

# NWFSC Observer Program Vessel Sampling Plan

## WCGOP Non-Catch Share Vessel Selection

Besides quality observers, the WCGOP Non-Catch Share program also needs a viable sampling plan to achieve its goal. A sampling plan is the framework used to sample the fleet in a non-biased and random fashion. The sampling plan is executed through vessel selection. A basic understanding of the vessel selection process is necessary for observers, as it explains observer placement on vessels and priorities for Non-Catch Share observer coverage.

Last year, the WCGOP Non-Catch Share program provided observer coverage for 13 fisheries. The methodology used for vessel selection is summarized below.

1. Permit lists are obtained from state (open access) or federal (limited entry) agencies.
2. Permits are placed in port groups based upon the previous year's landings. Port groups are one or more ports grouped together based upon fishing operations and proximity. The WCGOP has 13 port groups between Bellingham, WA, and San Diego, CA.
3. The WCGOP determines the selection cycle length for each fishery.
4. Permits are given a random number and selected sequentially for a coverage period.
5. Selection letters are sent from Seattle to the permit owners approximately 45 days prior to the coverage period.
6. When the coverage period begins, selected vessels are required to carry an observer for all trips during the period, unless given a waiver by a designated WCGOP official.

*Selection Cycle: The amount of time required to select and cover all vessels in the selection frame.*

*Coverage Period: The amount of time a vessel is required to carry an observer. During the coverage period, all trips a vessel takes must have an observer or a WCGOP-issued waiver. Coverage periods are usually 1, 2, or 7 months.*

## Determining Selection Cycle Length

As the fishery is managed with landing limits by species or species complex, it is only natural to assume that some limits will be reached prior to the attainment of all species or species complex limits. Once a limit is reached on a species, all individuals of that species caught thereafter will be discarded. Therefore, managers have long assumed the rate of discard increases as the vessel nears attainment of the limits. To capture a good image of the discard rate over time, observers are placed on vessels for the length of time the limits cover. For instance, species/species complex limits in the pink shrimp trawl fleet are for one-month periods. Therefore, observers cover shrimp trawlers for all trips during a one-month trip limit period. For the sablefish fishery, vessels catch their sablefish quota over a 9-month period. Observers cover these vessels for all trips during the 9-month period when sablefish are targeted.

The selection process is started for the entire fishery when permitting data becomes available. For fisheries where cycles begin in January, this process typically begins in the fall, and is finalized in mid to late November. Letters are sent out the month before a period begins (e.g. once selections are finalized for the entire year in November, letters for Jan-Feb are generated and sent).

## Non-Catch Share Fishery Coverage Priority List

As port groups often have multiple selected vessels that are fishing at the same time and there are only a limited number of observers, Non-Catch Share fisheries are prioritized for observer coverage in the following order:

- Tier 1:** Electronic Monitoring (EM) Exempted Fishing Permits, Limited Entry Sablefish Endorsed
- Tier 2:** IPHC Directed Commercial Halibut, Zero Tier Sablefish, West Coast Open Access Sablefish, CA Halibut, and all nearshore fisheries
- Tier 3:** WA/OR/CA Shrimp

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## Non-Catch Share Observer Placement

There are two important facets to observer placement: seasonality and geography.

The number of observers deployed by the WCGOP changes throughout the year to coincide with fishing activity. Fishing activity is highest during the summer months and lowest during the winter. This is due to various reasons, including weather and vessel participation in other fisheries.

As permits are placed in port groups prior to selection, observers are also assigned to a port group. The port group an observer works in will usually include a large port and the surrounding smaller ports. Observers primarily cover vessels that originate out of their assigned home port group but travel to other port groups may be necessary.

## WCGOP Catch Share Vessel Selection

The WCGOP Catch Share program is structured differently in that all vessels participating in Catch Share fisheries must have 100% observer coverage. Rather than receiving a selection letter, all Catch Share fishers must contact an observer provider company to establish a contract for coverage. Catch Shares fisheries do not have selection cycles or coverage periods. An observer must be onboard for all fishing activity that occurs on a Catch Share vessel.

