LT.

Designation for gill netter is GN.

Sport fishery recoveries may be designated as "rod and reel",
or "hand line."

9. Boat (name). Whenever possible, the name and register number of the vessel should be given.
10. -11. Name and address of finder. This should be obtained with the utmost care, and printed for clarity.
12. Remarks. This space is for any observation of the Port Agent. Here should be shown any irregularity in the fish itself, any evidence of infection where the tag is attached to the fish, or evidence of faulty technique in attaching the tag. The agent may add here any supplementary information for the above categories.
13. The form will show the amount of the reward paid, and the initials of the agent.

Note:

In addition to recording the items of information shown on the forms, the following procedures should be followed:

1. A scale sample is required from all scale bearing tagged fish received.
2. Scales and otoliths are required from all Canadian tagged fish received.
3. Scales, otoliths, and the tags are placed in a scale envelope, showing on its face the tag number, species, length, and date caught.

4. This envelope is stapled to the underside of the form, either upper corner, face of envelope showing.

Sea scallops data requirements

The form is made out for sea scallops in the same manner as for fin fish, except for the following:

1. Do not report length. Send the shell with tag intact to the Tagging Unit for measurement and observation.
2. Gear. The symbol SD is used to designate scallop dredge. In the rare instances when tagged scallops are recovered by any other gear, the gear can be shown by its symbol.

Bottom drifters data requirements

The following items on the card form are completed for drifters:

1. Serial number (including any letter designation shown with the number).
2. Species = drifter.
3. Locality where caught. Same as for fin fish, Loran, Latitude and Longitude, if possible; otherwise as necessary. Statistical area plot not necessary.
4. Water depth. Same as for fin fish.
5. Gear used. Same as fin fish, except that OT tonnage classes and sport fish designations are eliminated.
6. Boat (name) - yes.
7. Name of finder. Same as for fin fish.
8. Address. Same as for fin fish.
9. Remarks. Anything the agent considers pertinent can be added here.
(As with fin fish, the form will be initialed. Staple the message unit on the back of the form.)

Drift bottle data requirements

Due to the nature of their gear, these are picked up by commercial fishermen very infrequently. The "species" will be designated as "drift bottle," and the same procedure as with bottom drifters will be followed on the card forms.

REWARDS

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Fin fish | U.S. (tag only) | \$ 1.00 |
| | U.S. (fish with tag attached) | 2.00 |
| | Canada (tuna) | 10.00 |
| | Canada (other fin fish) | Same as U.S. |
| | Other countries, all types | Same as U.S. |
| | WHOI (tuna) | 5.00 |
| Scallops | U.S. | 1.00 |
| Bottom drifters | All | 1.00 |
| Drift bottles | All | 1.00 |

The following procedures are followed in the payment of rewards: The Agents will pay the reward in cash to the finder at the time the tag is submitted, or as soon as practicable thereafter.

In accordance with the above schedule, rewards are paid for all tags and markers recognized as such, regardless of their origin. Among these are normally found tagged fish and bottom drifters released by the Fisheries Research Board of Canada; fish and crustacea tagged and released by various state conservation departments or private research organizations; bottom drifters, drift bottles, and tagged fish of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution; as well as tagged fish, shellfish,

and crustacea of U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Laboratories. Rewards paid for tags and markers, the origin of which is not immediately known, will be one dollar.

IMPREST CASH FUND

Funds for the above reward payments are distributed by the Tagging Unit of the Woods Hole Laboratory to the Agents from an Imprest Cash Fund of \$1,000, maintained by the Unit for this purpose,

Agents, for each reward paid, make out a "Receipt for Cash" subvoucher on Standard Form 1165 provided.

On the last operating day of the month, Agents will send their accumulated subvouchers, accompanied by a statement of the amount of cash on hand at that time, to the Tagging Unit of the Woods Hole Laboratory so the Imprest Cash Fund can be balanced, and application prepared to replenish the fund.

At this time, the Tagging Unit sends funds to the Agents who require same, accompanied by an "Interim Receipt for Cash" form, which the Agent signs and returns to the Tagging Unit.

The fund is to be used by the Agents for reward payments only. Any exception which may occur must be jointly agreed upon by the Office of Statistical Services, and the Imprest Fund Cashier of the Tagging Unit, and the Agent so advised.

Each Agent will keep a record on a simple ledger form provided of funds received and payments made.

SPECIAL FUND (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution)

The Tagging Unit maintains a special fund provided by this Institution for the payment of rewards on their bottom drifters and drift bottles.

Receipt for Cash Subvoucher No. 1165 is not used with this fund. In all other respects the Agent handles this separate fund as he does our own Imprest Cash Fund, keeping his own records, reporting his cash on hand at month's end, and signing interim receipt for cash funds received from the Tagging Unit.

Note: In order to identify the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution drifters and drift bottles with their own special fund, for record keeping purposes of the Tagging Unit, these will be plainly marked on the face of the tag return form in red pencil with the letters W. H. O. I.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Port Agents display and distribute public relations material provided by the Tagging Unit, such as indoor and outdoor posters, pilot house cards, reproduced announcements, etc.

They assist by making arrangements with the press for news releases regarding tagging programs. Arrangements are made by the Agents for display of exhibits prepared at this Laboratory for the ports, to show the progress of the tagging programs.

OBSERVATION

The Tagging Unit is dependent upon Port Agents as observers in the field. Because they are continually in contact with fishermen, plant workers, and because they can examine the fish returned, their observations and comments are valuable to this Laboratory and the Tagging Unit. From these contacts and observations we can modify our techniques in tagging fish, as well as our design and modification of tags, as to their physical effect on the fish, and design and positioning for visibility and detection by fishermen and plant workers.

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

Various requirements by the Tagging Unit for special assistance are met by the Agents, including "trouble shooting" in procuring supplementary information for tags received here directly by mail, tracing out-of-state tag returns to shipping firms at the ports, and many other requirements.

Note: The Agents are instructed that no orders bearing on tagging procedures or reward payment procedures are valid unless received directly from the Office of Statistical Services of the Regional Office or the Tagging Unit of this Laboratory. In case of doubt, telephone the Laboratory or supervisor.

Summaries of tagging operations by this Laboratory are provided for the Agents (usually on an annual basis) showing type of tag, serial numbers, location, date tagged, etc. These enable the Agent to provide the fishermen with immediate information on the tagging of the fish.

Please note, however, that the serial number series of the tagging summaries is kept confidential by the Agent, as well as information received from the fishermen with the returned tags.