

To learn more:

www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish_catch_shares/index.html

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Observing the Fishery

The West Coast Groundfish Observer Program continues to provide 100% observer coverage as required by federal regulations supporting the Pacific Fishery Management Council recommendations for individual accountability. The program deployed on average 116 observers on 117 vessels in the shoreside IFQ sectors in 2013-2014. Sea days averaged about 7,000 in those sectors as well as another 1,500 sea days in the at-sea fisheries. That is about 25 "sea-years" worth of data per year! In the catch shares fishery, observers prioritize sampling of protected and overfished species as well as IFQ species for quota management. Observers collect a large suite of fishery-dependent data, such as fishing location and duration, species caught and retained or discarded, biological data including genetic samples and otoliths, and information on interactions with protected species. In addition to providing individual accountability and discard data to allow fishermen to manage their IFQ quotas, observer data is regularly used in stock assessments, fisheries research, and ocean management. Observers and observer data were also used to help further electronic monitoring research in the different sectors of the Catch Share Program.



Exploring Electronic Monitoring

The Pacific Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries continued exploring the use of electronic monitoring as a possible option to help reduce the cost of fisheries observers in shore-based and mothership fisheries. The fisheries require 100 percent observer coverage but the subsidy program that helps cover the cost of observers is expected to be phased out in 2016. The Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted electronic monitoring methods for the whiting midwater trawl, non-whiting midwater trawl, fixed gear and bottom trawl fisheries in 2014. The methods will be tested under exempted fishing permits in 2015 and 2016, with the expectation of developing electronic monitoring regulations for the whiting fishery in 2016 and the fixed gear and bottom trawl fisheries in 2017.

The West Coast Catch Shares Program

2015 UPDATE FOR THE WEST COAST CATCH SHARES PROGRAM



November 2015



Three years into the Catch Shares Program for the West Coast groundfish fishery, fishermen continue to benefit from increased flexibility while reduced bycatch of overfished species helps rebuild stocks. Fishermen are keeping more of the fish they catch, as well as landing more fish and earning more revenue for each fishing trip. NOAA Fisheries continues to work with the groundfish fleet to assure the program operates cost-effectively.



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Introduction

The third year of catch shares in the West Coast groundfish fishery continued many of the positive trends observed in the first two years: improved catch of target species; reduced bycatch; and greater landings and revenues per fishing trip. These results fulfill many of the original goals of catch shares, which replaced the previous race by vessels to catch as many fish as possible, as fast as possible, with a balanced approach that apportions the fishery into predetermined shares. Catch shares gives fishermen newfound flexibility to pursue their catch more efficiently depending on the weather, market conditions, and other factors. The result is a safer, more efficient fishery, with fishermen making more of their own decisions on how, when and where to fish.

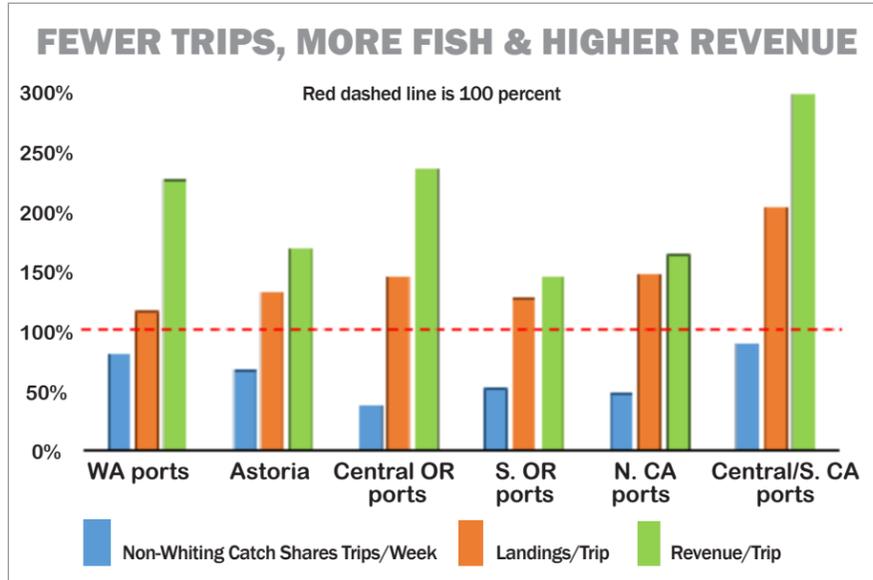
In 2014, NOAA Fisheries began charging fishermen for the cost of administering the program, as the law requires. Any new cost creates challenges, and the fleet has stressed to NOAA Fisheries that this cost is no different. The concerns underscore the importance of administering the Catch Shares Program cost-effectively. As expected, federal reimbursement for the cost of required fisheries observers has been gradually reduced. NOAA Fisheries continues to explore options to reduce observer costs, such as allowing new observer providers to enter the fishery, while exploring alternative options such as electronic monitoring.

Increasing Efficiency

Vessels are making fewer trips per week but catching more fish and earning more revenue per trip under catch shares than they did previously, a sign of improving efficiency. The average annual revenue per trip doubled in many ports. The total non-whiting catch rose about 3.5 million pounds in 2013 compared to 2012 and fishermen caught 7 percent more of their quota. Non-whiting landings and revenue from bottom-trawl gear remained consistently high under catch shares, and with mid-water trips, landings and revenues increased rapidly into 2013 with substantial catches of yellowtail rockfish and widow rockfish. The exception was non-trawl landings and revenue, which have dropped consistently through 2012 and 2013. The decline was likely related to reduced prices for sablefish, the primary non-trawl target species.

