

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON ELECTRONIC MONITORING REGULATIONS AND EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT UPDATE

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received a presentation from Melissa Hooper of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) West Coast Region regarding updates on the electronic monitoring (EM) regulations and exempted fishing permits (EFPs) during our publicly noticed pre-meeting conference call on September 1, 2015. The GMT also reviewed the briefing book documents and offers the following thoughts and recommendations.

In September 2014, the Council selected the Final Preferred Alternative (FPA) for developing the whiting fishery EM program. At that time, the FPA for discard accounting in the mothership sector was to “deduct the aggregated accumulated unintentional minor discards (spillage) estimated to be less than 0.5 percent of the mothership allocation.” However, with this option, there would be no inseason accounting of discards. The GMT agrees with NMFS’ concern in their report ([Agenda Item H.4.a](#)) that the discard rates used to calculate the initial deducted amount may become outdated quickly and would not have the capability to be updated frequently inseason. The GMT relies heavily on inseason accounting for updating projections and recommending management measures. We are therefore supportive of the work NMFS and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission are doing in order to replicate the inseason reporting process currently used with human observers. Since not all catcher vessels will be participating in EM moving forward, the GMT believes that having a similar process of inseason accounting between EM and human observers will provide the best available and comparable data. We are looking forward to seeing the results of the analysis comparing logbook and EM discard data in November, and can provide more direction at that time if needed.

Finally, on our conference call, it was brought up by members of the public that the current timetable to implement EM regulations for the whiting fishery (slated to begin in 2016) may be too quick. Lessons are still being learned, as noted in the NMFS report, and the EFPs are working well. The GMT has previously stated that EFPs are typically done to inform the regulatory process, but could present unanticipated results to help refine the regulatory framework. With the development of the discard accounting method for the mothership being so late in the year, the GMT sees merit in potentially delaying the implementation of the whiting EM regulations in order to learn all the lessons from the EFPs and create an effective discard accounting method.

PFMC
09/11/15