

Report of the STACTIC Observer Program Review Working Group (WG-OPR) Meeting

27-28 August 2025

Via Webex

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1. Opening by the Chair, Brent Napier (Canada)

The Chair (Brent Napier) opened the meeting at 09:00 hours (UTC-3) on Wednesday, 27 August 2025 via Webex. The Chair welcomed representatives from Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Iceland, Japan, Norway, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America (Annex 1).

2. Appointment of Rapporteur

The NAFO Secretariat (Catherine Thompson) was appointed as rapporteur.

3. Adoption of Agenda

The following additions were made to the agenda under item 5 – Other Business:

- a. Data Confidentiality
- b. Minimum standards for Electronic Monitoring
- c. Article 30 Reporting Template
- d. Observer Program Review (OPR) tasks update

The agenda was adopted, as amended (Annex 2).

4. Outstanding items for WG-OPR discussions

a. Observer application

The NAFO Secretariat presented STACTIC OPR-WP 25-05 which outlined questions regarding the data flow for the observer application. Contracting Parties agreed that the data flow for the observer application should operate the same as the current Excel template process whereby the reports can be reviewed by the FMC prior to being posted to the MCS website, noting that changes to the application can be made in the future if necessary.

Contracting Parties discussed how the daily OBR messages should be transmitted through the app and agreed that the app should be able to summarize the daily catch for the OBR message and that the observer should be able to review and include the remaining fields from Annex II.G of the NAFO CEM before it is submitted to the Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC) and the Secretariat. Contracting Parties agreed that observers should have the ability to update, cancel, resend and track OBR messages within the app. Further updates and discussion on the observer app will take place at the 2025 STACTIC Annual Meeting.

b. Observer reporting requirements

The WG-OPR discussed the required frequency of observer tasks outlined in Annex II.M of the NAFO CEM. Canada is currently engaging with subject matter experts to determine specific frequencies for observer tasks, noting that standardized minimum thresholds would be helpful for observers. Many flag State Contracting Parties currently follow existing domestic thresholds. It was noted that a thorough review of the elements of Annex II.M would be required to identify the needs and priorities relating to the use of the observer data in

order to potentially develop minimum standards. The WG-OPR was not able to make substantial progress on this item, and agreed to report back to STACTIC on the discussions, noting they may continue in the future as required.

5. Other Business

a. Data Confidentiality

The WG-OPR reviewed the proposal for amendments to Annex II.B. of the NAFO CEM outlined in STACTIC OPR-WP 24-02, which was previously discussed at the STACTIC Intersessional Meeting in May 2025 ([COM Doc. 25-03](#)). To support these discussions, the NAFO Secretariat compiled a summary of the provisions that fall under the Rules of Confidentiality in the NAFO CEM in STACTIC WP 25-05. The summary outlines the potential reports and messages that could be subject to the Rules of Confidentiality if the scope of Annex II.B. were to be expanded.

One Contracting Party expressed concern about expanding the scope of the terms of the Rules of Confidentiality without performing a full review of Annex II.B. Contracting Parties agreed that the Rules of Confidentiality need to be updated to reflect current protocols. It was agreed that the WG-OPR would recommend to STACTIC that there is a need to review the provisions of Annex II.B of the NAFO CEM. Once that review is completed, discussions on the proposed changes outlined in STACTIC OPR-WP 24-02 should continue.

It was **agreed** that:

- **The WG-OPR recommends that STACTIC undertake a comprehensive review of the data confidentiality measures outlined in Annex II.B of the NAFO CEM.**

b. Minimum standards for Electronic Monitoring

The WG-OPR reviewed STACTIC OPR-WP 25-04 (Rev. 4), which outlines a possible revision of Articles 1, 30 and 38 of the NAFO CEM in order to incorporate an electronic observation program. The European Union highlighted changes to the paper since the STACTIC Intersessional Meeting, based on feedback received from Contracting Parties. Contracting Parties provided further comments and clarifications during the meeting, which were incorporated through track changes.

Changes were made to the terminology in the paper to increase the lifespan of the document and to better align the language in the paper with that of the NAFO CEM. The WG-OPR discussed requirements for Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS), including the minimum data storage capacity on board vessels using EMS, the costs associated with data storage, and whether data retention requirements are necessary. Parties also discussed the length of time that EMS must be operational while the vessel is at-sea. The Chair noted that having a greater understanding of EMS technology will help support these discussions and Contracting Parties thanked the European Union for their work on the paper. The WG-OPR noted that some language may require further review by the NAFO Editorial Drafting Group (EDG) to ensure clarity and consistency.

It was **agreed**:

- **To forward STACTIC OPR-WP 25-04 (Rev. 5) to STACTIC for further discussion at the Annual Meeting, recognizing that significant work has been completed by the WG-OPR.**

c. Article 30 Reporting Template

Canada highlighted discrepancies in the Article 30 Reporting Template, particularly with respect to Part III. In Part III of the template, Contracting Parties are asked to provide a *summary of fishing trips where the figures of the observers in Part 4.B of the observer trip report are the same or very similar to the figures reported by the*

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master and a summary of fishing trips where the figures of the observer in Part 2 of the observer trip report are the same or very similar to the figures reported by the master for observed tows. Canada noted that the language “very similar” is vague and creates uncertainty for Contracting Parties that are reporting the information. A suggested way forward was that a standardized metric for reporting could be developed, and Contracting Parties agreed with this approach. The European Union will consult with member States to reflect on what has been used in their reporting to help in the potential development of a metric that can be added to the template, to enhance clarity and consistency. Canada and the European Union will work with the Secretariat to edit the template for further discussions in STACTIC.

