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# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

USAGA Task Force Meeting  
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Petersburg, Alaska

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Alaska Fisheries Science Center  
Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division

# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

The success of the AMMOP is heavily reliant on working cooperatively with ADF&G and fishery participants.

## **AMMOP seeks to:**

The AMMOP seeks to sample the fishery with as little impact to fishing operations as possible and with no loss of revenue to gillnetters.



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# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

## AMMOP Observer program 2024 – 2026

### 2024 Scoping Year

- Develop effective monitoring methods including electronic monitoring (EM) tools to document fishing effort and marine mammal interaction with fishery
- Coverage on a portion of the fishery

### 2025 – 2026 Full Coverage Year

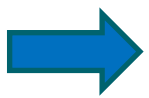
- Obtain bycatch data to construct statistically reliable estimates of mortality and serious injury.
- Coverage on entire fishery



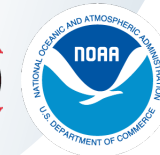
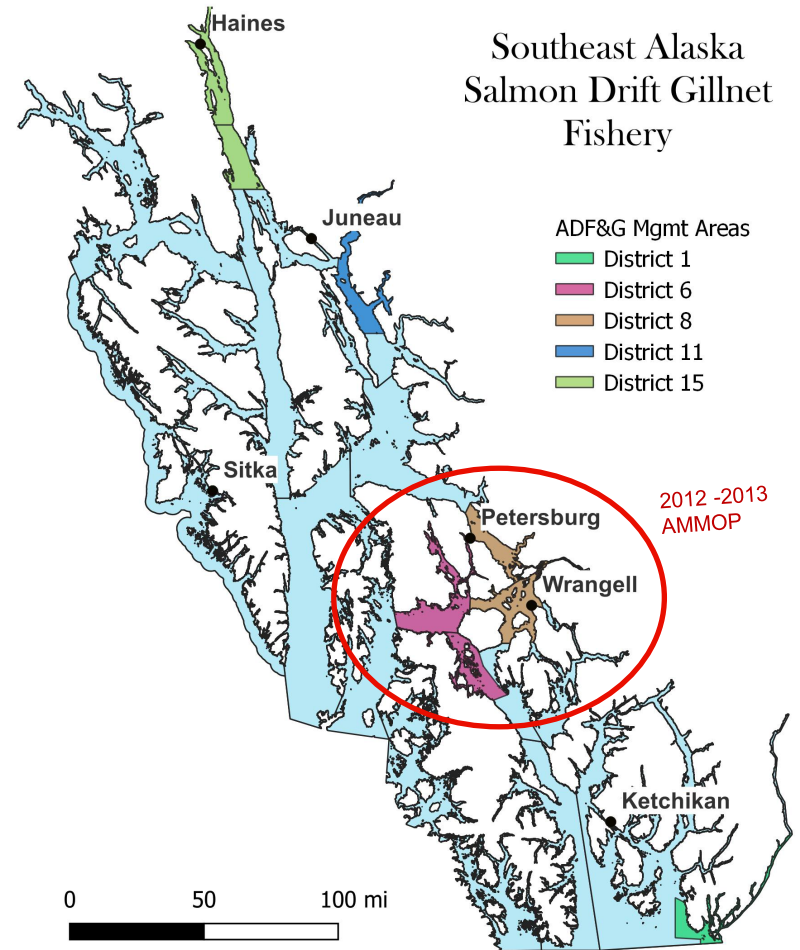
# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

## Observer Program 2012 – 2013

- 20% of gillnet fishery effort sampled
- <7% coverage
- Funding did not allow for planned sequential years
- Best available data to construct bycatch estimates



Current representative bycatch data is needed



# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

## Observer Program: Data collection

- Permit holders will be randomly selected so everyone will have equal opportunity of selection
- All active fishing including all sets, hauls and soaks that occur over the course of a week will be monitored.
  - From Sunday 12:01pm - Sunday 12:00 pm
- Observations from separate vessels.
- Many vessels will be equipped with EM equipment
- Statistical week 24 – 39 (June 9<sup>th</sup> – Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>)

## Information recorded by observers:

- weather
- water conditions
- fishing gear
- catch
- location
- fishing operations
- other animals in the vicinity
- other gillnet vessels in the vicinity
- bycatch of mammals, fish, invertebrates, and birds

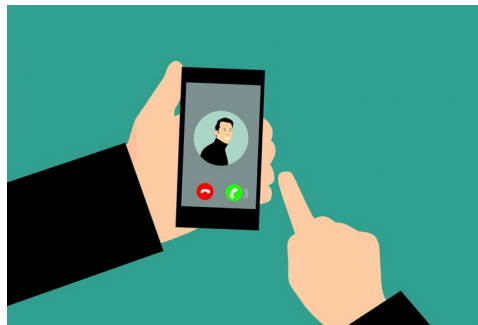


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# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

## Contact with permit holder

- A staff member from the AMMOP will contact **all registered permit holders** sometime in April/May
  - Do you intend to fish during the 2024 gillnet season?
  - What districts do you intend to gillnet?
- A staff member will contact **randomly selected** permit holders each week
  - Where and when do you intend to fish?
  - Coordinate meeting time at fisher's vessel to issue a personal locator beacon and get outfitted for EM equipment.

