

# Observer Life

## CHAPTER 10

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## I. Introduction

This chapter provides information about the day-to-day routine of West Coast Groundfish Observers and describes expectations for observer performance.

The chapter includes:

- Guidelines for communicating with vessels.
- Checklists of tasks that must be completed before and after each trip.
- Descriptions, recommendations and care of personal, sampling and safety gear.
- Considerations for being on-call and travel.
- Explanation of the data debriefing process and observer evaluations.
- Requirements for maintaining position as a WCGOP observer.



## II. First Days

### Start Dates and Contacts

After successfully completing training, observers will travel to their assigned ports and provide the date they are prepared to accept an assignment to coordinator and AOI. If there are any changes in the date of availability for deployment, AOI and the field coordinator must be informed.

**Tip:** Contact information for program staff and observers can be found in the WCGOP database and Observer Manual Appendix

It is the observer's responsibility to provide AOI with updated contact information and to keep an up-to-date mailing address (PO Boxes are not acceptable), email address and phone number(s) in the WCGOP database.

### Getting to Know the Port

A coordinator, lead or year-round observer will arrange an orientation tour of the assigned port(s) for each new observer close to their start date. The port orientation tour should include vessels, docks, local processing plants, local US Coast Guard, and an introduction to other port observers and to local state biologists (port samplers and port biologists). It should also include an

overview of local responsibilities, including any expectations for providing information or aid to the local state biologists.

The coordinator, lead observer and other observers in the assigned port group are excellent sources of information for locating housing, places to eat, local entertainment, and other personal needs. Many have been in the area for multiple years and are very knowledgeable about the port.

### III. Communication and Contacting Vessels

#### Contacting Vessels



Observers will be assigned vessels by their coordinator or lead observer. All vessel assignments are tentative and can change without notice. Observers should be ready to cover any vessel in any port at any time. Observers are supplied with vessel names, vessel owner/operator names and phone numbers. Vessel contacts are also available in the database. Once this information is received, the coordinators or lead observers are responsible for contacting the vessel owner/captain and sometimes observers help make these phone calls or go to the docks to contact vessels (if requested by their coordinators or lead observer). **ALL vessel communications must be logged in the database.**

Guidelines for contacting vessel owner/operator by phone:

#### Example phone introduction:

Hi, my name is Joe Smith.

I am the West Coast  
Groundfish Observer in  
Port Group XX.

Could I please speak with  
*Vessel Owner/Captain's  
Name?*

1. When calling the vessel owner or captain, do so in a friendly and professional manner.
2. State your name and association with the WCGOP.
3. Make it a habit to begin with a professional introduction to whoever answers the phone. Example:
4. If the vessel owner/operator is not available, leave a message with your name and number and request that they return your call.
5. If there is no reply from the vessel owner/operator within 4 days, call again. Do not give up until you have spoken to either the vessel owner or vessel operator. It is important that contact calls be completed well in advance to allow the vessels time to rectify any problems.
6. Once contact has been made with the vessel owner/operator, establish the reason for the call.

***First contact with vessel owner / operator***

When making the initial call to notify a vessel owner/operator of selection for observer coverage, ensure that the following information is given or obtained, as well as documented in the database's vessel communications log:

1. Notify vessel owner/operator of selection for observer coverage and for what fishery. Determine whether they received a selection letter that explains the requirement to carry an observer and explain that you are one of the observers who will be working with them. Offer to have another letter mailed to them if needed and verify the correct address.
2. Determine if the vessel will be fishing for the selection coverage period. If the vessel **does not** plan to go fishing, inform them:
  - They are obligated to contact WCGOP as soon as they resume fishing or if their plans change.
  - Offer a courtesy-reminder call prior to the next trip limit period (about 2 months) reminding them of their selection.
  - Ensure they understand that the fishing vessel will be carried over to subsequent trip limit periods until they fulfill their observer coverage obligation.

If the vessel plans to go fishing determine the following:

- Which port they will be fishing out of.
  - When they plan to start and end fishing.
  - Is the vessel USCG Safety Decal current.
  - Arrange a meeting time for the vessel safety walk-through.
  - Confirm a contact person name and phone number(s).
  - Approximate length of the next fishing trip.
  - Vessel type/gear type (if not known).
3. Obtain the following information and notify the lead observer and field coordinator for the port group:
    - Address any questions or concerns they might have in working with observers or the WCGOP. If there are any questions, complaints or uncertainties that you cannot address to the satisfaction of the vessel owner/operator, refer them to your coordinator or lead observer.

If a vessel owner/operator proves difficult to contact by phone, other methods of making contact, such as leaving a note on the vessel must be employed. **All attempts to contact the vessel must be documented in the database.** If a vessel owner or captain cannot be contacted, inform the field coordinator or lead observer in a timely manner.



## Vessel Communication Log

The database communications log is used by lead observers and coordinators to track communications with vessels and to ensure calls are made and not duplicated. It also provides a record of contacts should vessels claim they were not notified.

