

Questions and Answers: Partial Coverage Observer Program Reintroduction

Q: Where can I find the information bulletin about the status of the Partial Coverage Observer Program?

A:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/bulletin/ib-20-45-notice-alaska-observer-requirements-partial-coverage-fleets-effective-june-28>

Q: What did NMFS consider in its decision to deploy observers?

A: The partial coverage deployment protocol in Alaska is consistent with the Council's recommendation for "port fidelity", observers have to strictly adhere to State of Alaska health mandates (quarantine) applicable to commercial fishermen, and we maintain the ability to release vessels on a case by case basis in all ports (including our listed ports) if conditions warrant. In other words, our deployment plan is flexible to respond to changing conditions and we can release coverage if observers cannot meet quarantining requirements or if there are health and safety conditions in a specific port that may warrant releasing vessels.

Q: Does this reintroduction of the partial coverage observer program follow the recommendations of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council?

A: Yes, the new deployment and sampling plan follows the Council's recommendation to deploy to select ports, similar to how the waiver was lifted for Kodiak earlier in the year. It also maintains trip selection through 2020. The Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division (FMA) of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center has identified 14 ports from which observers may be deployed safely on selected trips.

Q: The reintroduction of the partial coverage observer program began on June 28. Will trips from these 14 ports immediately start being covered?

A: Observers are not currently located in all 14 of these ports, so some trips may still be released until an adequate number of observers meeting the Health Mandates for commercial fishing have been staged in these locations.

Q: If I'm not fishing from one of the 14 ports identified, do I need to log my trips in ODDS (Observer Declare and Deploy System)?

A: Yes. All vessels in the partial coverage sector must still log trips into ODDS. Trips departing from ports other than the 14 currently identified will be released. Log trips through [ODDS online](#) or by phone at : 1-855-747-6377 (via AIS).

Q: Were there changes to the fixed gear electronic monitoring selection rate?

A: No. The EM selection rate of 30% for fixed gear will remain the same as in the original 2020 Annual Deployment Plan.

Q: Who pays for observers to complete quarantine procedures? Will this be passed on to the observed vessels?

A: The partial coverage observer program is supported by the observer fee, so no additional costs will be passed along to individual vessels. The federal contract reimburses for travel costs (food and lodging) during the quarantine period. While costs for this purpose may be higher this year, observers will also travel less within the state once they are assigned to a community.

Q: What safety plans for commercial fishery observer deployment has AIS, Inc. put in place for Alaska?

A: The AIS, Inc. [COVID-19 Action Plan](#), [Testing Plan](#), and a [2-page summary](#) are all available online.

Q: If an observer shows signs of COVID-19 during a verbal pre-boarding screening, what steps should the operator take?

A: AIS is verbally screening their observers prior to boarding so this situation is unlikely, but should it occur, the operator should immediately contact AIS so they can enact their action plan.

Q: Does this deployment plan allow NMFS to respond to changing health and safety conditions in the listed ports?

A: Yes, NMFS retains the ability to release vessels from observer coverage requirements at all ports if health and safety conditions warrant.