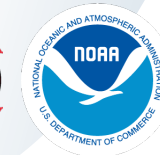
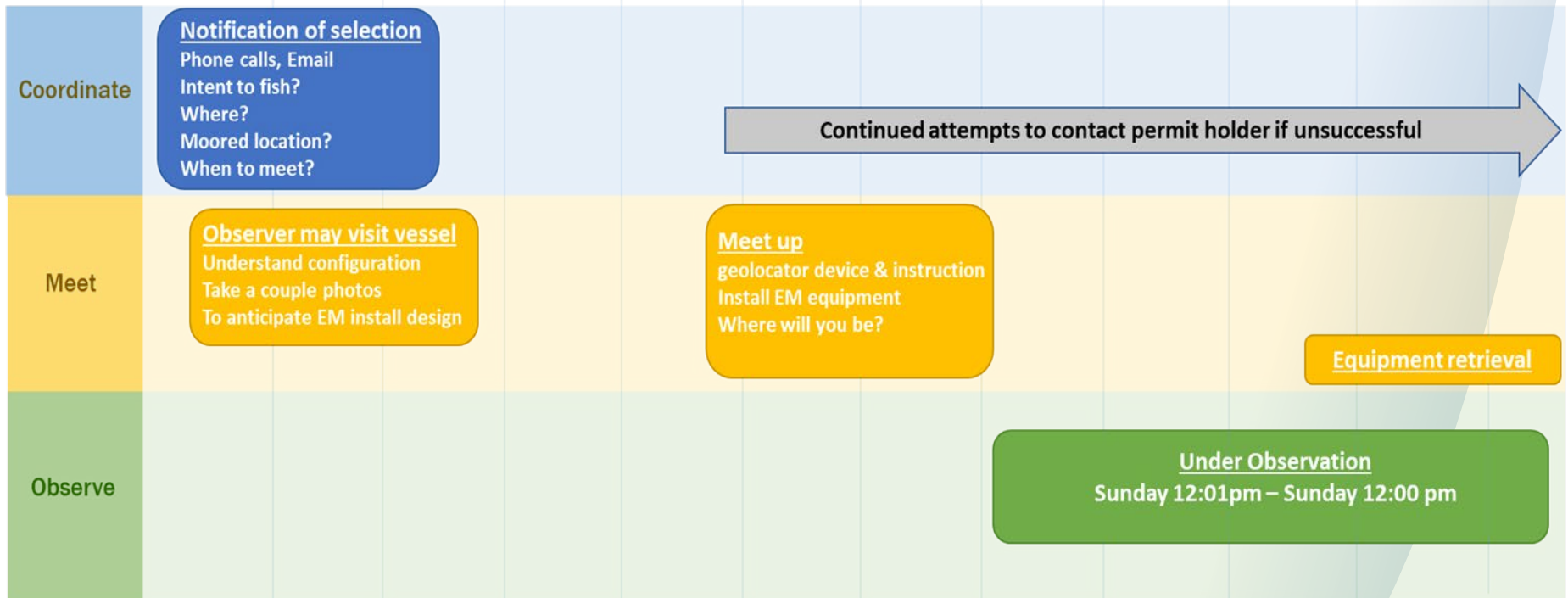




# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

## What happens if I am selected for observation?

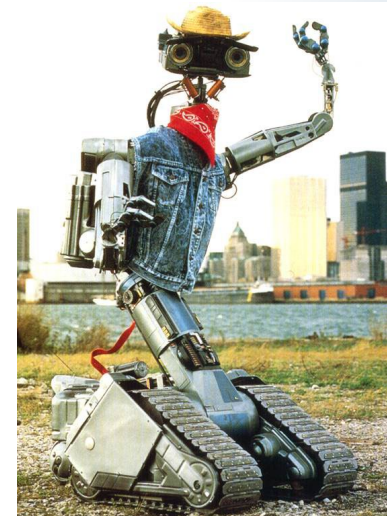
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# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

## Electronic monitoring (EM)

- EM has the potential to provide significant cost savings
- Allow the observer program to obtain higher coverage levels
- Higher coverage will result in more precise estimates of bycatch
- EM may even get better views during times of high winds and strong currents that make it difficult for observer vessels to get close
- The AMMOP successfully secured a \$225k grant specifically to develop EM in 2024.



robotics.fandom.com



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# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

Gillnet fleet is a different situation from traditional EM use

- Small, variable configuration, less power, only the view of net emerging from the water is needed

## AMMOP seeks

- Equipment that takes up little space
- Battery powered or single cord
- Plug and play power adapter
- Can be installed by non technical staff (i.e. fishery observers)
- Can be installed in 20 – 60 minutes.

