

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON REGULATIONS FOR VESSEL MOVEMENT MONITORING

The HMSAS supports the No Action (Status quo) alternative for the following reasons.

Increasing the ping rate will result in a substantial increase in costs for to DGN operators with no prospects for a conservation or management gain.

The No Action (Status quo) alternative currently mandates a ping rate of one per hour. This ping rate is more than adequate to detect that a DGN vessel could be deploying their net. The deployment and retrieval of a DGN net with a zero soak time takes a minimum of one hour and half hours. During this deployment/retrieval process the current ping data compiled by the HMSMT demonstrates that the vessel will be moving at the approximate drift rate of up to 1.5 knots per hour. The fact that this data already exists, clearly demonstrates that increasing the ping rate will not provide any additional supplemental data for management or enforcement.

In September, 2015 the Council discussed mandatory monitoring of the DGN fishery. At that meeting the Council voted to achieve mandatory, 100% monitoring of the fleet either through EM or observer coverage by 2018. Having this requirement implemented could relieve the need for any new VMS requirements at this time because an observer or EM can verify that DGN fishing activity is not occurring in the Protected Resource Closure Areas (PRCA). Based on this decision by the Council, the No Action alternative would be appropriate.

The implementation of a continuous transit requirement also will not add any management or conservation value, because it is unlikely to contribute to the detection of fishing in times and areas when it is prohibited. However, this new legal requirement would appear to put boats in legal jeopardy for many currently allowed activities, because the PLCA covers a much larger area than the Rockfish Conservation Areas, meaning that the continuous transit requirement would effectively apply to any DGN vessel movement from Monterey north to central Oregon during the PLCA closure period. These activities encompass safety issues such as the operator resting, sleeping, inclement weather, and maintaining their boats in a safe condition. Additionally, DGN vessels are not restricted from fishing for HMS with other legal gears in areas closed to DGN fishing. Therefore, a restriction from fishing these legal gears in areas closed to DGN fishing will have a great economic impact on the fishers.

As a result the proposed changes to the DGN VMS requirement will do nothing except harm the participants without any management or conservation justification. The DGN fishery is so heavily regulated that it is very difficult for the remaining participants to make a living, even with access to many other fisheries.