Observers **must** log all communications with vessels in the database in a timely manner. This should include initial contacts, notifications of selection, arrangements for safety inspections, notification of departure times, cancellations, and any other communications with vessels or pertaining to coverage of vessels. Any communications that might be construed as harassment must be documented. It is also a good idea to document in the Observer Logbook communications with lead and other observers as well as WCGOP staff.

Communications must be recorded daily. The communications section of the Observer Logbook is used to record communications that take place when away from port (at sea, on travel, etc.). These communications must be logged in the database at the earliest possible time.

## Vessel Safety Checks

A Vessel Safety Checklist should be completed several days before the first trip, at a minimum (See Observer Logbook for Vessel Safety Checklist). Ideally, vessel safety inspections should be done soon after making initial contact (approximately 1 month prior to the selection period). This gives vessels time to correct any deficiencies before the start of the selection period. **If possible, do not wait to do the safety orientation until the day before, or the day of, the planned departure for the first fishing trip!** It is very problematic to discover a vessel lacks necessary safety features, such as adequate life raft capacity to accommodate the observer and crew, at the time the vessel is planning to depart. Vessels are not typically issued waivers for failure to meet safety obligations.

The Vessel Safety Checklist must be completed and mailed or faxed to the coordinator prior to embarking on the first trip. If this is not possible (example: observer was sent on travel and arrived after business hours, with no place to mail or fax), call the coordinator's office and leave a verbal confirmation that the vessel has passed inspection. A copy of the Safety Checklist must be mailed or faxed as soon as possible after disembarkation.

Do safety orientations with another observer, if possible. Two observers working together are likely to do a more thorough inspection than one. Also, it will not be necessary to take additional time from the captain or crew to complete a second inspection should both observers be assigned to the boat during the same selection period.

## IV. Before and After a Trip

### Observer Trip Notification Phone System

The WCGOP utilizes a call-in system (available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week) to track observer departures (embarkation) and returns (disembarkation). The Observer Trip Notification Phone System (OTNPS) is operated by Answering Northwest, Inc.

Since each observer is issued a personal Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), it is vital that NOAA Fisheries, PSMFC, and AOI are aware when observers are at-sea in the event that an EPIRB is set off. If an observer's personal EPIRB goes off, the Coast Guard will contact NOAA Fisheries, PSMFC, or AOI and inquire if there is a real emergency. The OTNPS provides a simple and quick way for any of these groups to determine if the individual, issued that particular EPIRB, is at-sea. The OTNPS potentially reduces the time it would take for the Coast Guard to respond in a real emergency.

Observers are required to phone Answering Northwest, Inc. at **206-444-4268** immediately prior to embarking on a vessel and immediately after disembarking a vessel. Upon embarkation, leave the following six pieces of information:



**Embarking:**

1. First and last name
2. Vessel name
3. Departure port
4. Estimated time of departure
5. Estimated length of trip
6. Cell number

**Note:** Do not include the date and time of the call as it will be recorded automatically by Answering Northwest, Inc.

Upon disembarking a vessel, call the answering service again and leave the following three pieces of information:

**Disembarking:**

1. First and last name
2. Vessel name
3. Arrival port

**Note:** The time and date of the call will be recorded automatically.

**Remember:** Observers are required to notify Answering NW, Inc. before and after every trip *even if it has been reported to the coordinator. **There will be no exceptions to this rule.***

**Observer Checklist: Before Every Trip**

1. Contact vessel owner/captain and arrange to meet at the vessel.
2. Complete Vessel Safety Checklist. (See Observer Logbook for Vessel Safety Checklist.)
3. **Mail, fax, e-mail or text message** a copy of the Vessel Safety Checklist to the coordinator **prior** to departing on the first trip. If you are unable to send a copy of the Vessel Safety Checklist to your coordinator, call in to confirm the vessel has passed inspection and to discuss any safety concerns or issues. Submit a copy of the Vessel Safety Checklist to your coordinator at the earliest opportunity upon disembarkation.
4. Review sampling procedures for the fishery to be observed. Call your debriefer if you have any questions.
5. Ensure personal and sampling gear is in order and scales have been lubed and tested. Make sure to bring extra pencils and **plenty of forms.**

6. Observers should be on the vessel with gear stowed and ready to depart **at least 30 minutes prior to vessel departure time**. Depending on port location, this may mean arriving at the docks an hour or more before the trip's scheduled departure time. Often there will be an unforeseen delay but it is vital that the observer does not cause it!
7. **Call the Observer Trip Notification Phone System (OTNPS) prior to embarkation.**

### Checklist: After Every Trip

1. Clean, organize and pack gear before landing. Ensure that no observer gear, such as a survival suit or EPIRB, remains on the vessel.
2. Make sure all necessary data from the Vessel Logbook has been gathered (if applicable).
3. Ask the vessel when they anticipate making their next fishing trip.
4. **Call the Observer Trip Notification Phone System (OTNPS) upon disembarkation.**
5. Obtain the fish ticket number (landing receipt number) at the delivery or as soon as possible.
6. Finish paperwork and complete entry of trip in the database within **3 days** of the disembarkation date.



