



Observer Life

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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.
- Explanation of the data debriefing process and observer evaluations.
- Requirements for maintaining a position as a WCGOP observer.

First Days

Start Dates and Contacts

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

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

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

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. 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.***

1. Guidelines for contacting vessel owner/operator by phone:
2. When calling the vessel owner or captain, do so in a friendly and professional manner.
3. State your name and association with the WCGOP.
4. Make it a habit to begin with a professional introduction to whoever answers the phone.
5. If the vessel owner/operator is not available, leave a message with your name and number and request that they return your call.
6. 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.
7. 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 as early as possible BEFORE before the first trip (See Observer Logbook for Vessel Safety Checklist). This gives vessels time to correct any deficiencies that may exist. **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 can be 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.

The Vessel Safety Checklist must be completed and mailed, faxed or emailed 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, faxed, or emailed 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.

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 Locator Beacon (PLB), it is vital that NOAA Fisheries, PSMFC, and AOI are aware when observers are at-sea in the event that a PLB is set off. If an observer's PLB 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 PLB, 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:

- First and last name
- Vessel name
- Departure port
- Estimated time of departure
- Estimated length of trip
- 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:

- First and last name
- Vessel name
- 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 PLB, 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 start trip in the database within 3 days of the disembarkation date.
7. Complete entry of trip into database **within 3 days** of disembarkation date. After the First Trip

Observers **must** contact their debriefer after their first trip to ensure all proper sampling protocols were followed (see the manual appendix for all debriefer contact information).

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.

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.
- 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.

Observer Safety and Sampling Gear

The WCGOP will supply sampling and safety equipment for observers. Observers should check sampling gear to see that it is in good working order when issued. It is the responsibility of each observer to maintain their gear and return it in the best condition possible. Observers

may be charged for misuse or neglect of sampling/safety gear. Observers rely on their equipment to perform their sampling duties, so making gear cleaning and upkeep a daily routine is recommended.

Observer Safety Gear

Safety gear is the most important equipment issued to observers. All safety gear is inspected to ensure it is in working order at the time of issue. Safety gear requires routine maintenance and inspection. Observers should test their safety gear once a month and document it in the Observer Logbook. The WCGOP provides the following safety gear:

- Immersion Suit (See Chapter 11 Gear).
- Personal Locator Beacon (PLB).
- Personal Flotation Device (PFD).
- Strobe for Survival Suit.
- Strobe for PFD.
- Whistle
- First Aid Kit.
- In addition, observers are issued gear to help prevent injuries such as safety glasses, hard hats, back braces, earplugs, and carbon monoxide detectors.

Safety equipment is provided to help survive an emergency at-sea and to reduce reliance on the vessel's safety equipment. While at-sea, the immersion suit should be:

- Kept in a safe place that is dry.
- Easily accessible at all times (consider storing in

galley or near outside hatch).

- Kept separately from the crew's.
- In addition, keep the WCGOP-issued PLB in the immersion suit.

Proper maintenance of all safety gear is a priority for WCGOP observers. More information regarding safety gear is located in Chapter 9, *Health and Safety Info* and Chapter 11, *Gear*.

Observer Sampling Gear

The majority of sampling gear will be issued at training (see Chapter 11, *Gear*).

1. Keep gear in a secure place aboard the vessel. Avoid leaving gear on the vessel's deck. If there is no alternative to leaving it out on deck, be sure that everything is well secured and protected from the weather.
2. Keep forms, books, pencils, pens, and unused equipment in a dry safe place, such as the forepeak, stateroom, or a secure lazarette.
3. Keep all gear as clean as possible. Use deck hoses to rinse slime, scales, and blood off the baskets, deck sheets, length boards, clipboards, scalpel, and knife after each use. Rinse gear with fresh water after each trip.
4. Keep metal parts clean and well oiled.
5. Do not put scales, scalpels, knives, thumb counters, measuring tapes, or other metal objects in plastic bags or boxes when they are wet or they will rust.
6. Follow protocols for maintaining motion

compensated scales in Chapter 11 Gear.

