



Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Exempted Fishing Permits Field Report

Agenda Item H.4.b
Supplemental Public Comment
September 2015

September 2, 2015

In April 2015, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) approved four applications for exempted fishing permits (EFPs) to test the use of electronic monitoring (EM) in the Pacific groundfish fishery. Participating vessels were allowed to use EM in place of human observers to meet the requirement for 100-percent observer coverage. All four of the EFP groups selected Archipelago Marine Research Ltd. (Archipelago) for the provision of equipment and field services related to the EFP. Archipelago is providing this update to the Council to share an account of the equipment installation, and technical support in preparation for the Council's more comprehensive discussion of EM.

The installations of EM equipment on EFP vessels began in May 2015, conducted in ports from Bellingham, WA to Morro Bay, CA. To date, of the 37 participating vessels, 28 installations have been completed, with the remaining installations expected to be completed by the end of September.

During each installation, the EM technician reviewed the basic system operation with the fisher. Fishers have also been provided with a package of reference materials explaining the equipment, user interface, troubleshooting procedures, and primary program contacts.

As part of the installation process, the EM technician worked with the fisher to gather and document information on the vessel layout, deck measurements, and discard locations and practices. This information was used to create the installation summary that is included in the Vessel Monitoring Plan (VMP) for each vessel. The VMPs are composed of:

- A cover letter detailing the vessel information, program contacts, and date of VMP;
- EM system installation summary, camera views, and deck diagram (Appendix A);
- General requirements for fishers defining the fisher responsibilities, hard drive retrieval frequencies, logbooks requirements, and catch-handling restrictions (Appendix B);
- List of IFQ species, those that can be differentiated from IFQ species, and those that are difficult to differentiate from IFQ species (Appendix C); and
- Information for observers working on EFP vessels (Appendix D).

The VMP was then submitted to NMFS and PSMFC on behalf of the fishery for review and approval prior to the first fishing trip under the EFP.

Vessels that require services such as hard drive swaps, or service while in port, can schedule a service with a local technician in several ports. Local technicians are trained on the installation,

maintenance, troubleshooting, and use of EM systems. To further support continuous collection of high-quality data, Archipelago receives feedback forms from the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) describing any recommended changes (e.g. camera view adjustments etc.). When necessary, an Archipelago technician contacts the vessel operator to discuss the issue, provide advice on system operation, or schedule a system service.

Due to the requirement to have EM systems functional during all fishing trips, Archipelago has set up a 24-hour technical support phone line for any fishers who may experience technical challenges while at sea. When a fisher contacts Archipelago using the technical support line, the EM technician works with the fisher to try to resolve the problem, and documents the action taken. NMFS is notified of all calls from sea, and provides advice for any technical problems that could not be otherwise resolved. To date, there have been 16 calls from sea, and all technical issues have either been resolved or deemed non-critical.

As a further measure against equipment failure, backup EM systems have been stationed aboard the processors in case of need by at-sea whiting vessels. To date, backup systems have not been required.

At this time, none of the EFP vessels have been required to return to port mid-trip to resolve a technical issue. For non-critical issues, a service event is scheduled for immediate follow-up at the first landing by the vessel.

In summary, the majority of the EFP fleet has EM systems installed and are conducting fishing operations. The technical support team has worked closely with the fleet to resolve any issues, and the program is functioning well due to close collaboration between Archipelago, PSMFC, the participating vessels and the industry groups. We are pleased to be participating in this successful program.

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