## A-SHOP Vessel selection

Regulations requiring 100% observer coverage for catcher-processors (C/Ps) and motherships (MS) went into effect in 2004, though observers have been deployed in the hake fishery since 1975. From 1975- 2000, observers on hake vessels were deployed by the North Pacific Observer Program. The At-Sea Hake Observer Program (A-SHOP) in its current form began in 2001, at the same time as the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program, to manage observers deployed along the West Coast. Currently, the mothership and catcher-processor sectors both operate under cooperative agreements (co-ops) which are part of the West Coast Catch Shares program.

The at sea Hake fishery opens May 15 and the last day of fishing allowed is December 31. Typically there are 15 +/- 1 participating vessels. There is a 'spring season' (mid-May through June) and a 'fall season' (late August through November). Trip durations range from 10 days to three weeks, depending on the vessel and the season.

## 2024 WCGOP Non-Catch Share Vessel Selection Criteria

Annual selection lists are produced for the 11 Non-Catch Share (NCS) fisheries covered by WCGOP observers.

1. **OR Blue/Black Rockfish**
2. **OR Blue/Black Nearshore Rockfish**
3. **CA Nearshore Rockfish**
4. **WC OA Fixed Gear**
5. **CA Halibut**
6. **CA Pink Shrimp**
7. **OR Pink Shrimp**
8. **WA Pink Shrimp**
9. **Limited Entry Zero Tier**
10. **LE Sablefish Tier**
11. **IPHC Commercial Directed 2A fishery**

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### 1. OR Blue/Black Rockfish - 40 permits in Cycle 21 (6 Periods Jan-Dec 2024)

#### CRITERIA APPLIED:

- a) Selection is by permit for 2 month period
- b) All Permits selected
- c) Vessel has a Black/Blue Rockfish Permit
- d) Vessel used fixed gear to land the rockfish
- e) Permit is currently assigned to a vessel or fisher
- f) Vessel  $\geq$  18 ft.

### 2. OR Blue/Black Nearshore - 65 permits in Cycle 21 (6 Periods Jan-Dec 2024)

#### CRITERIA APPLIED:

- a) Selection is by permit.
- b) All Permits selected. Started selecting 100% of permits in 2014
- c) Vessel has a Black/Blue Rockfish Permit with a Nearshore Endorsement
- d) Vessel used fixed gear to land the rockfish
- e) Permit is currently assigned to a vessel or fisher
- f) Vessel  $\geq$  18 ft.

### 3. CA Nearshore - 172 permits selected in Cycle 23 (6 Periods Jan-Dec 2024)

#### CRITERIA APPLIED:

- a) Valid permit with one or more of these endorsements.
  - Deeper Nearshore Species Fishery Permit
  - Nearshore Fishery Permit, N. Central Coast
  - Nearshore Fishery Permit, North Coast
  - Nearshore Fishery Permit, S. Central Coast
  - Nearshore Fishery Permit, South Coast
  - Nearshore Trap Endorsement
  - N. Central Coast
  - Nearshore Trap Endorsement , North Coast
  - Nearshore Trap Endorsement, S. Central Coast
  - Nearshore Trap Endorsement , South Coast
- b) Fixed Gear used
- c)  $\geq$ 1lbs shallow & deeper nearshore rockfish ONLY. Cabezon, CA Sheephead, Sablefish, Lingcod, "Other groundfish" and Thornyheads were removed from the total landings starting in 2018.
- d) Vessel  $\geq$ 18ft
- e) If a license or endorsement was fished on multiple vessels, the vessel with the most landings was selected for coverage.
- f) Since we're selecting permits, not vessels, a vessel may be selected twice if it fishes two permits

### 4. West Coast OA FG - 201 licenses selected in Cycle 18 (6 Periods Jan-Dec 2024)

#### CRITERIA APPLIED:

- a) Vessel does not have a limited entry permit for the year
- b) Vessel does not have a CA Nearshore, Blue/Black, Blue/Black Nearshore permit for the year

