

(c) Every action shall be reported in writing to the Assistant Administrator, or authorized representative, via the agency or institution designated by the state to record such events. Reports shall contain the following information:

(1) Name and position of the official or employee involved;

(2) Description of the sea turtle(s) involved including species and condition of the animal;

(3) When applicable, description of entangling gear, its location on the turtle, and the amount of gear left on the turtle at release;

(4) Method, date and location of disposal of the sea turtle(s), including, if applicable, where the sea turtle(s) has been retained in captivity; and

(5) Such other information as the Assistant Administrator, or authorized representative, may require.

[70 FR 42509, July 25, 2005]

Subpart D—Observer Requirement

SOURCE: 72 FR 43185, Aug. 3, 2007, unless otherwise noted.

§ 222.401 Observer requirement.

Any United States fishing vessel, either commercial or recreational, which operates within the territorial seas or exclusive economic zone of the United States or on the high seas, or any fishing vessel that is otherwise subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, operating in a fishery that is identified through the annual determination process specified in § 222.402 must carry aboard a NMFS-approved observer upon request by the NMFS Assistant Administrator, in consultation with NMFS Regional Administrators and Science Center Directors, as appropriate. NMFS and/or interested cooperating entities will pay direct costs for the observer. Owners and operators must comply with observer safety requirements specified at 50 CFR 600.725 and 50 CFR 600.746 and the terms and conditions specified in the written notification.

§ 222.402 Annual determination of fisheries to be observed; notice and comment.

(a) The Assistant Administrator, in consultation with Regional Administrators and Science Center Directors, will make an annual determination identifying which fisheries the agency intends to observe. This determination will be based on the extent to which:

(1) The fishery operates in the same waters and at the same time as sea turtles are present;

(2) The fishery operates at the same time or prior to elevated sea turtle strandings; or

(3) The fishery uses a gear or technique that is known or likely to result in incidental take of sea turtles based on documented or reported takes in the same or similar fisheries; and

(4) NMFS intends to monitor the fishery and anticipates that it will have the funds to do so.

(b) The Assistant Administrator shall publish the proposed determination and any final determination in the FEDERAL REGISTER. Public comment will be sought at the time of publication of the proposed determination. In addition, a written notification of the final determination will be sent to the address specified for the vessel in either the NMFS or state fishing permit application, or to the address specified for registration or documentation purposes, or such notification will be otherwise served on the owners or operator of the vessel. Additionally, NMFS will notify state agencies and provide notification through publication in local newspapers, radio broadcasts, and any other means as appropriate. The proposed and any final determinations will include, to the extent practicable, information on fishing sector, targeted gear type, target fishery, temporal and geographic scope of coverage, or other information, as appropriate.

(c) Fisheries listed on the most recent annual Marine Mammal Protection Act List of Fisheries in any given year, in accordance with 16 U.S.C. 1387, will serve as the comprehensive set of commercial fisheries to be considered for inclusion in the annual determination. Recreational fisheries may also be included in the annual determination.

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(d) Publication of the proposed and final determinations should be coordinated to the extent possible with the annual Marine Mammal Protection Act List of Fisheries process as specified at 50 CFR 229.8.

(e) Inclusion of a fishery in a proposed or final determination does not constitute a conclusion by NMFS that those participating in the fishery are illegally taking sea turtles.

§ 222.403 Duration of selection; effective date.

(a) Fisheries included in the final annual determination in a given year will remain eligible for observer coverage under this rule for five years, without need for NMFS to include the fishery in the intervening proposed annual determinations, to enable the design of an appropriate sampling program and to ensure collection of scientific data. If NMFS wishes to continue observations beyond the fifth year, NMFS must include the fishery in the proposed annual determination and seek comment, prior to the expiration of the fifth year.

(b) A 30-day delay in effective date for implementing observer coverage will follow the annual notification, except for those fisheries that were included in a previous determination within the preceding five years or where the AA has determined that there is good cause pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act to make the rule effective without a 30-day delay.

§ 222.404 Observer program sampling.

(a) During the program design, NMFS would be guided by the following standards in the distribution and placement of observers among fisheries and vessels in a particular fishery:

- (1) The requirements to obtain the best available scientific information;
- (2) The requirement that assignment of observers is fair and equitable among fisheries and among vessels in a fishery;
- (3) The requirement that no individual person or vessel, or group of persons or vessels, be subject to inappropriate, excessive observer coverage; and

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(4) The need to minimize costs and avoid duplication, where practicable.

(b) Consistent with 16 U.S.C. 1881(b), vessels where the facilities for accommodating an observer or carrying out observer functions are so inadequate or unsafe (due to size or quality of equipment, for example) that the health or safety of the observer or the safe operation of the vessel would be jeopardized, would not be required to take observers under this rule.

PART 223—THREATENED MARINE AND ANADROMOUS SPECIES

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