



May 20, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR: A.I.S., Inc.,
East West Technical Services and MRAG Americas
At-Sea Monitors and
Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers

FROM: Amy S. Van Atten 
Branch Chief, Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB)

SUBJECT: 6 Month Debriefings

In an effort to increase observer communication, feedback and data quality, The Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB) encourages observers to be debriefed in person on a bi-yearly rotation. Formerly this process was isolated to Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) observers; however, the FSB sees value in making this an operational requirement for all programs. The FSB is re-instating a regular debriefing process that requires all NEFOP observers and At-Sea-Monitors (ASM) to attend a debriefing physically at Falmouth Technology Park. Industry Funded Scallop observers may be added at a future time.

In person debriefings between observers and NMFS staff is an essential component of the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program to enhance data quality and observer retention. It is estimated that between 4 and 6 hours should be needed to complete a debriefing. During the debriefing process, FSB staff will review all submitted trips with observers to ensure data completeness. Any outstanding questions that the editor may have will be addressed. The observer will receive feedback on how they are performing, in terms of data collection and recording, sampling protocols, identification techniques, reporting compliance issues and field performance as reported by fishermen.

During the debriefing process observers will have an opportunity to view their photographs and will review their animal identification with FSB staff. FSB will examine various gear (reference manuals, sampling tools, safety equipment and electronics) to ensure that all items are up to date and in good condition. The observer will also meet with the Area Lead to receive feedback from Fisherman Comment Cards and Captain's interviews and touch base on important fisheries management issues in their areas. Observers will be asked for feedback on the editor's performance as well as other FSB staff they have communicated with. Safety issues and Incidental take protocols will be reviewed. If any incidental takes have occurred, then the Incidental Take Lead will review the documentation with the observer. If the observer wishes, informal meetings may be scheduled with the end users of the observer data. This provides observers and research scientists an opportunity to interact and discuss issues directly. Other topics such as current data requests and data processing systems may be addressed as well.

The Data Editor Lead and/or the COTR will identify when observers are due in for an in person debriefing and the contractor will be informed and work directly with the Data Editor Lead to schedule a date that works for the observer. The goal is to have in person debriefings completed every six months. The contractor should ensure that the observer brings the required gear for the debriefing. The duration of

the debriefings can vary, however, the observer should plan on being available for a full day. When a date has been scheduled, the Data Editor Lead will inform the editor and other appropriate FSB and Northeast Fisheries Science Center staff. The Data Editor Lead will assign an FSB staff member as the "host" (usually the observer's editor or the Data Editor Lead) who will accompany the observer throughout the day.

The contractor shall be reimbursed mileage for the trip to and from Falmouth Technology Park regardless of distance. Additionally, the contractor may bill the government hourly wages for travel to and from the debriefing as well as the time at the debriefing. Depending on where the observer is traveling from, a hotel may be required before and/or after the debriefing. If so, those costs will be reimbursed as well. Any questions about reimbursable should be directed to the COTR.

If you have any question regarding the purpose or logistics involved with the 6 Month Debriefing, please contact Kris Tholke at kris.tholke@noaa.gov or 508-495-2351.

Attachment:

Observer Debriefing Checklist

Observer Debriefing Gearlist

Thank you!