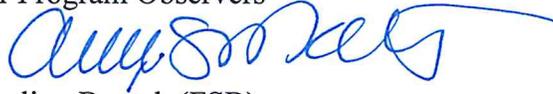




July 21, 2016

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

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

SUBJECT: Observer Gear Usage Policy

Observers are expected to carry and use their issued field gear on all deployments. This gear may be issued by NMFS or by the observer provider company. Lack of proper equipment can result in significant data loss.

On every trip, the following pieces of equipment are considered “critical gear”:

- Safety gear, including survival suit, personal locator beacon (PLB), and personal flotation device (PFD)
- Charged digital camera
 - Bringing an uncharged camera does NOT constitute being prepared for the trip. Cameras must be charged and ready to use at all times during an observed trip.
- Android tablets (currently only required on groundfish trips)
- Calipers (required on trawl, pot/trap, and dredge gears; strongly recommended on others)
- Length Frequency board(s) and strip(s)
- Spring scales and Marel scale (if issued)
- Incidental take kits, fully stocked
- Regulatory permits, forms to be given to captain (data release, OLE letters, etc.)
 - Rest of the Regulatory Compliance Folder recommended but not critical
- Observer identification (CAC)

If a piece of equipment was not brought on an observed trip, the observer must inform FSB as soon as possible after the trip lands. If issued a Marel scale but not able to bring it, a comment must be provided on the Marel Scale Worksheet indicating the reason.

FSB staff will evaluate reasons for not bringing equipment on a case-by-case basis. Events deemed “acceptable” may result in a warning. If an excuse is deemed “unacceptable”, that observer will be immediately placed on priority status for the next 3 trips. The observer will be allowed to deploy on back-to-back trips, but after the third trip they must wait for FSB to review their data and verify that all required equipment was brought.

Example: An observer reports that they cannot bring their Marel scale on a trip because the boat is too small. This is generally an acceptable reason, but FSB will compare with previous trips on that vessel. If multiple other observers were able to bring their Marel scale on the same boat recently, it will be considered an unacceptable excuse.

If an observer has a second incident of unacceptable missing gear, they will be put on probation for the next 3 trips. During probation they must take and submit a picture of all their gear on the vessel (the picture itself will serve as proof of the charged camera), and may not redeploy on the next trip until FSB has reviewed the picture and sent an approval notice.