

NOTE: Highlighted sections will be updated as appropriate.

Notice to Highly Migratory Species Pelagic Longline Permitholders selected for observer coverage in Quarter 3, 2020 (July 1 through September 30th, 2020).

Increase in Minimum Sets to be observed during Quarter 3

Due to the periods beginning on April 6th, 2020 when selected vessels were waived from Observer coverage while a plan to safely resume observer deployments was under development, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southeast Fisheries Science Center's Pelagic Observer Program waived a total of 33 trips on 12 selected vessels. It is unlikely that resumption of coverage in May or June 2020 will result in the Program achieving target coverage in Quarter 2. Under an Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation, in 2004 NMFS issued a Biological Opinion that required 8% annual observer coverage of the United States Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Pelagic Longline Fishery. In order to account for the unobserved effort in Quarter 2, 2020 and ensure compliance with the requirement for a minimum of 8% coverage for the year, the Pelagic Observer Program will require vessels selected for coverage in Quarter 3 to carry an observer more frequently than in normal selection periods. Selection letters normally specify a minimum number of sets that will be required to comply with observer coverage requirements; this number indicates the average number of sets the vessel normally does in a single trip. For Quarter 3, 2020, the minimum number of sets required that appears in the selection letter will represent an increase from what would normally be required. If the Pelagic Observer Program is unable to make up for the lost Quarter 2 effort in Quarter 3, this process will continue in Quarter 4.

Please note that the electronic monitoring systems carried by pelagic longline vessels in order to verify compliance with Amendment 7 bluefin tuna retention requirements do not serve as a substitute or augmentation of human observer coverage.

If you have questions about this process, please contact the Pelagic Observer Program at the number given in the selection letter.