



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Northeast Fisheries Science Center  
166 Water Street  
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

December 15, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR: A.I.S., Inc.,  
East West Technical Services,  
Fathom Research LLC, and  
MRAG Americas  
At-Sea Monitors, Industry Funded Scallop Observers, and  
Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers

FROM: Amy S. Martins, nee Van Atten  
Branch Chief, Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB)

*Suzanne Wecker*  
For Amy Martins

SUBJECT: **New protocol when recording a discard event.**

Per usual, in the case where a significant discarding event occurs, observers are required to complete and submit a Discard Log with the associated Haul Log. A significant discarding event is considered one where a relatively large amount of catch is released before coming on board the vessel (released directly into the water) or before the observer is able to sample the catch (dumped on deck then immediately shoveled over). This may be due to safety, weather, mechanical malfunctions, undesired species, vessel capacity filled, etc. Discarding events can take place across any gear type, but typically occur in trawl fisheries. In most cases the haul would be considered unobserved. **When a Discard Log is present, observers are now required to record all discard information in the species section of the Haul Log, even if the haul is unobserved.** This is consistent with the exception to unobserved hauls as documented on page 3 in the Observer Program Biological Sampling and Catch Estimation Manual, 2013. Unobserved hauls without a Discard Log will continue to follow normal protocol.

In effort to capture as much information for these events, observers must:  
Paper data:

- Document and describe the weight and species composition of the released catch as accurately as possible on the Discard Log. It is especially important for observers to comment on why the catch was released, the amount released, and the species composition of the catch. For example, 5,000lbs of catch was released because the net reel broke and the crew was unable to bring the catch onboard. I saw all of the contents of the codend directly released into the water. The released catch was composed mostly of dogfish (~4500lbs), but I also saw a mix of small hake and mixed sized skates (~500lbs).
- Record the released catch as 'Fish nk' and the corresponding weight and fish disposition code in the species section of the Haul Log (refer to 'Not brought onboard' fish disposition codes on pg. A.16 in the Observer Program Manual).

Electronic data:

- **OBPRELIM:**

Scallop and all other trips: Continue entering data as usual. *No change required.*

Herring: Continue entering all kept and discarded species, as well as a Discard Log for all hauls. *No change required.*

Longfin squid: For trips with catch >2500 lbs of longfin squid, continue entering all kept species and discarded butterfish as usual. In the case of a discarding event complete the electronic Discard Log and record the released catch as 'Fish nk' with the associated weight and fish disposition in the species section of the Haul Log.

You may enter discarded species in OBPRELIM on the Haul Log regardless of whether the haul is observed/unobserved. The electronic Discard Log is located between the positional data fields and the Haul Log species section of the Species screen. See below.

	Species Name	Pounds	Drop Code	Discard Reason
1	1000 - HERRING ATLANTIC	19472	100 - KEPT GENERAL	R
2	1477 - HADDOCK	114	172 - KEPT REGULATORY PROHIBIT	R
			DISCARD AT SEA	
3	2120 - MACKEREL ATLANTIC	140	100 - KEPT GENERAL	R
4	1040 - HAKE, BLUE (GATLING)	216	100 - KEPT GENERAL	R
5	1020 - HAKE, RED (LARGE)	32	100 - KEPT GENERAL	R
6	1477 - HADDOCK	5	301 - 1/2 MARKET BUT OBTAINED FOR	U
			EXPOSURE FOR BIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS	
7	1000 - HERRING ATLANTIC	3	307 - NO MARKET BUT RETAINED FOR	R
			DISSEMINATION FOR SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES	

- **SectorASM**

All groundfish trips: Because there is no electronic Discard Log available in the SectorASM program, in the case of discarding event observers should:

- Record all species, both kept and discarded, in the species section regardless of whether the haul is observed/unobserved.
- Write in the Haul comments 'Discard Log submitted'.
- In the species comments, record the specific species composition for the 'Fish nk' species record.

Please reference the Observer Program Manual, 2013 for detailed information on how to fill out the Discard Log (page 360). If you have any questions regarding this new protocol, please contact your assigned editor or Debra Duarte (508) 495-2304.