### After the First Trip

Observers should contact their debriefer if they have questions about data collection before, during or after a trip. After going on the first trip, or after observing a new gear type or fishery, observers should contact a debriefer to discuss the trip. Debriefers will review the data from the trip and, depending on the quality of the data, may make arrangements to meet in person to go over the data and to discuss sampling procedures.

## V. Gear

### Observer Personal Gear

Dressing to work on the deck of a vessel off the West Coast can be challenging; usually, the conditions are cold (45°F or colder) and wet, but in the summer there are days when the outside temperature can reach into the 70's or above. A suggested list of clothes and belongings observers may want to bring to sea is provided below. This list is not exhaustive and personal needs must be

considered. If you have questions on what to bring to sea, ask for advice from the WCGOP staff or an active observer. Rather than taking a lot of clothes, focus on bringing a few clothing items that are bulky and warm and can be worn in layers. Layered clothing provides protection from the elements and helps prevent overheating if the weather gets warm. Synthetic or wool materials are recommended because they have a greater ability than cotton to retain body heat when wet. Inexpensive clothes are also recommended, since the smell of fish is difficult to remove from fabric. Some observers find appropriate, inexpensive work clothes at Army-Navy Surplus or used-clothing stores.

Here are some suggestions for personal gear needed at-sea:

- Toiletries (towel, soap, toothbrush, tooth paste, deodorant, travel size shampoo, wet wipes).
- Personal medications.
- Seasickness medication.
- Food for special dietary needs.
- Extra contact lenses or glasses.
- Water
- 2-3 pairs of socks.
- Clothes that can be layered for warm weather (thermal, sweatshirt, fleece).
- Baseball hat, cap.
- Sunglasses, sun block and chap stick.
- Small first-aid kit.
- Small pocketknife.
- Flashlight with extra batteries.
- Sleeping bag/blanket.
- Travel pillow.
- Reading material, knitting, radio/walkman/mp3 player, etc.

**Tip:** Remember, sea bags (small duffel bags are ideal) should be packed so items are easily accessible.

### *Considerations for Fishing Trips*

- Exposure to wet conditions, even when it's not raining.
- Exposure to direct sunlight.
- Exposure to wide range of temperatures and quick weather changes.
- Possible exposure to strong wind conditions.
- LIMITED amount of space aboard the vessel.
- Observer may or may not have a bunk.
- Vessels may not have a head (bathroom) or a shower.
- Dietary restrictions: discuss with the captain and/or the cook before departing. Example: It is unlikely a vessel will cater to the needs of special diets such as vegan/vegetarian. If you have special dietary needs, be prepared by bringing food on each trip.

## **VI. Being on Call - Observer Availability**

### **Observer Notification Expectation**

Vessel assignment may come with very short notice, sometimes as little as two or three hours before vessel departure. Selected fishing vessels are required to give 24-hour notice to the WCGOP before entering a fishery and must then give a 4-hour notice for each trip. This, however, does not mean that observers should expect to get 24-hour or even 4-hour notification before every trip.

Although lead observers and coordinators attempt to provide as much notice as possible, the coordination of multiple vessels and observers in multiple ports sometimes necessitates short notice. Short notice occurs occasionally when there is a:

- Change in observer availability (sick or vacationing observers).
- Miscommunication between observer/vessel/coordinator.
- Changes in weather.

Be prepared to embark on a vessel or to travel to another port group with little notice by having sampling and safety gear ready at all times.

**Tip:** Observers are not commonly assigned trips on short notice, but on the rare occasion that it occurs, be ready!

In most cases leads and coordinators avoid calling late at night. However, observers may be called to cover an early morning trip when extenuating circumstances occur.

While every effort is made to inform observers of assignments, situations change and assignments may change as a result. When vessel activity is slow in a port group, observers are frequently sent on travel to cover other ports.

**Remember: Vessel assignments can change at any time.**



### Time-Off

WCGOP observers are on call at all times. Observers must be granted time off by AOI for any days when they are not prepared to take an assignment.

Observers are expected to be prepared for assignment any time while under contract unless they have been approved for time off.

Observers must be prepared to work the moment that leave expires (midnight of the last day requested). Messages should be checked at the end of the final day of leave or before. Be ready for deployment at 0001 the morning after official time-off expires.

### Requesting Time-Off

Time-off needs to be approved by AOI, who consults with program staff regarding time-off requests. While time-off can be discussed with coordinators, final approval must be granted by AOI.

AOI will provide a time off request policy to all observers. This policy explains the steps to take to request time off and the rules AOI has regarding time off requests.

### Illness and Injury

**If ill or injured, contact the field coordinator and contractor (AOI) immediately.** Most of the situations where observers are required to take trips on short notice occur due to other observers calling at the last minute to

inform their lead/coordinator that they were unfit to cover a trip assignment. With proper communication these short notice trips can be avoided.

