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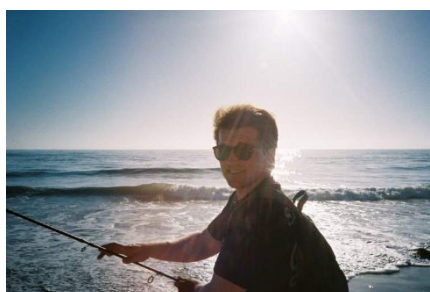
National Marine Fisheries Service
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

2025 AFSC Seminar Series

Cameron Van Horn, Pacific States Marine Fisheries
Commission; AFSC

Tuesday, April 8th @ 10 am Pacific

Understanding data deletion in the North Pacific groundfish observer program



Fisheries observer programs represent a type of long-term ecological monitoring program (LTEM), and as such employ varied quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) methods to ensure data vital to sustainable fisheries management is of the highest quality. In the North Pacific Observer Program (NPOP), a significant element of the QA/QC chain is the final debriefing, an interview between trained, highly knowledgeable staff (a.k.a., debriefers) and fisheries observers returning from deployment. The purpose of the

interview is to review all collected data to ensure compliance with collection standards and quality guidelines. To understand the impact of final debriefings on data quality in the NPOP, we summarized trends in how, where, and why debriefers deleted data during the interview stage from 2014-2023. We summarized deletions by calculating the percent of available data deleted by debriefers within the covariates of time (year), vessel class and gear type (as groups), observer experience (approximated by number of prior cruises), whether observers were deployed alone or with other observers to a vessel, and by deletion causes attributed by debriefers upon deletion. Our findings suggest debriefers in the NPOP rarely delete data *en masse*. The value of debriefing appears through the removal of biased or incorrectly transcribed data, especially aboard vessels fishing pot gear, and for observers with little experience and when deployed as the sole observer on a trip. These summaries demonstrate how debriefing acts as a vital component of fisheries observer programs to maintain high quality standards.

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