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- c) Landings from CA, OR, WA
  - d) **Pool 1:** At least 2000 lbs combined landings in the last 2 years of Lingcod, Flatfish, Spiny Dogfish, Sablefish, Non-Nearshore Rockfish or Misc Landings (Whiting, Pacific Cod, Longnose Skate). *This pool of landings has sablefish landings but may also have a nearshore permit.*
  - e) **Pool 2:** At least 2000 lbs combined landings in the last 2 years of Lingcod, Flatfish, Spiny Dogfish, Non-Nearshore Rockfish or Misc Landings (Whiting, Pacific Cod, Longnose Skate). *This pool of vessels does not have sablefish landings and does not have a nearshore permit.*
  - f) Both pools are combined. If a vessel has landings in multiple ports the vessel is selected based on the port group with the most landings.
  - g) Troll gear landings (PacFin gear codes BTR and TRL) are now included when determining if a vessel has enough landings in the last two years to be selected.
  - h) Landings with fixed gear LE Permits excluded.
  - i) Does not include tribal landings.
  - j) Vessel  $\geq$  18ft
- 5. CA\_Halibut - 19 permits selected in Cycle 30 (1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024)**  
**CA\_Halibut - 19 permits selected in Cycle 31 (7/1/2024 to 12/31/2024)**  
**CRITERIA APPLIED:**
- a) CA Halibut Trawl Permit
  - b) Permit must be associated with landings over the last two years
  - c) Vessel used any trawl gear to land the CA Halibut
  - d) Vessel  $\geq$ 18 ft.
  - e) Starting in 2015, cycle was reduced to 6 months
- 6. CA Pink Shrimp - 23 permits selected in Cycle 19 (7 Periods Apr-Oct 2023)**  
**CRITERIA APPLIED:**
- a) California Pink Shrimp permit
  - b) Pink Shrimp landed in CA or OR
  - c) Valid permit must be associated with landings over the last two years
  - d) Vessel  $\geq$ 18 ft
- 7. OR Pink Shrimp - 87 permits selected in Cycle 19 (7 periods Apr-Oct 2023)**  
**CRITERIA APPLIED:**
- a) Oregon Pink Shrimp permit
  - b) Pink Shrimp landed in CA, OR, WA
  - c) Valid permit must be associated with landings over the last two years
  - d) Vessel  $\geq$ 18 ft
- 8. WA Pink Shrimp - 55 permits selected in Cycle 14 (7 periods Apr-Oct 2023)**  
**CRITERIA APPLIED:**
- a) Washington Pink Shrimp permit
  - b) Pink Shrimp landed in WA or OR
  - c) Valid permit must be associated with landings over the last two years
  - d) Vessel  $\geq$ 18 ft

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### **9. LE Sablefish 0 Tier - 34 permits selected in Cycle 21 (6 periods Jan-Dec 2024)**

#### **CRITERIA APPLIED:**

- a) All vessels selected with valid permits.
- b) Longline, Trawl, or Trap endorsement without a Sablefish endorsement -TIER1, TIER2 or TIER3
- c) If a vessel was not associated with the permit, the previous year's landings were used to determine the primary port group.
- d) Vessel  $\geq$  18ft.
- e) Selected for a 2 month period.
- f) Selection period now runs from Apr. - Dec. (not Apr. - Nov.)

### **10. LE Sable Fixed Gear - 68 permits selected in Cycle 18 (Apr-Dec 2024)**

#### **CRITERIA APPLIED:**

- a) Selection by permit
- b) Permit Holder contact information is used for Vessel Selection
- c) Permit must have a Sablefish Tier greater than 0 (Tier 1,2,3)
- d) Permits must be associated with a vessel that has  $>$  0 sablefish landings in the last 2 years
- e) Gear used must be Longline/Trap
- f) 40% of permits selected from each port group
- g) Port Groups may be excluded or selected based on random generation

### **11. IPHC Directed 2A Commercial halibut - 36 permits selected in Cycle 7 (Jun - Sep 2023)**

#### **CRITERIA APPLIED:**

- a) Permit is the same as the Vessel Number
- b) Permit Holder contact information is used for Vessel Selection
- c) Vessel  $\geq$  18ft
- d) Only select vessels with landings  $\geq$ 1 lb in the prior two years
- e) Only vessels fishing in WA, OR, CA were selected. AK vessels were excluded
- f) 40% of permits with landings selected from each port group