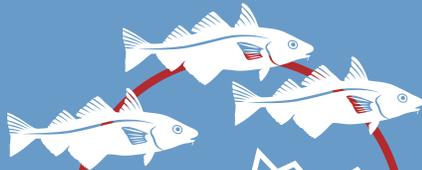
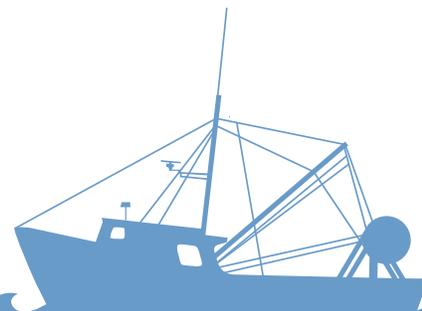


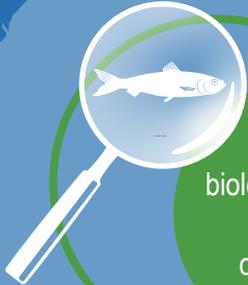
The Northeast Fisheries Science Center manages multiple observer programs covering federal and state waters from Maine to North Carolina. Our team processes and manages data and biological samples collected by observers during commercial fishing trips.



To inform stock assessments & fishery management



To reduce bycatch with gear modifications



To collect biological samples for special collections & research

How do we use observer data?

To recommend sustainable seafood choices (FishWatch)



To document commercially-important, special, & endangered species



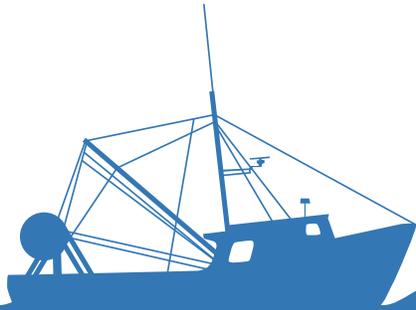
To explore new fisheries & revisit small fisheries



To provide information for the scientific & research community



NOAA
FISHERIES



How do we use observer data?

Observer data provide unique and independent information, collected at sea, critical to the effective management of our marine resources. These data support sustainable fisheries and protected species recovery.



Inform Stock Assessments & Fishery Management

Observer data directly inform stock assessments to monitor the health of fisheries. Fisheries managers utilize observer data to set catch levels, maintain healthy fish populations, and rebuild overfished stocks.



Reduce Bycatch

Commercial fishery catch includes two components: kept catch and discarded catch. Kept catch is landed and sold, while discarded catch is thrown back into the ocean. Because some of the discards do not survive, NOAA Fisheries is working with fishermen and others to modify commercial fishing gear to reduce unwanted bycatch. When a gear modification is made, data collection is essential to make sure the modified gear is working as intended.



Recommend Sustainable Seafood

FishWatch is a NOAA Fisheries tool that provides up-to-date information and facts about U.S. seafood, so consumers and businesses can make informed decisions and be pointed toward sustainable choices. Observer data help assess the state of the fishery, determine impacts to habitats, and evaluate bycatch for FishWatch.



Support Science & Research

Every year, we receive requests for non-confidential fisheries data for use in research from government agencies, the commercial fishing industry, and academic institutions across the country. From 2015–2019, the program processed over 300 of these data requests.



Explore New or Smaller Fisheries

The fishing industry constantly evolves as new technology is developed and new markets open. Observers are there to collect baseline data for managers to determine if the resource could be—or still is—fished sustainably.



Document Species

In 2018, our fisheries observers spent about 10,782 days (~172,200 hours) at sea, where they encountered many types of fish, mammals, seabirds, and invertebrates. The Species Verification Program (SVP) validates the accuracy of identification by requiring observers to photograph or submit a wide variety of commercially-important species, endangered species, or species of particular concern. SVP data provides feedback to observers and are used to improve observer training methods, support improved data accuracy, and evaluate species-specific data reliability. SVP records provide high-confidence data on species distributions used to identify important and shifting species-specific habitats and ranges.



Enhance Special Collections

Due to their specialized training and equipment, observers offer a unique opportunity to support new research or fill data gaps by collecting biological samples. Observers help promote long-term sustainability of fishing ecosystems by working collaboratively with fishermen, scientists, and resource managers.