

Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP)



NOAA FISHERIES

Protected Resources



Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, all Category I or II fishery participants (those that have a moderate to high likelihood of seriously injuring or killing marine mammals during the course of fishing) must carry an observer on fishing trips when requested. NOAA Fisheries may also request that Category III fishing participants (those with rare or undocumented takes of marine mammals) carry an observer on a voluntary basis.

Observer programs are a vital component of the fishery management process because they are one of the best ways to gather information on the status of marine resources.

Observer Data Are Used To:

- Track the effectiveness of gear modifications.
- Determine whether appropriate conservation measures are in place for commercial fisheries to reduce bycatch of marine mammals.
- Identify fishing patterns.
- Identify ways for fishermen to efficiently reduce unwanted bycatch.
- Document interactions between marine mammals and determine severity of injuries.

Categorization of Observed Fisheries In The Northeast (2016 List of Fisheries):

Category I Fisheries

- Mid-Atlantic gillnet
- Northeast/Mid-Atlantic American lobster
- Northeast sink gillnet

Category II Fisheries

- Atlantic mixed species trap/pot
- Chesapeake Bay inshore gillnet
- Mid-Atlantic bottom trawl
- Mid-Atlantic haul/beach seine
- Mid-Atlantic menhaden purse seine
- Mid-Atlantic mid-water trawl (including pair trawl & flynet)
- North Carolina inshore gillnet
- North Carolina long haul seine
- North Carolina roe mullet stop net
- Northeast anchored float gillnet
- Northeast bottom trawl
- Northeast drift gillnet
- Northeast mid-water trawl (including pair trawl)
- Virginia pound net

Category III Fisheries*

- Atlantic shellfish bottom trawl
- Gulf of Maine Atlantic herring purse seine
- Gulf of Maine menhaden purse seine
- Northeast/mid-Atlantic bottom longline/hook-and-line
- Gulf of Maine mussel dredge
- Gulf of Maine, U.S. Mid-Atlantic sea scallop dredge
- U.S. mid-Atlantic offshore surfclam and quahog dredge

For a complete list of ALL Category I, II, and III fisheries, visit: www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/interactions/lof/

For information on the Greater Atlantic Marine Mammal Authorization Program visit www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/mmapp/ or call NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Office 978-281-9328



For more information or questions regarding observer coverage requirements, visit www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/fsb/ or contact: Amy Martins, phone: (508) 495-2266 or e-mail: Amy.Martins@noaa.gov



As a fishery participant, your cooperation is important to help NOAA Fisheries collect the most complete, unbiased, and relevant data possible. Good data prevent over-regulation and ensure the sustainability of our fisheries and the conservation of protected species populations.

For information on the Greater Atlantic Marine Mammal Authorization Program visit www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/mmap/ or call NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Office 978-281-9328



How Will I Be Notified to Carry an Observer?

Fishermen and fishing industry representatives will be notified in advance, whenever possible, that observer coverage will be required. Fishermen may be notified that they have been selected for observer coverage either by letter, phone, or in person by NOAA Fisheries personnel or a designated certified observer service provider.

If selected to carry an observer, a vessel may not engage in any Category I or II fishing operations unless the observer is aboard.

What are My Responsibilities When Carrying an Observer?

- Allowing the observer access to all areas of the vessel.
- Allowing the observer access to communications equipment & navigation equipment.
- Allowing the observer to sample, retain, & store marine mammal specimens and other protected species specimens, or target and non-target catch specimens.
- Notifying the observer when all commercial fishing operations are to begin & end.
- Providing accommodations & food to the observer equivalent to those provided to the crew.
- Allowing for the safe embarking & disembarking of the observer.



What are the Safety Requirements for Carrying an Observer?

Complying with all United States Coast Guard (USCG) requirements while at sea. Obtaining a Commercial Fishery Vessel Safety Examination Decal by successfully completing a USCG safety examination. Safety examination are completed dockside at no cost by calling the USCG Marine Safety Office Dockside Examiners. Allowing an observer, NOAA Fisheries personnel, or designated observer service provider to visually inspect any safety or accommodation requirement if requested.

Note: Vessels that do not have a current and valid safety decal are considered unsafe for purposes of carrying an observer. Vessels that are required and selected to carry an observer, but do not have the safety decal and required gear, are prohibited from fishing without observer coverage

For more information or questions regarding observer coverage requirements, visit www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/fsb/ or contact: Amy Martins, phone: (508) 495-2266 or e-mail: Amy.Martins@noaa.gov