



EIGHTH REGULAR SESSION

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REPORT ON WCPFC/IATTC SECRETARIATS MEETING OF THE CROSS ENDORSEMENT OF OBSERVERS (UPDATE TO WCPFC8-2011-IP/03)

WCPFC8-2011-IP/03A
13 March 2012

Introduction

Cross endorsement of Observers between IATTC and WCPFC was discussed at the IWG-3 held in 2009, further discussion at TCC and WCPFC has culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in 2010 between the IATTC and WCPFC on the cross endorsement of Commission approved observers when observing on the high seas of the Convention areas of both organisations.

Following the approval of the MoC, the Secretariat of the two organisations have met and discussed further the implications and requirements for observers to be endorsed to carry out duties in the waters of the two Commissions. A copy of the report of the meeting held in Hawaii between the two secretariats is included below for member's consideration; members may like to read this paper together with Paper WCPFC8-2011 IP/03.

Members are asked to offer further advice on the way forward, including funding requirements to ensure observers from both organisations are available for vessels wishing to cross from one Commission area to the other.

Meeting Report

IATTC and WCPFC met at an informal meeting at the Ala Moana Hotel in Hawaii to discuss what was required to advance the cross endorsement of observers between the two Commissions.

Matters discussed included

- **Standards of observers required by both Commissions**
- **Notification**
- **Training**
- **Training numbers**

- **Training Venue**
- **Training costs**
- **Observer source**
- **Cost recovery for observer payments**
- **PNA observer**
- **Data formats**
- **High Seas vs. Member countries**

Standard of observers required by both Commissions

IATTC Observer education standards require an observer, to have as a minimum, a University degree on a Biology related field or an equivalent degree. The observer must also have a medical clearance to say they are fit and able to carry out duties at sea.

Most WCPFC Pacific Island observer programmes requires the observer to have as a minimum, a pass in English and Mathematics from a recognized High School, potential observers also must undertake and pass a pre course criteria test before gaining entrance to observer training.

WCPFC observers must have a medical clearance to say they are fit and able to carry out duties at sea.

Discussion took place on the differences between the required standards; The meeting felt that with proper training, experienced observers would not have a problem in collecting the required data for each Commission. There was some suggestion that the IATTC secretariat would need to inform their membership on the differences in observer standards.

Notification

Notification time asking for a specially crossed endorsed observer was briefly discussed and whilst no time frame was given it was felt that as much notification as possible would be required. There was also a suggestion that to ensure availability of these specially trained observers it may be best to retain a few of them on shore. The suggestion was that to satisfy the demand for these specially trained observers and to defer the uncertainty of their assignment until those vessels that have the capabilities of fishing in both areas, define their strategy, they should be paid to remain on shore until a vessel requires their services.

When a vessel knows it will cross from one Convention area to the other, this is when a cross endorsed trained observer would be required, however it was pointed out from experience in the WCPO, that the cross endorsed trained observers are likely to be the better observers in their national programmes, therefore they are more likely to be used, and could be on other national or sub regional observer trips when required. A strategy for their use will need to be in place, otherwise they may not always be available when they are needed for a cross endorsement trip.

Training

It was agreed that a special training session involving trainers from both Commissions would be required. As the participants were expected to be current observers; training would not require the general observer training curriculums. A special course curriculum based on the special requirements of each Commission would need to be developed for the subject matter for the training session. Training time frame was not determined as the subject matter needs to be decided; however it was felt that somewhere between 7-10 working days would probably be required.

Training numbers

No actual numbers that may be required were decided but it was mentioned that probably around 10-12 participants from each organisation was probably a good figure to work on for the special courses.

Training Venue

Training would probably require two courses one held in an IATTC country, plus a course in the Pacific for the ROP observer. Because of costs, Fiji was mentioned as a most likely place to hold the ROP training. But this would be determined when the numbers and source of observers were known. A venue for IATTC training was still to be determined.

