

accurate observer data on this important fleet sector. An alternative that would have extended the requirements to catcher vessels with 30 percent required coverage, in addition to catcher-processors, motherships, shoreside processors, and catcher vessels with 100 percent observer coverage, was also rejected. This would have involved extending coverage to several hundred additional catcher vessels, all of which were estimated to be small entities. Concerns were also raised over the security of the OCS software on computers during periods of time when observers were not present on the vessels. A final alternative would have required OCS coverage on catcher-processors, motherships, and shoreside processors, but not catcher vessels. This alternative would have increased resources devoted to observer program data processing in order to reduce the time it took to get catcher vessel data to in-season managers for management purposes. This alternative would have reduced the impact on small catcher vessel entities, however, while it would have reduced the time to process data and provide it to in-season managers, it would not have affected the important time lag between at-sea observation by the observer and delivery to observer program data processors. In addition, it would not have addressed concerns over data quality.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 679

Alaska, Fisheries, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: October 2, 2003.

Rebecca Lent,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

■ For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 679 is amended as follows:

PART 679—FISHERIES OF THE EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE OFF ALASKA

■ 1. The authority citation for part 679 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*, 1801 *et seq.*, and 3631 *et seq.*

■ 2. In § 679.50, paragraphs (g)(1)(iii)(A), (g)(1)(iii)(B), (g)(1)(iii)(C), (g)(2), (g)(2)(iii)(B), and (g)(2)(iii)(C) are revised and paragraph (g)(3) is added to read as follows:

■

§ 679.50 Groundfish Observer Program applicable through December 31, 2007.

* * * * *

(g) * * *
(1) * * *
(iii) * * *

(A) Observer use of equipment.

Allowing NMFS-certified observers to use the vessel's communications equipment and personnel, on request, for the confidential entry, transmission, and receipt of work-related messages, at no cost to the NMFS-certified observers or the nation.

(B) *Communication equipment requirements.* In the case of an operator of a catcher/processor or mothership that is required to carry one or more observers, or a catcher vessel required to carry an observer as specified in paragraph (c)(1)(iv) of this section:

(1) *Hardware and software.* Making available for use by the observer a personal computer in working condition that contains a full Pentium 120 Mhz or greater capacity processing chip, at least 32 megabytes of RAM, at least 75 megabytes of free hard disk storage, a Windows 9x or NT compatible operating system, an operating mouse, and a 3.5-inch (8.9 cm) floppy disk drive. The associated computer monitor must have a viewable screen size of at least 14.1 inches (35.8 cm) and minimum display settings of 600 x 800 pixels. The computer equipment specified in paragraph (g)(1)(iii)(B) of this section must be connected to a communication device that provides a point-to-point modem connection to the NMFS host computer and supports one or more of the following protocols: ITU V.22, ITU V.22bis, ITU V.32, ITU V.32bis, or ITU V.34. Personal computers utilizing a modem must have at least a 28.8kbs Hayes-compatible modem.

(2) *NMFS-Supplied software.* Ensuring that the catcher/processor, mothership, or catcher vessel specified in paragraph (g)(1)(iii)(B) of this section obtains and has installed the data entry software provided by the Regional Administrator for use by the observer.

(C) *Functional and operational equipment.* Ensuring that the communications equipment required at paragraph (g)(1)(iii)(B) of this section, and that is used by observers to enter and transmit data, is fully functional and operational, where "functional" means that data transmissions to NMFS can be initiated effectively aboard the vessel by such communications equipment.

* * * * *

(2) *Shoreside processor and stationary floating processor responsibilities.* A manager of a shoreside processor or a

stationary floating processor that is required to maintain observer coverage as specified under paragraph (d) of this section must:

* * * * *

(iii) * * *

(B) *Communication equipment requirements—(1) Hardware and software.* Making available for use by the observer a personal computer, in working condition, with a full Pentium 120 Mhz or greater capacity processing chip, at least 32 megabytes of RAM, at least 75 megabytes of free hard disk storage, a Windows 9x or NT compatible operating system, an operating mouse, and a 3.5-inch (8.9 cm) floppy disk drive. The associated computer monitor must have a viewable screen size of at least 14.1 inches (35.8 cm) and minimum display settings of 600 x 800 pixels. The computer equipment specified in this paragraph must be connected to a communication device that provides a point-to-point modem connection to the NMFS host computer and supports one or more of the following protocols: ITU V.22, ITU V.22bis, ITU V.32, ITU V.32bis, or ITU V.34. Processors utilizing a modem must have at least a 28.8kbs Hayes-compatible modem.

(2) *NMFS-supplied software.* Ensuring that the shoreside processor or stationary floating processor obtains and installs the data entry software provided by the Regional Administrator for use by the observer.

(C) *Functional and operational equipment.* Ensuring that the communications equipment required at paragraph (g)(2)(iii)(B) of this section and that is used by observers to enter and transmit data, is fully functional and operational, where functional means that data transmissions to NMFS can be initiated effectively by that equipment.

* * * * *

(3) The owner of a vessel, shoreside processor, stationary floating processor, or buying station is responsible for compliance and must ensure that the operator or manager of a vessel, shoreside processor, or stationary floating processor required to maintain observer coverage under paragraphs (c) or (d) of this section complies with the requirements given in paragraphs (g)(1) and (g)(2) of this section.

* * * * *

[FR Doc. 03-25514 Filed 10-7-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S