



NOAA FISHERIES

Fisheries Information System Program

About the Quality Management and Continuous Improvement Professional Specialty Group

As part of the Fisheries Information System (FIS) program, the Quality Management and Continuous Improvement Professional Specialty Group (QM/CI PSG) brings experts together from across NOAA Fisheries and our partner institutions to provide trainings; conduct workshops; promote timely, cost-effective management and policy-making; and foster a broad and enduring culture of quality throughout the fisheries data community.

About FIS

The Fisheries Information System program is a state-regional-federal partnership that supports sound, science-based fisheries management. FIS does so by fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration and funding innovative projects to improve the quality of fisheries-dependent data.

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Quality Management and Continuous Improvement Success Story

Enhancing Observer Program Safety: Value Stream Mapping for the North Pacific Observer Gear Program

The Challenge

Fisheries observers play a critical role in the sustainable management of our nation's fisheries. While by nature the job can sometimes include long trips, close quarters, and intense work, it's critical that the conditions observers work in be safe and professional, and observers have all of the gear they need to stay healthy and productive onboard. The program must maintain hundreds of inventoried items spread across multiple field stations serving hundreds of observers and thousands of sea days.

The Goal

The North Pacific Fisheries Observer Program turned to the FIS Quality Management and Continuous Improvement Professional Specialty Group to help create clear processes to ensure observers are properly equipped and ready to deploy quickly when an assignment comes in. The aim was to identify and root out inefficiencies that were costing time and money—and ultimately transition to a system that relied on effective processes instead of institutional memory.

The Approach

The QM/CI PSG used a tool known as a value stream map to create a visual accounting of each step in the gear procurement and deployment process, including approximately how long each step takes. The VSM revealed where bottlenecks occurred, and quantified how those delays impacted staff time and observer readiness.

The Outcome

The gear team was able to identify potential issues that might otherwise be invisible when looking at such a large program, and were empowered to rethink their current processes with fresh ideas and a fresh perspective. The VSM was the first step in a larger effort to improve efficiency in the gear program's processes, including prioritizing the development of an Observer Gear Inventory system.

To learn more about scheduling a workshop, funding opportunities, and the FIS commitment to enhancing the NOAA Fisheries culture of quality, visit www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/commercial-fishing/fisheries-information-system-program.