It was **agreed**:

- **That Canada and the European Union will work with the Secretariat to edit the template for further discussions in STACTIC.**

d. Observer Program Review (OPR) tasks update

The WG-OPR reviewed the Work Progress Update in STACTIC WP 25-11 and evaluated the tasks listed in the document. All items were marked as “complete”, and the updates are reflected in STACTIC WP 25-11 (Rev.) (Annex 3).

6. Adoption of the Report

The report was adopted via correspondence.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:48 hours (UTC-3) on Thursday, 28 August 2025.

Annex 1. List of Participants

CHAIR	Napier, Brent (Canada)
CANADA	Barbour, Natasha Browne, Dion Harvey, Kyna Hickey, Jenelle
DENMARK (IN RESPECT OF FAROE ISLANDS AND GREENLAND)	Holm, Jannik
EUROPEAN UNION	Babcionis, Genadijus Grossmann, Meit Näks, Liivika Sanchhez-Mateos, Manuel Sanz Carrasco, Pablo Shrives, Jonathan Quintans, Miguel
ICELAND	Ragnarsson, Njáll
JAPAN	Batori, Koji Iwano, Taisuke Mitome, Haruki Moronuki, Hideki Suzuki, Hyoue
NORWAY	Aalén, Lene
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Fomin, Konstantin
UNITED KINGDOM	Murphy, Paul Smith-Devey, Imogen White, Amelia
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	Jaburek, Shannah McBride, Holly Moran, Patrick Pohl, Katie Provencher, Eric
NAFO SECRETARIAT	Aker, Jana Benediktsdóttir, Brynhildur Kendall, Matt Thompson, Catherine

Annex 2. Agenda

1. Opening by the Chair, Brent Napier (Canada)
2. Appointment of Rapporteur
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4. Outstanding items for WG-OPR discussions
 - a. Observer application
 - b. Observer reporting requirements
5. Other Business
 - a. Data Confidentiality
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6. Adoption of the Report
7. Adjournment

Annex 3. Work Progress Update from WG-OPR (STACTIC 25-11 Revised)**Background**

Following the August 2025 meeting of the WG-OPR, the Chair, following discussions within the working group, updated the status of work for each task identified for the group.

Update

Green = Completed, no further work required by the WG-OPR

Yellow = Work largely completed or established as an ongoing item, and is not expected to require further work by WG-OPR

Orange = Further work required by WG-OPR

Task	Status
1. The minimum level of observer coverage required under derogation	Complete Discussed Jan. 2025, no change recommended
2. Use of the observer electronic application and its implementation	Complete The WG-OPR provided input to the NAFO Secretariat on the outstanding list of questions relating to data flow in the app. The Secretariat will continue to work towards the completion of the application. Decisions required by WG-OPR/ STACTIC regarding data flow No list of required decisions has been presented by NAFO Sec.
3. Use of electronic observation program and to recommend minimum requirements for those systems to be used as an alternative to Observers	Complete The WG-OPR agreed to forward STACTIC OPR-WP 25-04 (Rev. 5) to STACTIC for further discussion at the Annual Meeting. See STACTIC OPR-WP 25-04 Rev.3
4. Standardized reporting templates and reporting	
a. Observer reporting requirements	Complete The WG-OPR discussed the frequency of observer tasks, but noted a substantial review would be required before minimum thresholds could be developed. Frequency of Observer tasks yet to be determined
i. The possible inclusion of the collection of vessel's garbage disposal practices	Added to Part 3, effective Jan. 1, 2025
5. Potential improvements on Data Collection on Sharks	
a. Review findings presented in STACTIC WP 21-49 Rev3 "Review of Greenland shark Data Collection and Methodologies"	Complete
i. Pursue development of standardized handling and release guidelines	Complete
ii. Pursue development of for a species identification	Draft was presented to STACTIC at the May 2025 intersessional meeting in STACTIC WP 25-14. Oceans

Task	Status
guide/observer handbook for Sharks	North will be invited to present an update at the 2025 STACTIC Annual Meeting. In development by Oceans North
6. Consider revisions of infringements relating to the Observer Program	Complete See STACTIC OPR-WP 25-04 (Rev. 5) Discussions to continue at 2025 STACTIC intersessional in multiple working papers
7. To discuss mechanisms to promote quality control for Observer and electronic observation data	Complete The WG-OPR had several discussions in relation to data quality control and Contracting Parties shared experience and best practices. In Progress

Proposed Way Forward

At this time, the Chair of WG-OPR proposes to STACTIC that the WG-OPR hold an additional meeting before the 2025 Annual Meeting to work towards resolving Terms of Reference tasks 2 and 4.a. STACTIC may also wish to consider whether the WG-OPR is the appropriate group for continuing discussions surrounding EMS outside of regular STACTIC meetings, as may be necessary.