**Tip:** Observers should contact the field coordinator and contractor as soon as a cold or illness is suspected. Coordinators can then provide adequate notice to a replacement observer. The earlier the notice is given, the more time the coordinator has to inform the replacement observer of the upcoming assignment

## VII. Traveling Out of Port

### Port Boundaries

As a general guideline, observers are expected to stay within four hours of their home ports. If necessary, lead observers and coordinators may require an observer to remain even closer to their home ports.

**Tip:** When on-call, contact coordinator and/or lead observer if traveling farther than 2 hours out of home port or will be without phone reception for more than 2 hours.

### Covering Other Ports

Observers may cover several different ports and should be prepared to travel at all times within their assigned port group. Typically, greater notice will be given if travel outside of the home port group is required.

**Note:** Occasionally observers will embark in one port and disembark in another (often hundreds of miles away). Coordinators and AOI will provide assistance in returning to the home port in these situations.

### Preparedness

Little notice may be given prior to travel so it is important to have sampling/safety gear packed and ready to go at all times. In addition, it helps to have clothes (including an extra pair of street clothes) ready at all times.

Observers are required to own and maintain a working vehicle. If a vehicle needs repairs, secure alternate transportation. Observers must be taken off pay status if alternative transportation is not available. Vehicle problems do not



excuse observers from covering vessels or travel. Chronic vehicle problems will not be tolerated. The lead observer or coordinator must be notified at the first sign of car problems; they may be able to work around the problem short term if given advance notice. Ultimately, however, a working vehicle must be maintained.



## VIII. Data Collection and Data Entry

### Data Collection

Data is collected for approximately two-months (one trip period) and then debriefed with program staff. During this two-month period, observers may be assigned to one or multiple vessels operating in different fisheries and may employ many sampling methods. Be familiar with the sampling protocols for the gear type to be observed before embarking on a trip. This will ensure the correct equipment and forms are brought and hopefully, ease some anxiety. The observer manual, field manual, debriefing staff, and more experienced observers are excellent resources for learning about new gear types and fisheries.

Collection of fishing effort and catch data while at sea is crucial, but timely entry of that data into the database is also important. Observers are required to complete entry of each trip's data into the database within three days of disembarkation. This aids in ensuring that the program is attaining its data quality and coverage goals. It is more likely sampling details and data will be forgotten by the observer if entered weeks after a trip is observed. Entering data immediately after a trip (before the next trip is taken, if possible) increases the chances of the data accurately reflecting what was collected and documented during the trip. In addition, all trips made by selected fishing vessels are verified by the coordinators to confirm that vessels have been covered by WCGOP. The process of verifying a vessel's compliance with WCGOP is dependent on having the most up to date trip data in the database. Timely trip data entry is key to responding to vessels that are non-compliant and take a trip without an observer.

## Data Entry

After returning from a trip, budget time for data entry. The following information is entered into the WCGOP Database:

- **Data**
  - All data collected on vessels, including information on Trip Forms, Catch Forms, Species Composition Forms, Length Frequency Forms, Biospecimen Forms, and Marine Mammal/Seabird/Sea Turtle Interaction and Sighting Forms, must be entered within **3 days** of disembarkation.
  - **Activity:** *Observers should have each month's activity entered no later than the 3rd of the subsequent month.*
  - **Communications:** All communications with vessels must be entered into the database daily.

## IX. Debriefing

Data collected by West Coast Groundfish Observers is vital to the successful management of many fisheries off Washington, Oregon, and California. In order to ensure that data are consistently collected according to program guidelines, observers are required to go through a debriefing process every two months.

The debriefing process consists of six steps.

1. Initial data review and edits by observer.
2. Data submission to debriefer.
3. Data reviewed by debriefer and returned to observer for corrections (if needed).
4. Data corrections completed by observer on paper forms and database and mailed back to the debriefer.
5. Debriefing interview between debriefer and observer.
6. Written Performance Assessment and Evaluation by debriefer.

### Initial Data Review by Observer

#### *Trip Data*

Prior to submitting data to debriefers, all calculations and forms must be double-checked for accuracy and legibility. All data must be entered into the WCGOP database and a trip error report (TER) must be run for every trip.

The TER will flag problems in the data as either errors (E) or warnings (W). Errors indicate potentially serious problems with data collection, documentation, or entry while warnings indicate data that is atypical or falls outside of expected ranges. Any errors detected need to be corrected and any warnings must be double-checked for accuracy before submitting data to debriefers.

The following checklist will help to catch mistakes prior to submitting data. Keep the checklist handy and refer to it when data is being edited. This list is not all-inclusive. Refer to the form instructions for each gear type for a detailed listing of how to complete each form.

