**NOAA Fisheries Issues Emergency Action to Continue to Waive Observer Coverage**

**Emergency Rule** |

[National](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/about-us)

**Overview**

**Fishing Type**

Commercial

**Action Status**

Emergency Rule

**Published**

03/29/2021

Summary

NOAA Fisheries has issued an interim final rule to continue to provide the authority to waive observer coverage, some training, and other program requirements, on a case-by-case basis. The rule is a continuation of NOAA Fisheries’ response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The authority to waive coverage has resulted in a successful balance between public health and the safety of fishermen, observers, and others, while maintaining fishery operations and the monitoring necessary for sustainable management.

Under this emergency action NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrators, Office Directors, and Science Center Directors have the ability to waive observer requirements under two criteria:

1. Placing an observer conflicts with travel restrictions or other requirements addressing COVID-19 related concerns issued by local, state, or national governments, or the private companies that deploy observers pursuant to NOAA Fisheries regulations; or
2. No qualified observer(s) is available for placement due to health, safety, or training issues related to COVID-19.

 NOAA Fisheries will consider a trip waiver if the observer providers cannot meet the risk mitigation protocols imposed by a state on commercial fishing crew or by the vessel or vessel company on its crew. Based on our regulatory and contract oversight authority, NOAA Fisheries intends to ensure that observer providers and their observers and monitors are following the same risk mitigation protocols that fishermen are following.

When observer requirements are waived, the agency monitors fishing effort, catch data and other relevant information to ensure that there are no significant adverse environmental consequences and consider alternative fishery management measures should such consequences arise.

Website: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/noaa-fisheries-issues-emergency-action-continue-waive-observer-coverage