



May 15, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: MRAG Americas,
Northeast Fisheries Observers Program (NEFOP) Observers

FROM: Amy Martins 
Branch Chief, Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB)

SUBJECT:

Update A: River Herring and American Shad Biological Sampling Requests
Update B: Addition of Program Code (045) for Midwater Trawl Herring Vessels

Update A:

Researchers from Duke University and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries have requested samples of river herring (blueback herring, alewife) and American shad respectively. The basic goal of the research being conducted is to analyze where bycatch events occur and their impact to the local watershed level across all fisheries. Duke University is attempting to map bycatch of river herring back to their natal origins, by pinpointing the fish to the exact river in which they were spawned, using genetic and otolith geochemical markers. They wish to determine if river herring runs are impacted by bycatch events and where those events occur. Researchers in Virginia are attempting to look at the bycatch rate of oxytetracycline (OTC) marked fish encountered and the overall implications of bycatch to fisheries management and recovery of American shad populations.

In the event that there is river herring/shad bycatch on a haul, observers are asked to retain whole samples (Gear Type: All, Areas: All):

- For each species place up to 50 fish in a single bag per haul and label with tripid, haulnum, date, statistical area, and species. It is very important to separate species and record the haul number on which the bycatch event occurred, so that specific location information may be obtained.
- Samples should be frozen or placed in a cooler with ice as soon as possible.
- On the tag, please write "River Herring: Duke" or "American Shad: VA" to ensure the samples do not get mixed up with regular samples sent in for species ID or training purposes.
- Record the samples as disposition code 007 (no market, but retained by observer for science purposes) on your haul log. You are encouraged to collect as many specimens per haul/trip as is reasonable.

If you have questions regarding this sampling request please contact Chad Keith, (508) 495-2067, Charles.keith@noaa.gov.

Update B:

New Mid-water Trawl Herring Program Code (045)

Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan revised access to the groundfish closed areas for mid-water trawl vessels. These revisions were described in Memo 14-002, sent to observers in Feb, 2014. Amendment 5 includes a provision that requires any mid-water trawl vessel fishing inside any of the 5 groundfish closed areas to carry an observer. The 5 groundfish closed areas are Closed Area I, Closed Area II, Nantucket Lightship Closed Area, Cashes Ledge Closure Area, and Western Gulf of Maine Closure Area. The coordinates for these areas are available at the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office website. A new program code (045) was created to document these trips. This new code is different from the past program code (042) for Closed Area I. Since the new program code (045) includes Closed Area I and all other groundfish closed areas, this new code supersedes the old code (042) and should be used for any trips fishing within the groundfish closed areas. A trip is considered to have fished inside the groundfish closed areas if any haul begins or ends within one of the 5 groundfish closed areas. It is important for observers to use the correct herring program code so that trips can be accounted for correctly.

If you have questions please contact Glenn Chamberlain at (508) 495-2153 or Glenn.Chamberlain@noaa.gov

Thank you for your hard work and continued dedication to the observer program.