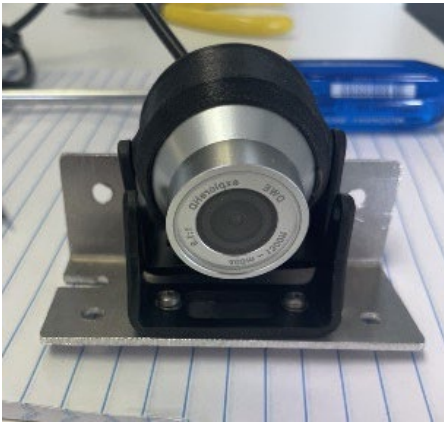


# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

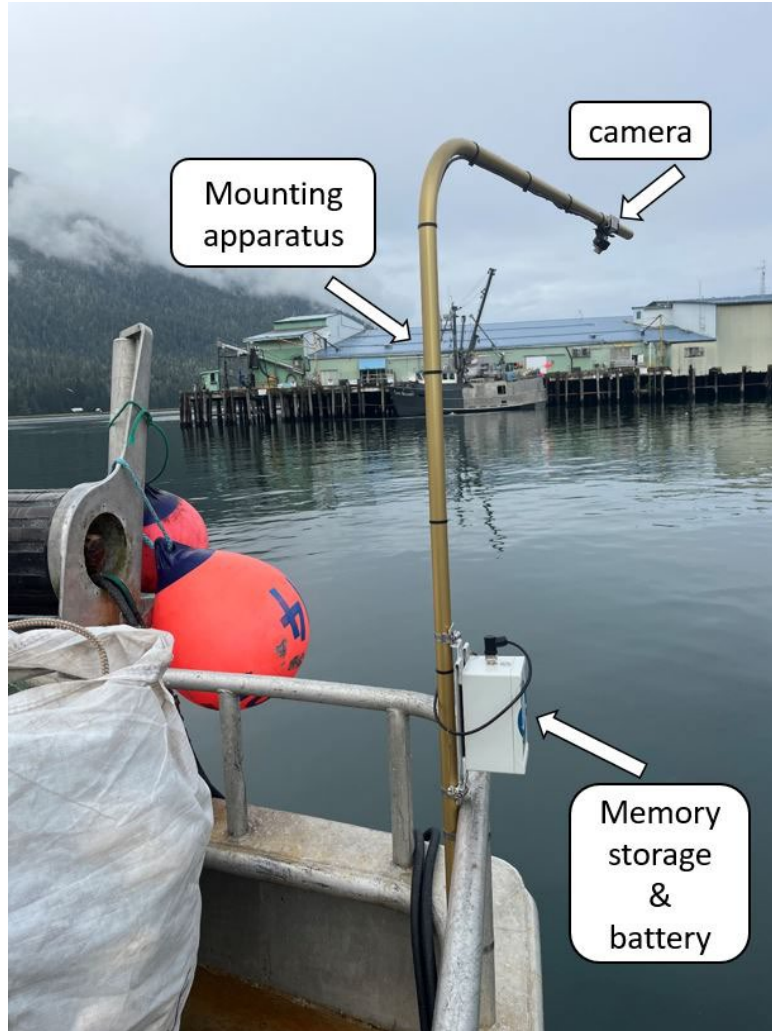
The AMMOP partnered with Archipelago Marine Resources (AMR) and a gillnetter during the 2023 salmon season

## FishVue Micro (prototype)

- Small, internal memory storage, 10-hr battery



# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program



**AMR's FishVue Micro  
from 2023 field work**



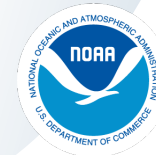
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# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program



Saltwater Inc. has a small vessel system

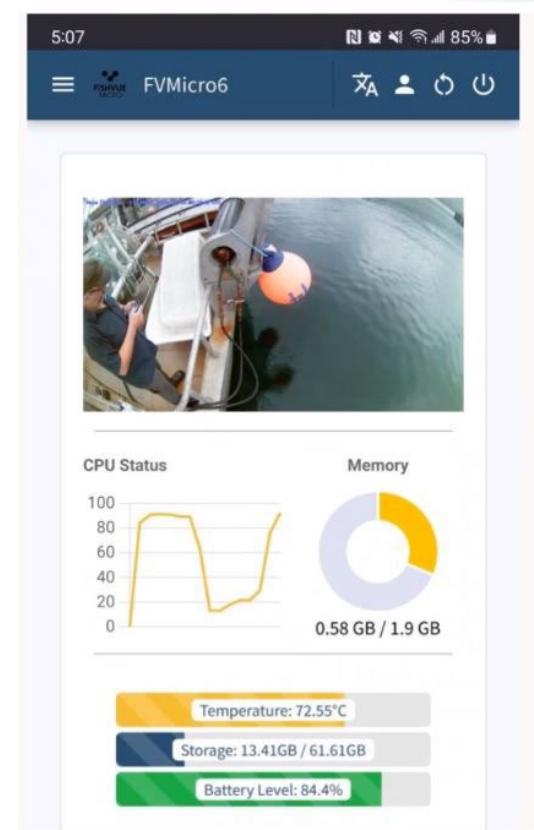


# Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

Electronic monitoring will require some assistance from Gillnetters

For example

- Swap batteries
- Ensure the field of view is not blocked
- Wipe lens prior to each haul
- Connect to the app to check status



# Questions, Comments