**Trip Form / Hauls:**

- Year is recorded as YYYY.
- Fishery Type is circled (LE, OA, EFP). If EFP, name of EFP must be written on the form.
- Trip # recorded (generated by database).
- USCG number recorded for any vessel that has one. If no USCG number, then State Registration Number recorded.
- Pages are numbered.
- Vessel Logbook Name and page number field should be completed for all fisheries with a vessel logbook.
- Skipper's name recorded. If not found in database, contact debriefer.
- Landing and Departure dates are recorded as MM/DD/YYYY.
- Landing and Departure times are recorded in 24-hour notation (4 digits, XXXX).
- Fish Ticket and State Agency Code recorded. If there was no fish ticket issued for a trip (no fish delivered) include a note indicating this in the Trip Notes field.
- Check that all OTC's are recorded to two decimal places.
- OTC keypunch check is completed.
- Verify that Total Hooks/Pots field is filled in for all fixed gear sets.
- Total Hooks/Pots keypunch check is completed.
- Gear Performance Codes recorded for all hauls.
- Seabird avoidance methods used (Fixed Gear only)
- Comment on anything that is unclear or out of the ordinary.

**Trip Form/ Haul Locations:**

- Hauls/Sets numbered sequentially by retrieval time.
- Latitude and Longitude recorded in degrees, minutes, and 1/100<sup>ths</sup> of a minute.
- Verify that target strategy codes are valid.
- Check that both Depth of Catch fields per haul/set are completed. If only one depth is available, write it in both fields.
- Verify that all trip notes are entered verbatim into the database.

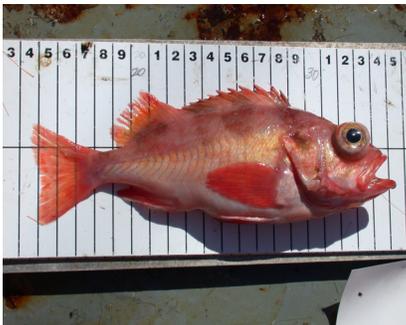
**Catch Form:**

- Haul number is recorded.
- Page is numbered.
- Date is recorded as MM/DD/YY.
- Trip number is recorded.
- USCG number is recorded for all vessels that have them.
- Catch # column is filled in sequentially.
- Volume and Density columns are filled in for any catch category with weight method 2 (Trawl/Prawn Catch Form).
- Weights and volumes (if used) are recorded to two decimal places (Trawl/Prawn Catch Form).
- # of Fish column completed for weight methods 8, 19, 20 and, if an actual #, for methods 14 and 6 (Trawl/Prawn Catch Form).
- # of Fish column completed for weight methods 14, 6 and 20 (Fixed Gear Catch Form).
- Discard Reason column is filled in only for discard catch categories with no associated species composition sample.
- # Hooks/Pots sampled column filled in (Fixed Gear Catch Form). All fixed gear catch categories in a given haul MUST have the same number of sampled Hooks/Pots.
- # Hooks/Pots keypunch check is completed (Fixed Gear Catch Form).
- Sample/Catch Weight keypunch check is completed.

**Species Composition Form:**

- Haul number is recorded.
- Page is numbered.
- Date is recorded as MM/DD/YY.

- Trip number is recorded.
- USCG number is recorded for all vessels that have them.
- Catch Category codes and the corresponding catch number match those on the Catch Form.
- Sample Method codes are 1, 2 or 3 for trawl, and 4, 5, or 6 for fixed gear.
- Weights are recorded to one or two decimal places.
- KP Weight and KP Number fields are completed for every catch category recorded to one or two decimal places.
- Species common names are fully written out and match the common names that appear in the database.
- Species codes are correct.
- Discard reasons are recorded for all discarded species.
- Release method provided for each species of discarded rockfish (**fixed gear only**)



**Length Frequency Form:**

- Haul number is recorded.
- Page is numbered.
- Date is recorded as MM/DD/YY.
- Trip number is recorded.
- USCG number is recorded for all vessels that have them.
- Catch Category codes and the corresponding catch number match those on the Catch Form.
- Species common names are fully written out and match the common names that appear in the database.
- Species codes are correct.
- Sex column is filled in only if an attempt was made to ascertain the sex of the individual. If no attempt was made, leave the field blank.
- Key punch checks (length and frequency) are completed for all species.
- Verify that individuals that are recorded on the Biospecimen Form are **NOT** recorded on the Length Frequency Form, also. If any information other than sex and length are collected, record the information only on the Biospecimen Form.

**Biospecimen Form:**

- Haul number is recorded.
- Page is numbered.

- Date is recorded as MM/DD/YY.
- Trip number is recorded.
- USCG number is recorded for all vessels that have them.
- Catch Category codes and the corresponding catch number match those on the Catch Form.
- Species common names are fully written out and match the common names that appear in the database.
- Species codes are correct.
- Verify that Discard reason is recorded for each species.
- Weight Method recorded
- Sex column is filled in only if an attempt was made to ascertain the sex of the individual. If no attempt was made, leave the field blank (**never record sex for Pacific Halibut**).
- Verify that Pacific Halibut Viability Codes are for the appropriate Gear Type.
- Verify that adipose presence/absence is documented whenever salmon snouts are collected.
- Verify that Maturity stage for Dungeness crab eggs presence/absence is documented whenever female crabs are sampled.
- If dissections taken, dissection type(s) and associated barcode(s) recorded.
- Verify that individuals that are recorded on the Biospecimen Form are **NOT** recorded on the Length Frequency Form, also. If any information other than sex and length are collected, record the information only on the Biospecimen Form.

