

Application for Experimental Fisheries Permit

Use of Electronic Monitoring in West Coast Trawl Fishery on Vessels Utilizing Fixed Gear.

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Applicants:

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Background:

In 2011, NMFS implemented a Council-developed catch share program for the West Coast limited entry groundfish trawl fishery. The program requires that each vessel acquire quota pounds (QP) to cover its catch (including discards) of nearly all groundfish species. Proper functioning of the program requires some form of at-sea monitoring to ensure that discards are enumerated for each vessel. The catch share program specified that this monitoring function be achieved through 100% at-sea observer coverage. Electronic monitoring (EM) is being explored as a potential technically and economically viable substitute for the use of human observers in the function of compliance monitoring for the catch share program.

In 2012 and 2013, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) expanded its initial pilot project to test the feasibility of using electronic monitoring for catch

accounting in the trawl catch share program in the west coast groundfish fishery. Included in expansion of the project were trawl-permitted vessels utilizing both pot and longline gear. Vessels were outfitted by NMFS certified EM service providers. In addition to the installation of EM systems, permitted vessel owners were also required to continue to contract for and carry a federal fisheries observer.

On May 3, 2013, National Marine Fisheries Services issued policy directive 30-133, setting forth the following objective:

It is the policy of the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) to encourage the consideration of electronic technologies to complement and/or improve existing fishery-dependent data collection programs to achieve the most cost-effective and sustainable approach that ensures alignment of management goals, data needs, funding sources and regulations

Purpose and Goals:

For this experimental fishery permit, applicants propose to monitor catch and discard aboard a trawl-permitted vessel, utilizing fixed gear, via an electronic monitoring system, without the on board presence of a human observer. Compliance monitoring, rather than the collection of biological data, is the primary focus of this application. While industry is interested in finding less costly and more flexible methods to monitor catch and discards at sea, this application is meant to address a key management issue:

Can video monitoring be used on board a fixed gear vessel to accurately track and correctly identify an individual's fish catch, including discards, to be debited from a quota account? And can this be done without the presence of a trained federal fisheries observer?

From previous experience in 2012 and 2013 with the PSMFC pilot projects, preliminary data has indicated a very high confidence level in the correlation of logbook data entered by vessel captains of the weight and the species of fish caught and discarded, when compared to observer data and the review of onboard video. Applicants seek the issuance of an EFP to show whether such a high confidence level in the reporting of catch and discard can be demonstrated solely through the use of EM and without the presence of the human observer.

Broader Significance of EFP: In the event that there continues to be a very high correlation of EM data, video review and logbook data of the catch and discard of IQ species aboard the vessel, it is anticipated that the requirement for 100% human observer coverage on trawl-permitted vessels using fixed gear may be significantly reduced, if not entirely eliminated.

Duration of EFP and Number of Vessels Participating: Applicants request that this EFP be for a duration of two years, beginning January 1, 2015 and ending December 31, 2016.

While vessel owners from three states are submitting this application for an EFP, it is anticipated that an estimated 20 other trawl vessel operators utilizing fixed gear and

experienced in the deployment and operation of EM could qualify under this EFP to participate in the second year.

Applicants envision the successful outcome of this EFP will be demonstrated within the first year, and anticipate Council action and NMFS future approval of a regulatory amendment to allow the use of EM without the presence of a human observer. However, applicants' past experience with the regulatory process leads them to believe that the amendment process may be quite lengthy, possibly exceeding two years. With the implementation of a two year EFP on January 1, 2015: 1) additional vessels will be able to join for the second year, providing additional data, and 2) the EFP can continue without interruption, pending a regulatory amendment.

Qualifications of Applicants:

John Corbin has longlined for sablefish off the West Coast and Alaska for more than 30 years. The F/V Buck and Ann is 56 ft long and the F/V Southeast is 66 ft long. Both vessels have trawl permits with sablefish and other groundfish quota in their respective vessel accounts, and have fished the trawl permits with pot gear for the last 3 years. During 2013, the F/V Buck and Ann participated in the PSFMC project, deploying an EM system while also carrying a federal fishery observer.

For purposes of this application, the F/V Buck and Ann will be using pot gear as will the F/V Southeast. The F/V Buck and Ann may also utilize longline gear while fishing off Morro Bay, CA.

Bob Eder has fished for sablefish with pots off the coasts of Oregon and Washington for 35 years. The F/V Timmy Boy is a 60 ft vessel, and has a trawl permit, sablefish and other groundfish quota in its vessel account, and fished its trawl permit with pot gear in 2011 and 2013. During 2013, the F/V Timmy Boy also participated in the PSFMC project, deploying an EM system while also carrying a federal fisheries observer.

Bill Blue has fished commercially for 40 years off the California coast in multiple state and federally managed fisheries with various gear types. Most recently, he began pot fishing for sablefish in 2006. In 2008 he was part of the first EFP to use fixed gear to harvest trawl allocation and has continued to be involved with catching trawl quota with fixed gear. In 2009 he added EM to the project, and while participating in that fishery, has not left the dock from that time until now without a human observer and EM on his boat. He currently owns and operates the F/V Brita Michelle.

Burton Parker has fished numerous pot and trawl fisheries and owned commercial vessels off the West Coast and Alaska for 40 years. He has previous experience with the installation and operation of EM in the whiting fishery. Alyssa Ann LLC is the owner of the F/V Alyssa Ann, a 44 ft vessel that fishes for sablefish out of Newport and Astoria OR. Burton Parker is the sole member of the LLC. The vessel has a trawl permit, quota in the account, and uses pots to fish for sablefish. The vessel's skipper is Jake Erickson, who has commercially fished for 10 years, and has 3 years' experience operating the F/V Alyssa Ann, fishing for sablefish with pots.