7. If something does happen to the issued gear, document what happened in the Observer Logbook. Observers will not be charged for gear damage or loss due to uncontrollable, documented circumstances.
8. Keep sampling gear consolidated. This will minimize the chance of forgetting something when disembarking and will be appreciated by the vessel crew during the trip.
9. **Do not check the WCGOP issued laptop computer when traveling by air. It should be a carry on item for all flights.**

If replacement gear is required, contact the WCGOP gear technician. If the gear is vital to safety or sampling your respective contractor must also be informed. More information can be found regarding scale care and scale testing in Chapter 11, *Gear*.

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.

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.

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 five 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 5 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.

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 promptly follow all the steps in the data quality process.

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). Data corrections will be documented on the WCGOP data correction sheet (DCS) and provided to the observer with their reviewed data. Also provided in this document will be performance feedback and areas of improvement for the observer. It is very important to read and follow the instructions on the DCS to maintain observer certification.
4. Data corrections promptly completed by observer on the paper forms and in the database and sent back to the debriefer.
5. Debriefing interview between debriefer and observer, if needed. The need for an interview will be determined by the debriefer and the observer and provider will be notified. At a minimum, an observer can expect an interview after their first three trips, every six months, and at the end of their contract. Performance concerns may also lead to additional debriefings at the discretion of the WCGOP staff.
6. Written Performance Assessment and Evaluation by

debrieger. A full written evaluation will be given at the end of an observer's contract. In addition to this, performance feedback will be given monthly to the observer through the DCS.

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 1/100ths of a minute.
- Check that excluder presence is absent, present, or blank (if you did not check for an excluder).
- 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.
- Catch # column is filled in sequentially.
- Volume and Density columns are filled in for any catch category with weight method 2 (trawl only, record to two decimal places).
- Fish #column completed for weight methods 8, 9 and 13, and if an actual #, for methods 14 and 6.
- # Hooks/Pots sampled column filled in (Fixed Gear only). All fixed gear catch categories in a given haul MUST have the same number of sampled Hooks/Pots.
- Wt. Method and Catch Purity fields are recorded or lined down for all catch categories.
- Discard Reason column is filled in only for discard catch categories with no associated species composition sample.
- Catch/ Sample Weight keypunch check is completed.
- # Hooks/Pots keypunch check is completed (Fixed Gear only).

Species Composition Form

- Haul number is recorded.
- Page is numbered.

- Date is recorded as MM/DD/YY.
- Trip number is recorded.
- 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 two decimal places.
- KP Weight and KP Number fields are completed for every catch category recorded to 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 (nearshore fixed gear only)

Length Frequency Form:

- Haul number is recorded.
- Page is numbered.
- Date is recorded as MM/DD/YY.
- Trip number is recorded.
- 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.
- Reason for discard code is 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.

- Keypunch checks (length and frequency) are completed for all species.
- Verify that individuals that are recorded on the Biospecimen Form are NOT also recorded on the Length Frequency Form. 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.
- 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.
- Biosample method is correct
- Verify that Discard reason is recorded for each species.
- 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.

Trip Discard Form

- Page is numbered.
- Trip number is recorded.
- 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.
- Equipment Test Checklist completed at least once a month.
- Scale Test Record documented.
- Detailed vessel diagrams completed for all vessels covered.
- Net key completed for all trawl vessels observed.
- 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

Data collected by observers are sent to their debriefers. 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.

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 scales are due monthly as follows:

Data Collected	Date Due	Data Collected	Date Due
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*

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.

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).

Species IDs

- Submit the required five IDs per trip, either with the corresponding trip or placed inside cover of the logbook, as per debriefer request.
- The debriefer will verify that the correct # of forms have been fully completed and that all overfished species encountered have IDs submitted with photographs

Logbooks

- Logbooks should be submitted with trip data each month.

Salmon Fin Clips

- Attach scale/ 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.

Salmon snouts

Salmon snouts and marine mammal snouts must be sent to your debriefer within a week of the debriefing interview. If you are going to ship the salmon snouts and marine mammal snouts, they 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 your debriefer's office. Before you ship a snout to your debriefer, call your debriefer to ensure they will be in the office to receive the snout package. Snouts should never arrive at the office on a weekend or holiday.