#### **Trip Discard Form:**

- Page is numbered.
- Trip number is recorded.
- USCG number is recorded for all vessels that have them.
- Date discard occurred recorded as MM/DD.
- Time discard occurred recorded in 24-hour notation.
- Common name of species discarded recorded.

#### **MM/SB/ST Interaction and Sighting Form:**

- Date, time, haul and location fields completed.
- Species name recorded.



- Write in Notes and Identifying Characteristics field ALL key characteristic used to identify the animal.
- Sketch of animal completed.
- All behaviors and interactions are circled and documented in the Notes box.
- Photo/Videos barcode and frame #s recorded.
- Trip Number recorded.
- Federal Groundfish Permit Number recorded (if vessel has one).
- USCG number or State Registration number recorded in Coast Guard documentation # field.

**Tagged Fish Form:**

- All fields completed.
- Tag attached securely to form.
- Otolith vial attached to form with tape if otoliths collected.

**Observer Logbook:**

Make sure that all required sections of the logbook are completely filled out (**Pen Only!!!**). These include but are not limited to:

- Name and trip limit period (including year) clearly noted on logbook cover.
- Vessel and captain name, USCG # and dates of observed fishing trips.
- Vessel safety checklists completed and signed, for all vessels observed.
- Observer Safety Survey completed for each vessel observed.
- Scale tests and maintenance documented.
- Observer equipment test checklist is completed at least once a month.
- Detailed vessel diagrams completed for all vessels covered. Any calculations double-checked for accuracy and ensure hook counts and average hook calculations are clearly documented if needed.
- Net key completed for all trawl vessels observed.
- Comprehensive descriptions of all OTC, Catch Category and Species Composition Weight/Sample Methods utilized for each vessel covered. Include details on how random sampling/biological sampling techniques were implemented.
- Daily Notes completed for each day at sea, with thorough documentation of sampling strategies, problems encountered, interesting encounters, etc. including safety concerns and difficulty with crew.

### Data Submission to the Debriefers

In general, data collected by observers are sent to their debriefers. However, some items are shipped to the Newport Office. WCGOP has a UPS account for observers to ship data and samples to their debriefers. UPS account details will be provided at training or by your debriefer or coordinator. Specifics on where to send each type of data are summarized below.

ITEM:	SHIP TO:
Trip Data	Debriefers
Logbook	Debriefers
Species ID Forms	Debriefers
Otoliths	Debriefers
Tagged Fish Forms (with tag attached)	Debriefers
Salmon fin clips	Debriefers
Salmon Snouts	Astoria Office
Marine Mammal Snouts	Newport Office
Sturgeon Fin Ray Samples	Newport Office
Other Tissue Samples	Newport Office

Data should be submitted either in person or via UPS according to the following schedule; however, be aware that debriefers may ask for data earlier or later than this schedule. All Trip Data, species ID forms, otoliths and salmon fin clip sare due monthly as follows

:

Data Collected	Due Date	Data Collected	Due Date
January	February 10th	July	August 10th
February	*March 10th	August	*September 10th
March	April 10th	September	October 10th
April	*May 10th	October	*November 10th
May	June 10th	November	December 10th
June	*July 10th	December	*January 10th

*\*Logbooks due*

Group data **by trip**, with forms arranged in the following order:

- Trip Form(s).



- Haul data: Hauls in sequential order with each haul's forms arranged in the following order:
  - a. Catch Form(s).
  - b. Species Composition Form(s).
  - c. Length Frequency Form(s).
  - d. Biospecimen Form(s).
- Trip Discard Form(s).
- Marine Mammal Sighting, Tagged Fish, and/or Seabird Sighting Form(s).

Salmon Fin Clips

- Attach fin clip envelopes to the associated trip data with paper clips.

Otolith Vials

- **Otoliths must be clean and dry prior to shipping.**
- Bundle and **clearly label** (with trip # and haul #) all otolith vials for trips being sent. Otoliths should be grouped by trip and, if more than 10 specimens have been collected for a single trip, by haul.

**Logbooks** should be submitted with trip data at the end of each two-month period (highlighted due dates in previous table above).

