



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Northeast Fisheries Science Center  
166 Water Street  
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

January 28, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers

FROM: Amy S. Van Atten *for Patricia Yoon*  
Acting Branch Chief, FSB

SUBJECT: Paperwork Reduction Act and NEFOP Observer Logs

The National Observer Program is working on obtaining guidance regarding observer logs and the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). Among other things, the PRA's purpose is to minimize the paperwork burden for individuals; ensure the greatest possible public benefit; improve the quality and use of Federal information to strengthen decision-making, accountability, and openness in Government and society; and ensure that the creation, collection, maintenance, use, dissemination, and disposition of information by or for the Federal Government is consistent with applicable laws.

Until we receive the final guidance to ask captains questions during an observed trip, we should continue to try to minimize the amount of questions that we ask the fishermen, in particular, questions that are related to collecting and submitting data variables. All of the questions that the NEFOP observers ask are deemed essential to the safety of observers, the logistics of the observer program, and/or the utility of the observed data, so we will continue to collect the information.

**As you have been trained and instructed to do, this memo is to reinforce that observers should reduce the frequency and/or curtail the practice of asking questions that could potentially be observed directly. Until we have received the final clearance on our observer logs, when there are instances where the observer must ask a question, the observer must not tell the captain that the question is mandatory.**

We are working on getting final guidance on the Paperwork Reduction Act and if needed, clearance approved through the Office of Management and Budget to support the mandatory collection of these asked fields, but until then, the questions that must be asked of the captain should be collected on a voluntary basis.



So as not to confuse your interpretation of this memo, you can continue to complete your logs as you were trained during your certification process – however, remember to collect whatever information you can on your own before asking the captain. This advisement on the “asked questions” should not curtail your communication with the captain that we have tried to promote and support over the years. *Remember, the Six-Month Questions Log is no longer collected.*

As the program is seeking PRA guidance, this does NOT affect the mandatory observer requirements. **Fishing vessels must still comply with the requirements to carry observers and meet the safety regulations. Refusals to carry an observer, or cases of observer intimidation, etc. should be brought to our attention immediately as before.**

If after reading this memo, there is any uncertainty regarding the intent of the memo to please contact me directly at 508-495-2266 or by email [Amy.Van.Atten@noaa.gov](mailto:Amy.Van.Atten@noaa.gov).

Thank you for your continued attention and cooperation.

