



January 1, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: A.I.S., Inc.,
East West Technical Services,
Fathoms Research LLC, and
MRAG Americas
At-Sea Monitors, Industry Funded Scallop Observers, and
Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers

FROM: Amy S. Van Atten 
Branch Chief, Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB)

SUBJECT: Species Verification Program Compliance

In January 2011, the Fisheries Sampling Branch issued a memo (2011-001) describing the Species Verification Program requirements. Species verification is a critical component of data quality. Incorrect identification can cause significant problems for fisheries management.

In the past three years, many observers have complied with all SVP requirements; however, the overall compliance is lower than desirable for a robust program. To improve data quality, FSB is implementing a minimum compliance rate of 85% for all observers, for each quarter.

Compliance calculation and reports

Under the SVP, observers are required to submit photographs or samples of 30 species each quarter (see list on last page). Percent compliance is calculated as the number of species correctly submitted (verified) divided by the number of species encountered during the quarter. Photographs or samples that are unidentifiable (*e.g.*, blurry photographs, missing identifying characteristics) or incorrect are not counted towards the percent compliance.

Each quarter, FSB will send an electronic summary to each observer with his or her history for that quarter. These summaries will be computed 7 days after the end of the quarter, to account for late photo/sample submissions. Photographs and samples submitted more than 7 days late will not be counted toward the observer's compliance for that quarter, but will be reviewed for accuracy and used to evaluate trip data.

Incorrect submissions

Observers should identify all animals to the most specific taxonomic level possible. FSB staff will review incorrect identifications with the observer as soon as possible. After an incorrect submission, the observer must submit photographs and/or samples of that species, when encountered, until correct identification can be verified. One correct (verified) submission will satisfy the quarterly requirement.

Consequences of low compliance

At the end of each quarter, observers that do not meet the minimum compliance (see table below) will immediately be placed on priority status for the following 3 months, with no restrictions on trip deployments. If they have not met the minimum compliance at the end of that quarter, they will be placed on probation for the following 3 trips.

For each probation trip, they will be required to submit photographs or samples of all SVP species encountered before redeploying on the next trip. If all required photographs are not submitted, the observer may be recommended for decertification. If the observer successfully complies with the probation requirements, they will be notified by FSB staff that they are no longer on probation and may resume taking trips as usual. If an observer fails to meet minimum compliance within one year of coming off probation, they may be recommended for decertification. See the [FSB Data Quality Monitoring and Improvement Measures](#) memo for more information about probation and decertification.

The table below identifies the required number of species correctly submitted (verified) for minimum compliance, based on the number of species encountered. Note that where 85% does not calculate to a whole number, the required number was rounded down (*i.e.*, in the observer's favor).

# of species encountered	# of species required	# of species encountered	# of species required	# of species encountered	# of species required
1	0	11	9	21	17
2	1	12	10	22	18
3	2	13	11	23	19
4	3	14	11	24	20
5	4	15	12	25	21
6	5	16	13	26	22
7	5	17	14	27	22
8	6	18	15	28	23
9	7	19	16	29	24
10	8	20	17	30	25

Changes to required species list

In January 2011, NEFOP and IFS observers were assigned a list of 30 required species, and ASM observers were assigned a shortened list of 20 required species. For simplification, all observers will be required to submit photographs or samples from the complete list of 30 species (see last page) starting next quarter (January to March 2014). Because of the high number of cross-trained observers, most ASM observers are already submitting these species.

Observers are still required to send in the following species on **all** herring trips: Atlantic herring, blueback herring, alewife, hickory shad, American shad, menhaden, and Atlantic mackerel. Herring submissions will be tracked on a trip-by-trip basis. Observers who fail to submit encountered herring species on a trip will be warned that they must submit those species when next encountered. Failure to do so may result in probation.

Thank you for your hard work and continued dedication to our observer programs.

Contacts

Species Verification	Loren Kellogg	(508) 495-2159	Loren.Kellogg@noaa.gov
Data Quality Lead	Debra Duarte	(508) 495-2304	Debra.Duarte@noaa.gov

Enclosure: Updated Species Verification on-deck reference guide, to replace previous version

Please send in actual specimens or photographs of the following species for each quarter.