***Bring all dissections to the debriefing interview so that barcode numbers can be verified.***

After the debriefer interview:

**Salmon Snouts:** Salmon snouts must be shipped to the Astoria office within a week of the debriefing interview. All salmon snouts must be salted prior to shipping! To prepare snouts for shipping:

- Salt snout (either at collection or upon return from trip).
- After a day or two, dump out used, nasty salt and replace with new salt.
- Repeat if necessary until snout is shipped.
- Double or triple bag salted snout.
- UPS snouts **overnight** to the Astoria office. **Before you ship a snout to Astoria, call an Astoria debriefer to ensure they will be in the office to receive the snout package. Snouts should never arrive at the Astoria office on a weekend or holiday.**

**Marine Mammal snouts:** Marine mammal snouts should be salted and sent to the Newport office as soon as possible **after** the debriefing interview is completed. Follow all salt and shipping instructions listed above.

**Coral and green sturgeon tissue samples:** Tissue samples should be sent to the Newport Office as soon as possible **after** the debriefing interview is completed. Follow shipping instructions listed above.

**Remember!** Due dates are the dates that data **must be received by** the debriefer, not the day it needs to be sent. Keeping up with paper work and computer entry is a must. If data is due during the dates of a scheduled trip, you must submit your data prior to leaving port! Debriefers may request that data be sent earlier than in the schedule outlined above. Instances where this might occur include:

- New observers will be required to submit data after their first or first few trips to allow for an early evaluation of sampling procedures.
- Observers leaving the program will be required to submit data after every trip in the weeks before conclusion of their contract, allowing debriefer enough time to review data.
- Other instances may occur at the discretion of the debriefer.

### Data Review by Debriefer

When trip data is received by the debriefers, they double check sampling strategies, all calculations and forms, and verify that barcode numbers on the paper forms match those on the otolith vials and scale envelopes submitted. All data forms with errors are flagged. The trips containing errors and a list detailing what needs to be corrected are returned to the observer.

Debriefers review the observer logbooks bimonthly. The logbook allows debriefers to become familiar with the sampling methods employed on the vessels covered prior to the interview.



### Data Corrections by Observer

Observer data with errors will be returned to them for correction. Data errors will be flagged and error explanations will be documented on an attached

spreadsheet. Data corrections must be made in a timely manner. Data corrections must be made to the paper forms **and** the database! Once observers make trip error corrections on all paper forms and database, another Trip Error Report should be run in the database and then mailed back to the debriefer.

### **Debriefing Interview**

Once all required materials have been received and reviewed by the debriefer, a debriefing interview will be arranged. The debriefing interview is a vital part of the observer's job. The interview is the observer's chance to demonstrate understanding of the methods learned in training and proficiency at applying them in the field. It is also an opportunity to give personal insights to WCGOP personnel about potential improvements to the program.

Any mistakes, paper and/or electronic, that have not been corrected prior to the debriefing interview must be corrected at that time.

### **Written Performance Assessment and Evaluation**

Observers receive a job performance assessment and an evaluation after each debriefing interview that will be posted in the database. The assessment is primarily designed to provide constructive feedback to observers to help clarify program needs and requirements of them. The assessment is broken down into nine categories. Each category covers different portions of the job and has different criteria that are considered. The last category is the evaluation summary which summarizes all the assessment categories together for overall job performance. The following is a copy of the actual Assessment/Evaluation form used by the WCGOP debriefing team

:

**Sampling Procedures**

Fishery – Vessels, Trips, Hauls

<i>OTC</i>	
<i>Catch Categories</i>	
<i>Biological Sampling</i>	
<i># of Hauls unsampled or otherwise not analyzable and reason(s)</i>	

Options for OTC and Catch Category Descriptors:

- Used Appropriately
- Minor Improvement Needed (comment required)
- Major Improvement Needed (comment required)

Options for Biological Sampling Descriptor:

- All/Most biological samples collected.
- Minor Improvement Needed (comment required)
- Major Improvement Needed (comment required)

Options for Reason(s) hauls unsampled or otherwise not analyzable:

- Catch dumped at-sea
- Weather/Safety (including rough seas)
- Safety due to last haul of trip
- Gear Issue
- Illness/Injury (including seasickness)
- Species composition failed
- Other

**Sampling Size**

1. Observer met program goal for sample size.	Average for non-whole hauled species composition weights was
2. Observer met program goal for number of fish used for average weight/number calculations.	

Options for Descriptors:

- Yes
- Generally (comment required)
- No (comment required)

**Data Forms**

1. Data forms are legible.	
2. Data forms are organized.	
3. All required fields filled in.	
4. Data fields completed according to instructions.	
5. No/minimal transcription errors.	
6. Raw data documented consistently.	
7. TRAWL ONLY - Raw data not transcribed and all appropriate data documented.	
8. TRAWL ONLY – Biological sampling list documented on all hauls.	
9. All fish ticket numbers documented.	
10. Clean Trip Error Report.	