As expected, overall participation in the fishery has dropped slightly in each year under catch shares, in terms of the number of vessels fishing. The total number of vessels with a recorded catch fell from 105 in 2012 to 103 in 2013, with the number making non-whiting trips dropping from 91 in 2012 to 88 in 2013.

Right: Average values for three metrics from the West Coast Catch Shares Program as a percent of their corresponding average values pre-catch shares. Metrics expressed in this manner include, from left to right, number of non-whiting catch shares trips per week (vessel-days, blue columns), average trip size (landed pounds round weight, orange columns), and revenue per trip (dollars per trip, green columns). For example, average weekly trip frequency in Astoria during the Catch Shares Program was 68 percent of what it was before the Catch Shares Program was established, but the average trip size in the Catch Shares Program is 135 percent, and average revenue per trip in the Catch Shares Program is 172 percent of what it was before the Catch Shares Program was established. The pattern is consistent across port groups.



Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Social Study

The Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Social Study is a multi-year study designed to measure social changes in affected fishing communities resulting from the Catch Shares Program. Following extensive social data collection using surveys and interviews in 2010 and 2012, NOAA Fisheries social scientists presented the first findings of this study to the Pacific Fishery Management Council in late 2014. This initial report presents new information under the themes of Graying of the Fleet, Changing Social Relationships, Program Perceptions, and Fisheries Participation. Brief summaries of the initial findings are presented here. NOAA is continuing to analyze the data for community comparisons, social network analysis, and the analysis of return respondents. Additional data collection to observe later year trends will occur in late 2015/early 2016. Results will inform the 5-year review of the program.

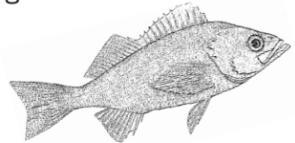
Changing Social Relationships
The data show that some changes are occurring in social relationships, however as the data were collected only a year or so after implementation, additional relationship changes are expected to occur with time. Initial changes were noted between fishermen and observers. The results indicated most relationships were positive; however an increase in negative

relationships was identified. Where information was provided to describe these changing relationships with observers, fishermen indicated that 1. they were new and developing relationships, 2. they have to pay for observers, 3. observers are required 100% of the time, 4. there were inconsistencies between the observers assigned to a vessel (different ones each time), and 5. some observers made mistakes and were viewed as inexperienced. Difficulties for processors focused on the ability to keep plant laborers working year-round. Improvements include relationships between processors and permit holders who had to work together to make the catch shares system successful.

Catch Share Program Perceptions
Findings show more support of the program following implementation from all surveyed participants. Differences of how they perceived the program are based on what people expected versus their actual experiences. Data also suggest more informed individuals are more likely to support the program. The top reason to support the program in both years of data collection was the benefit of reducing bycatch, while the top reason not to support the program in 2010 was the negative impact to the community from boats leaving the fishery. Post-implementation, the top reason reported not to support the program shifted

to concerns with required, for-cost observer coverage. Some fishermen also felt the cost for the observers was disproportionate for smaller vessels, as they have to pay the same costs as larger vessels, which are perceived to have a larger profit margin to absorb the costs.

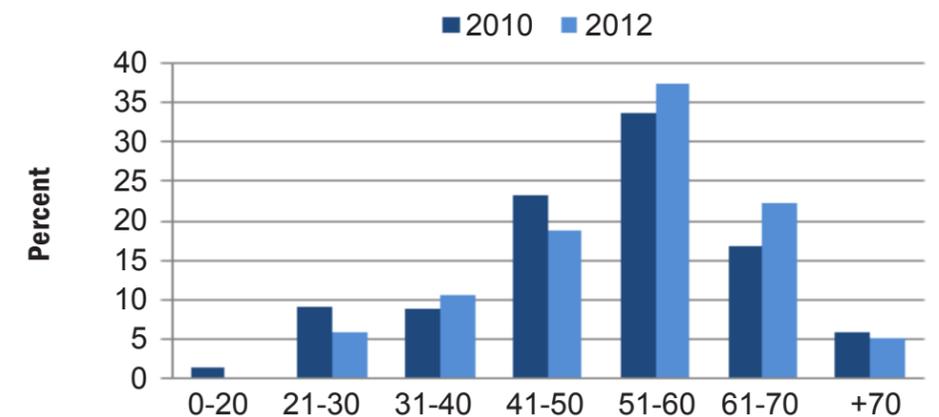
Participation in Other Fisheries
West Coast Catch Share groundfish fishermen are participating in other profitable fisheries including crab and pink shrimp. Interview data show fisherman are concerned with changing ocean cycles that could alter the availability of species and ultimately change the markets.



2014 INITIAL RESULTS: GRAYING OF THE FLEET

Initial findings support the perception that the fleet is aging, showing that over half of harvesters in the trawl fishery in both years of data collection are over 50 years old. This is also supported by semi-structured interview data.

"We've got a major problem with the aging of the crews. In our fleet, for example, most of our guys are close to 50 years old or older. And we don't see young people getting involved in fishery, it's just not happening."
- Seattle, 2012



Response Rate 2010: 100%
Response Rate 2012: 99.2%