Miscellaneous	Code	Photograph 1	Photograph 2	Photograph 3
Scup	3295	whole animal (side shot)		
Longfin Squid	8010	whole animal (side shot)		
Shortfin Squid	8020	whole animal (side shot)		
Redfish	2400	whole animal (side shot)	inside of mouth	
Ocean Pout	2500	whole animal (side shot)		

Gadids	Code	Photograph 1	Photograph 2	Photograph 3
Cod	0818	whole animal (side shot)		
Haddock	1477	whole animal (side shot)		
Pollock	2695	whole animal (side shot)		
Red Hake	1520	whole animal (side shot)	pelvic and dorsal filaments	rakers above the flexion point
White Hake	1539	whole animal (side shot)	pelvic and dorsal filaments	rakers above the flexion point
Silver Hake	5090	whole animal (side shot)	rakers on first gill arch	removed from body
Offshore Hake	5080	whole animal (side shot)	rakers on first gill arch	removed from body

Skates	Code	Photograph 1	Photograph 2	Photograph 3
Barndoor	3680	whole animal (top of disk)	whole animal (bottom of disk)	
Clearnose	3720	whole animal (top of disk)		
Little	3660	whole animal (top of disk)	close-up of rough/smooth patch or claspers	
Smooth	3690	whole animal (top of disk)		
Thorny	3700	whole animal (top of disk)		
Winter	3670	whole animal (top of disk)	close-up of rough/smooth patch or claspers	

Flounders	Code	Photograph 1	Photograph 2	Photograph 3
Am. Plaice	1240	whole animal (eyed side)	whole animal (blind side)	
Summer	1219	whole animal (eyed side)	whole animal (blind side)	
Windowpane	1250	whole animal (eyed side)	whole animal (blind side)	
Winter	1200	whole animal (eyed side)	whole animal (blind side)	close-up of lateral line
Witch	1220	whole animal (eyed side)	whole animal (blind side)	
Yellowtail	1230	whole animal (eyed side)	whole animal (blind side)	close-up of lateral line

Herrings	Code	Photograph 1	Photograph 2	Photograph 3
Alewife	0010	whole animal (side shot)	gut lining	upper profile of lower jaw
Blueback	1120	whole animal (side shot)	gut lining	upper profile of lower jaw
Am. Shad	3474	whole animal (side shot)	rakers on first gill arch	upper profile of lower jaw
Hickory Shad	1730	whole animal (side shot)	rakers on first gill arch	upper profile of lower jaw
Atl. Herring	1685	whole animal (side shot)		
Menhaden	2210	whole animal (side shot)	dorsal view (scales in front of dorsal fin)	

The highlighted herring species must be sent in for every trip targeting herring. In addition to the highlighted species, Atlantic mackerel (2120) must be sent in for every trip targeting herring, but is not required on non-herring trips.

Blue highlights indicate a change from previous requirements.

*****Bag, tag, and send in all Fish NK's along with photographs of the specimen.*****

*****Make sure to include something in each picture for scale.*****

Species Verification Program Requirements

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Photo and Video Naming Convention

Reminder: Only photos uploaded via WinSCP or zafpt must be renamed. Photos uploaded through OB-PRELIM or the Android SectorASM program after 2014 do not need to be renamed.

Naming photos and videos with a standard naming convention allows for proper upload, efficient data processing, and facilitates easy searching by end users.

Subject	Subject Code	Naming convention	Example
Incidental Take	01	01_year_tripid_nespp4_haulnum_psid_seq	01_2014_A76024_0818_001_01_1
Sighting	02	02_year_tripid_nespp4_eventnum_seq	02_2014_A76024_0818_04_1
Fish Verification	03	03_year_tripid_nespp4_haulnum_seq	03_2014_A76024_0818_005_2
Gear	04	04_year_tripid_gearcode_seq	04_2014_A76024_050_1
Gear Conflict	05	05_year_tripid_gearcode_seq	05_2014_A76024_050_1
Observer Duties	06	06_year_tripid_seq	06_2014_A76024_3
Compliance Situation	07	07_year_tripid_seq	07_2014_A76024_1
IAL Species	08	08_year_tripid_nespp4_haulnum_seqnum_seq	08_2014_A76024_6730_004_01_3
Other	09	09_year_tripid_seq	09_2014_A76024_1
Catch Estimation Worksheet	10	10_year_tripid_haulnum	10_2014_A76024_001

All photo names must include the elements in the order listed above for the photo subject, with each element separated by an underscore. All photos begin with subject code, year, and tripid. Other elements appropriate to individual subject codes include:

nespp4: a 4-digit species code used to identify the species captured in the photo; see Appendix O in 2013 Observer Program Manual.

eventnum: the number assigned to each individual sighting event on the Sighting Log.

gearcode: the standard 3-digit gear code that you would list on the Vessel and Trip Log.

seq: a sequence number for photos if multiple photos are taken of the same subject (1, 2, 3, etc.); it is NOT a counter for the entire trip

Whole Animal Samples

- Store the specimen in a Ziploc bag accompanied by a waterproof tag with your Observer ID, trip number and extension, haul number, and species name.
- Record the species on your Haul Log as fish disposition code 007 ("No market, but retained by observer for science purposes").
- Freeze the sample solid before shipping. Ship samples as a priority in a cooler, with coldpack, at the same time as your trip data. Please do not send on Friday or over the weekend).