Options for Descriptors:

- Yes
- Generally (comment required)
- No (comment required)
- N/A – not applicable

**Calculations**

1. All calculations clearly documented.	
2. Correct formulas always used.	
3. No/minimal calculation errors	

Options for Descriptors:

- Yes
- Generally (comment required)
- No (comment required)

**Observer Logbook**

1. List of vessels thoroughly completed.	
2. Vessel safety checklists appropriately completed.	
3. Observer safety equipment checklist completed both months.	
4. Observer safety survey completed.	
5. Scales calibrated according to protocol.	
6. All vessels properly diagramed.	
7. Footrope Key completed (Trawl only).	
8. All OTC weight methods thoroughly described.	
9. All catch category weight methods, species composition sample methods, and biological sampling techniques described.	
10. Random sampling techniques thoroughly documented.	
11. Daily notes thoroughly written for each observed day.	

Options for Descriptors:

- Yes
- Generally (comment required)
- No (comment required)
- N/A (not applicable)

**Species ID**

1. # of Species ID forms completed during assessment period	
2. # of Species ID forms not accepted	
3. % of species with completed forms for assessment period.	
4. All forms thoroughly completed.	
5. Met program expectation of 10 forms completed in assessment period or at least 85% of species seen during assessment period have completed forms.	

Options for Descriptors for questions 4 and 5:

- Yes
- No (comment required)

**Attitude/Reliability/Flexibility****Debrief**

1. Observer entered all trips within 5 days of disembarking.	
2. Observer has positive attitude and interactions with debriefer.	

**Coordinator**

1. Observer maintained a positive attitude.	
2. Observer was reliable.	

Options for Descriptors:

- Yes
- No (comment required)

**Communication**

**Debriefer**

1. Observer maintained good communications with debriefer.	
--	--

**Coordinator**

1. Observer maintained good communications with coordinator, leads, and vessels.	
2. All communications were logged thoroughly.	
3. All communications were logged in a timely manner.	
4. All vessel safety checklists were submitted in a timely manner.	

Options for Descriptor:

- Yes
- No (comment required)

**Areas for Improvement**

**Previous Assessments:**

Category	Level	Issues	Status

**New Areas for Improvement:**

Category	Level	Issues	Status

Level Descriptors:

- Improvement
- Task

## Requirement

### *Status*

- New
- Completed
- Not completed-observer has opportunity to complete task by did not.
- Pending (use in circumstances when the area could not be improved because the situation/species/issue was not encountered during assessment period.)

### *Summary Evaluation-*

This is the last section and is the written Evaluation of the Observers performance for the period.

Assessment and evaluations include written comments on each category and are posted in the database. Although there are no numerical scores associated with the assessment and evaluation, each category's comments will include notes on both **Accomplishments** (areas in which the observer met or exceeded program expectations) and **Areas for Improvement** (areas in which program expectations were not met - this may be left blank if all expectations were met or exceeded). If there are serious problems with data quality or any other portion of an observer's duties, or if the same deficiencies are repeatedly noted as 'Areas for Improvement' the evaluation may include **Tasks or Requirements**.

### *Tasks and Requirements*

**Tasks** are duties the observer **must** complete prior to the next debriefing or prior to an assigned date. Examples of Tasks include re-reading a specific chapter of the manual to improve understanding of sampling protocols or a stringent guideline requiring the completion of a duty neglected in previous periods (e.g. Species ID Forms must be completed for all new species encountered). If a Task is not completed by the time of the next evaluation it will be noted as a Requirement.

**Requirements** are duties the observer must complete or disciplinary action will be taken. In addition to unfulfilled Tasks, problems that severely affect an



observer's ability to adequately perform their job may be listed as Requirements. Examples of such items include an observer refusing to follow proper sampling protocol or significant problems with communication and/or attitude. Any time a Requirement is listed, the following items will also be documented:

1. Consequences if Requirement is not satisfactorily met.
2. Timeline in which Requirement must be met.

A mid-cruise debriefing must be done within a month of any evaluation containing a requirement.

Usually, observers will receive a draft assessment and evaluation from the debriefer at the debriefing interview. During the interview, observers may make clarifications that could potentially lead to modifications of the draft assessment and evaluation. A final assessment and evaluation will be made available on the database after the interview is completed. **Observers are required to read and sign off on the assessment and evaluations in the WCGOP database.** The assessment and evaluation may be edited until the observer signs off on it. If an observer feels that their assessment and evaluation does not fairly represent the job they have done, they may contact their debriefer directly or, if they are uncomfortable doing that, they may contact the lead debriefer or the Team Lead. By signing an assessment and evaluation, the observer verifies that they have seen the assessment and evaluation regardless of whether or not they agree with its contents. AOI will monitor the status of assessment and evaluations and will contact observers who have not signed off on recent assessment and evaluations.



## X. Maintaining WCGOP Observer Status

Observers continuing with the program must:

1. Adhere to WCGOP Standards of Conduct, Data Confidentiality, and Conflict of Interest requirements. (see Chapter 2, West Coast Groundfish Observer Program).
2. Demonstrate proficiency during each trip.
3. Receive satisfactory performance evaluations.

4. Maintain current First Aid and CPR certifications.
5. Pass a yearly fish test.
6. Complete a yearly WCGOP-approved safety training course.
7. Participate in an annual briefing and meeting.