Training Costs

The funding of training of cross endorsement observers for the WCPFC needs to be resolved. It was recalled that some WCPFC members during general discussion at meetings said they do not think the Commission should pay for this special training, as the majority of members do not get any benefit or require the use of these specially trained observers. The inference being that the fleets that want this cross endorsement availability should be the ones that pay all costs associated with the training and payment of cross endorsement of observers. Fleets mentioned who were likely to require cross endorsed observers, were USA with a current limited entry of one trip per year per vessel into the IATTC area; other members are Ecuador, El Salvador as well as Spanish-flagged vessels that were registered in both organisations.

Observer source

The source of observers for WCPFC/IATTC was discussed briefly and it was felt that Kiribati being a member of both organisations maybe a good source, this could make it easier for both Commission memberships. It was noted that it is important that any observer chosen for training would need to be able to get a multiple entry visa for the USA. Nonetheless, it was also indicated that Kiribati is not yet a member of the AIDCP and in order to be a 'provider' to the IATTC/AIDCP observer program; this issue would need to be resolved with the rest of the IATTC's CPCs. Marshall Islands and FSM were also mentioned as sources of WCPFC observer because of the convenience of observers from these countries not requiring a visa to visit the USA. There was no fixed determination of the source of the observers. It was also noted that the PNA require PNA observers on boats fishing in their waters. RMI, FSM and Kiribati are PNA countries so the use of observers from these countries would satisfy PNA rules on the source of observers on vessels entering their waters.

PNA observer- High Seas versus Member countries

The meeting felt that the collection of data by observer's crossing over from each other's Commission Convention area and remaining on the high seas would not be an issue for the member nations as long as this collection satisfied the standards and requirements of each organization.

The PNA countries have made it known that any observer who is placed on a foreign vessel and enters the waters of a PNA country must come from a PNA approved observer programme. This was seen as a problem for IATTC observers wanting to cross over on vessels licensed to fish in PNA waters and there would need to be some adjustment of this rule by PNA for the cross endorsement to work. It was suggested that the IATTC observer could be permitted to continue their work in the high Seas and waters of member countries until the vessel came to port, where an exchange of an appropriate observer could take place.

It was noted that approved WCPFC observers crossing into IATTC waters had little problems as the vessels would fish mainly on the High Seas in the IATTC Convention area and because there is no restrictions or nationality requirements by IATTC/AIDCP's observers to collect information inside the EEZs of their member nations.

Data formats

An exercise in the data formats was carried out in 2009 and it was found that even though formats are different there were only a small number of fields that are different. It seems there is not much problem for IATTC observers in collecting WCPFC data; however data collected by WCPFC observers for the IATTC is a little more complicated because of the AIDCP (Dolphin Free Program) requirements. This would be an emphasis in the training for WCPFC cross endorsed observers.

Cost recovery for observer payments.

The IATTC observer system has a strong financial payment control, as IATTC collect all the fees for observers through an annual fee, and then pay for observers through a central payment system. The WCPFC systems are variable, and there is no central payment system, with each member country having a different system of payment for their observers. Currently some providers of the observer would invoice the vessel for the required amount to pay the observer after the trip has finished. In some cases the providers may ask the vessel to pay moneys for travel and salary direct to the observer. As we move forward with cross endorsed observers, an approved standardization of the management of observer payments will be required.

Time Frame

The cross endorsement process has taken time for approval from both Commissions, and the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in 2010 allows the work to be advanced. It is suggested that the first training session of WCPFC observers should be organised and carried out as soon as practical and providing sufficient funds are made available for the training, a training session in the first half of 2012 would be beneficial.

Issues

There are a number of issues that will require some further work, agreement and standardization, these include

- Funding requirements for cross endorsement training.
- Method of Selection of observers for cross endorsement training.
- Training Curriculum
- Ensuring Availability when needed. (Protocols for placement)
- Observers entering member country waters
- Data Collection differences and how to collect the information required for both Commissions.
- Payment of Salaries and travel costs to observers.

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