Methods:

All of the applicants have successfully participated in at least one, if not multiple years, in an EM program aboard vessels they own. All have experience working with EM contractors, having vessels outfitted with gear and cameras, making system modifications suited to the individual vessel to ensure operational success, using customized logbooks, and facilitating data storage, retrieval, and delivery to EM contractors.. It is anticipated that the protocol for EM for this EFP will be entirely consistent with the protocols as established in previous years under PSMFC guidelines.

A. MONITORING REQUIREMENTS:

1. Procurement of electronic monitoring system services. Each vessel must have properly installed and functioning EMS equipment, unless the vessel has been granted a written EMS coverage waiver by NMFS. Owners of vessels must arrange for EMS services from a NMFS EMS service provider. Currently, the following are NMFS-specified EM system providers:
 - Archipelago Marine Research, Ltd.
 - Saltwater, Inc.
2. Installation. A vessel owner intending to fish under this EFP must schedule a time with the specified EMS provider for installation of the system. The EMS must be installed, tested, the system initialized and the EMS computer box sealed with tamper evident seals before the vessel leaves port on the first EFP fishing trip. Fishing without installing and testing the EMS equipment is a violation of this EFP.
3. EMS maintenance and data retrieval. As specified by the EMS provider, the vessel operator must schedule maintenance of EMS equipment and data removal by the NMFS-specified EMS provider by scheduling periodic appointments during the term of this EFP.
4. System checks. On each trip prior to leaving port, the vessel operator must conduct an EMS system status check as specified by the EMS provider to confirm that all components of the EMS are functioning properly. The EMS will record the results of this check. If the EMS check identifies a malfunction, the vessel must contact the NMFS-specified EMS provider immediately. When requested by the EMS service provider, the vessel would be required to carry EMS units that transmit system performance data while a vessel is at sea. Any such requirement would be in addition to the operator initiated system check which is to occur on each trip.
5. System malfunctions. The vessel is obligated to monitor the EMS performance. When aware that the EMS is not functioning properly or that the power has been interrupted, the vessel must contact the EMS service provider immediately. The EMS provider is required to provide technical service within 24 hours of notification.

6. Logbooks: For purposes of this EFP, vessel captains shall utilize what is known as an “Oregon Fixed Gear Logbook,” as modified per instructions from PSMFC and utilized in 2013 in the EM protocols. Vessels shall also maintain any other logbooks as required by state and federal agencies.

B. FISHING RESTRICTIONS

1. Gear restrictions. Only legal pot or longline gear may be used for fishing under this EFP.
2. Permits. Each participating vessel must have a limited entry trawl permit registered to the vessel, and have a vessel account with quota pounds registered to the account before beginning fishing. A copy of this EFP must be carried on board the vessel while EFP fishing and when fish caught while fishing under the EFP are on board the vessel.
3. Retention requirements. A vessel fishing trawl quota share with fixed gear under this EFP must account for 100% of all IFQ species caught on board the vessel. Procedures regarding full retention of fish shall be consistent with those approved and operational during the PSMFC EM practices in 2013. All IFQ species must be retained until offloading, with the following exceptions:
 - i. Fish in unmarketable condition ; or
 - ii. Halibut, which will be measured, evaluated for condition, and returned to the ocean.

Non IFQ species such as deepwater crab, giant grenadier, pink urchins, and brittle stars, may be discarded at sea.

If a large marine organism is discarded, the species and the reason for discarding must be recorded and labeled as “discard” in the required logbook. Any incidentally caught marine mammals must be documented in the vessel logbook and reported to the NMFS Office of Protected Resources by submitting a completed Marine Mammal Authorization Program mortality/injury report form as required by regulations at § 50 CFR 229.4.

4. Landing restrictions. All fish must be offloaded at only one designated processing plant (i.e. the offloading of catch from one trip cannot be split between two or more processing plants). Once offloading has begun at a designated processing plant, all fish on board the vessel must be continuously offloaded at that plant. The processing plant must be one qualified to receive trawl quota fish under the limited entry trawl IFQ program.

C. DATA RETRIEVAL AND ANALYSIS:

Applicants will work in partnership with PSMFC and EM service providers to insure the integrity of and timely delivery of data from the vessel to the service provider for analysis. Once the data is obtained from the vessel, the following is a general description of the analysis undertaken by the service provider

1. Evaluate data set completeness and identify fishing events
2. Confirm fishing events, and examine catch stowage operations to examine compliance with full retention of IQ species
3. Document discard events
4. Examine vessel logs to verify trips and fishing events align with sensor data
5. Compare vessel operator records of landed catch and discard as compared with EM data.

D. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

1. Preliminary: Pursuant to Council Operating Procedures, applicants, in conjunction with the EM service provider, will present a preliminary report on the results of the EFP at the November Council meeting in 2015. The report will indicate the applicants' intent to continue the EFP activity for the second year of the management cycle.
2. Final: A final written report of the results of the EFP will be presented by the applicants to the GMT, GAP, SSC and the Council at the September Council meeting of the year following the management cycle for which the EFP activity is conducted. The final report will include a summary of the work completed, an analysis of the data collected, a conclusion and recommendations.

Submitted by Applicants:

s/ John Corbin

s/ Bob Eder

s/ Bill Blue

s/ Burton Parker

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On Behalf of Applicants