Coral and green sturgeon tissue samples

Tissue samples should be sent to your debriefer as soon as possible after the debriefing interview is completed. Follow shipping instructions listed above.

Data Review by Debriefers

When trip data is received by the debriefers, they double check sampling strategies data documentation, any 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. All corrections that need to be made to the data will be documented on a Data Check Sheet (DCS) and provided to the observer. All areas of improvement the

observer needs to address will be provided in the DCS as well. The trips containing errors and a list detailing what needs to be corrected are returned to the observer.

Debriefers review the observer logbooks and species ID forms. The logbook allows debriefers to become familiar with the sampling methods employed on the vessels covered prior to the interview. The following table shows the data schedule for submitting and correcting data.:

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 sent 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 End of Contract Evaluation

Observers receive a written performance assessment following an interview, at the end of an observer's contract, and before a leave of absence. This evaluation will be posted in the database and a hard copy will be provided to the observer during the interview. 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 several 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 categories in the assessment/evaluation are:

1. **Sampling Procedures:** Proper use of weight methods, correct biosampling and Pacific Halibut sampling, # of unsampled hauls
2. **Sampling Size:** All species sampled according to protocol. Overall species composition size. Collection of basket weights and fish counts
3. **Data Forms:** Data organization and legibility. Completion of fields. Transcription errors. Review of TER.
4. **Observer Logbook:** All sections complete. Vessel diagrams are adequate. OTC and sample methods described. Randomization techniques detailed. Daily notes present.
5. **Species Identification:** SIDs for all encountered overfished species were submitted. Correct # of forms vs # of trips. Accurate and thorough form completion
6. **Attitude/Reliability/Flexibility:** Timely data entry and submission. Overall attitude toward at sea sampling and shoreside duties
7. **Communication:** Open lines of communication. Prompt responses to e-mail and phone calls.
8. **Areas for Improvement:** Outlines problems with data quality or other portion of the observers duties.
9. **Summary:** Includes notes on both.
10. **Accomplishments** (areas in which the observer met or exceeded program expectations) and **Areas for Improvement** (areas in which program expectations were not met).

Tasks and Requirements

With each month's data review sheet provided by the debriefer, the areas for improvement will be tracked for the observer. When problems or issues are first identified an Improvement is noted and what the observer needs to do to address the issue is explained in writing. If the same problem is seen again with the next month's data submission the improvement escalates to a Task. **Tasks** are duties the observer **must** complete before the next months data submission. 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 overfished species encountered). One task may not warrant bringing in an observer for an interview, but a few of them may. It will be at the discretion of the debriefer and the observer program. If the problem continues, the Task will escalate to a Requirement and the observer's provider will be notified of the continuing problem.

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. Observers with Requirements on their Areas for Improvement feedback will need to come in for an interview monthly until the problems are resolved. A meeting of the observer, debriefer and the observer provider may be requested. If corrections are not made after an issue becomes a Requirement, it will be requested that the observer repeat training or be decertified.

All observers will have Improvements and some Tasks at various times throughout their deployment but Requirements are rare. If data deadlines are met and WCGOP sampling procedures are followed an observer can expect to have only two or three debriefing interviews during their contract, including the end of contract evaluation.

End of Contract Performance Evaluation

Observers will be given at least one full evaluation at the end of their contract (possibly more with longer contracts). This evaluation will be a comprehensive look at the observer's performance over the course of their contract. The final summary will include any briefing or training requirements for the observer in order to re-obtain a deployment endorsement if returning to the WCGOP at a later date. Observers will receive a draft assessment and evaluation from the debriefer at the debriefing interview end of contract 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, the Team Lead or observer provider. By signing an assessment and evaluation, the observer verifies that they have reviewed the final evaluation regardless of whether or not they agree with its contents. The observer contractor have access to and will monitor the status of the final evaluations and will contact observers who have signed off to facilitate gear check-in and finalize any end of contract details.

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. Complete an annual briefing or training and attend any other briefings or trainings as instructed by the observer program to maintain their training, annual and deployment endorsements.

