

Fisheries Observer

BNOS PROFILE

ROLE OVERVIEW

Fisheries Observers work on vessels, docks, and in fishing plants to observe and record information about harvested fish. They examine landed catches for species, sex, age, and health indicators, while also reviewing fishing licences and inspecting gear to ensure compliance with environmental regulations. Observers collect data and report their findings to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Although they work alongside fishing crews, observers are not considered part of the crew, as they do not participate in fishing activities. The role requires strong attention to detail, professionalism, and communication skills.

While formal education beyond high school is not mandatory, candidates must complete and pass a recognized training program before being certified to work.

INDEX OF POTENTIAL TITLES

- Field Technician – Dockside Observer
- Dockside and At-Sea Monitor
- Dockside Fishery Observer
- Marine Observer

NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

22113 - [Conservation and fishery officers](#)

STRATA LEVEL

1 – Operational

RELATED CAREER PROFILE(S)

[Fisheries Observer – Job Bank Canada](#)

[Fisheries Observer – Seafood Careers Australia](#)

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

EDUCATION:

- Secondary (high) school graduation certificate or equivalent
- A degree, diploma, or technical training in areas of natural resource management, biology, zoology, environmental science, aquaculture, conservation management, etc. is preferred, but not limiting

EXPERIENCE:

- No experience necessary
- Will be required to pass recognized training program
- Previous experience/knowledge of fishery industry is an asset



TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES

SURVEY AND DATA COLLECTION

Collects appropriate population samples, measures sample features and characteristics, and records data findings legibly to upload to the government.

- Selects adequate population samples from harvested fish to analyze biological characteristics.
- Analyzes fish by weight, species, gender, and various other features to identify ecosystem and species health.
- Records field data legibly and inputs it into government reporting database to support regulatory decisions and long-term planning.
- Operates, maintains, and calibrates data collection and sampling equipment to ensure accurate and reliable measurements.
- Adheres to scientific sampling methodologies to support fisheries management, compliance, and conservation efforts.

MONITORING

Monitors fishing licenses, equipment, and gear to ensure regulatory compliance and support the sustainability of fish stocks.

- Reviews fishing licenses to confirm validity, authorized species, and designated fishing areas in compliance with regulations
- Inspect fishing gear to ensure safety and efficiency of fishing operations
- Monitors active fishing operations to verify that only permitted species are retained and bycatch is released according to protocol
- Oversees survey and data collection on harvested fish populations to verify compliance with catch limits and species regulations.

STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS MANAGEMENT

Engages with key stakeholders to identify needs, build partnerships, and support operational outcomes through collaborative problem-solving.

- Build trust with crews and captains to encourage cooperation and reduce resistance to regulatory compliance.
- Develop relationships with dockside and plant workers to support smooth coordination of field activities.
- Maintains regular communication with government program staff to report challenges and coordinate responses during operations.
- Ensures consistent communication and enforcement of fishery regulations to maintain stakeholder trust and fairness.
- Balances the priorities of crew, dock workers, and regulators to strengthen collaboration and achieve shared operational goals including during tense situations.



COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Communicates clearly and collaboratively to promote shared understanding, build support, and drive timely action toward operational goals.

- Actively listens to stakeholders to address concerns and negotiate practical solutions for effective regulation implementation.
- Communicate with crew members to share information that reinforces their role in supporting regulatory compliance.
- Records and reports compliance data to employers and decision-makers to support regulatory oversight and program improvement.
- Supports fellow deckhands to build trust and strong working relationships over the course of the assignment.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Completes fish measurements and analysis while recording findings with accuracy and legibility in a fast-paced and often pressure-filled work environment over long hours or tours.

- Accurately completes documents and report logs to ensure safe and efficient operations.
- Reviews and corrects errors or omissions, where applicable, to ensure efficiency and safety.
- Focuses fully when handling aquatic life to ensure accurate records and correct identification during long working hours in physically demanding work environments.
- Follow standard operating procedures and training to ensure consistent and accurate completion of routine tasks while following on-board or on-site safety procedures.
- Provides accurate, consistent, and reliable data on all pieces of work to ensure reliable data capture.
- Follows all safety procedures onboard vessels to ensure personal and crew safety during observation activities.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Demonstrates honesty, responsibility, respect, and fairness in regulatory oversight to diminish risk, increase trust, and improve long term fishery success.

- Acts in a professional, objective, and unbiased manner while interacting with fishery crews and government officials to ensure accurate and trustworthy long-term communication.
- Adheres to all regulatory and legislative procedures, processes, and programs to ensure fair and equal regulatory applications.
- Recognizes and implements responsible monitoring of sustainable fishing methods to minimize impacts on undersized, non-target species and maintain biomass stock in marine environments.
- Accurately and honestly conveys potentially difficult and inconvenient information to ensure that risks, incidents, and other lagging indicators pertaining to fishing regulations are understood by the appropriate actors, including management.



REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Adheres to specific regulations, codes, and legislation within a defined jurisdiction to ensure the health and safety of others.

- Verifies that fishing equipment and licenses meet requirements under Fisheries Management Acts and Regulations.
- Ensures identification and return of bycatch products to maintain operations within fishery license limits.
- Perform duties throughout all fishery processes to maintain and record regulatory compliance.
- Apply Fisheries Management Acts and Regulations to ensure operations comply with legal requirements.

PROTECTING PUBLIC INTEREST

Understands, observes, and records the impacts of fishing operations on life, health, property, economic interests, and the environment to ensure products or systems are in the best interest of public life.

- Apply relevant regulations to fishing operations to ensure sustainability of fishing stocks.
- Reviews and investigates gear and licenses to ensure that all fishing operations are legally placed to sustain fish stocks.
- Provides data to government decision-makers to support informed and forward-looking decisions.
- Assesses caught fish and other species to monitor for potential hazards and warning signs regarding sustainability of fishing stocks and supply.
- Ensures that crew, dock workers, and fishery workers are aware of the observer's role in the long-term management of fishing stocks.



AQUATIC STOCK SUSTAINABLE OVERSIGHT

Oversee aspects of aquatic harvesting, reviewing harvested species and samples to identify and ensure that harvesting quotas are within regulations to aid the sustainability of the population.

- Analyzes collected fish to identify initial population health.
- Catalogues samples of fish while ensuring their collection is within regulations.
- Records collections and reports issues or infractions to appropriate authorities, such as DFO, ship captain, or dock supervisor.
- Supports sustainability efforts through accurate data collection and regulatory compliance.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Monitors and reports on the changes to the environmental conditions of a species and general area to determine the impacts of policies, operations, and their implementation.

- Reviews sampled fish for disease, health, and growth to assess the quality of the ecosystem.
- Collects biological samples to support integrated data analysis.
- Observes fishing crew, dock workers, and fish plant practices to ensure protection of environment and species within regulatory boundaries.
- Collects data and reports raw findings back to decision-makers to add to broader monitoring projects .

FISH SAMPLING

Captures or observes fish to sample populations for the purpose of obtaining information about the characteristics of fish populations or communities, in relation to the habitats they occupy.

- Monitors and record environmental parameters affecting aquatic ecosystems to ensure accurate and reproducible data.
- Selects a sample of fish from the landed or at-sea fish population to collect general health data.
- Collects information from the gender, species, and weight of the fish including determining age from ear bone analysis.
- Applies knowledge and training to assess fish health indicators and record observations.
- Demonstrates strong knowledge of fish species and marine ecosystems to accurately identify species and assess ecosystem health.