

GROUND FISH ELECTRONIC MONITORING  
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT  
April 2014

**Report to the Council**

The Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Committee (GEMTAC) met January 22-23, 2014 in Portland, Oregon to discuss development of an impact analysis for the range of alternatives and options adopted by the Council for an electronic monitoring (EM) program. The GEMTAC also reviewed preliminary Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP) documents submitted to the GEMTAC by potential applicants. The GEMTAC had productive discussions and provided verbal comments to the applicants for consideration. With respect to the impact analysis, the committee reviewed plans for the analysis including issues and identified questions; numerous data requests were identified to support the analysis.

The GEMTAC received a presentation from the NMFS West Coast Observer Program (WCOP) on potential impacts an electronic monitoring program might have on the scientific collection program and consequences for industry and the agency. A more detailed report is available in Agenda Item C.7.b NMFS Report, April 2014 Council meeting.

The GEMTAC discussed the presentation by the WCOP and the observer duties. There are two types of duties for observers in the IFQ fishery, compliance observations and scientific observations. Compliance observations are needed to support catch and discard monitoring in the IFQ fishery to estimate total catch by a fishermen. Scientific observations are conducted to collect data to support stock assessments and estimate protected species interactions, amongst other things. If EM is used on IFQ trips and the observer is removed from the vessel without making other program adjustments, significant scientific information would be lost. A continuous need exists for at least some level of scientific observer coverage to collect biological samples and other scientific data on EM trips.

During the GEMTAC discussion, a possible need for an additional provision for the EM alternatives was identified. If scientific observations are needed on EM trips, who will be responsible for the costs of collecting this information? How the scientific observers are funded may substantially affect the impacts of a transition to EM. Prior to the trawl rationalization program NMFS paid for observers to collect biological data. If the management policy requires that the industry continue to pay for fulfillment of the biological observer function, the impacts (both financially and operationally and for both industry and NMFS) may be substantially different than would be the case if NMFS pays for observers. As an example with respect to operations, if NMFS is paying for observers, vessels may encounter longer wait times for observer availability. These and other potential impacts can be developed in greater detail in the forthcoming impact analysis of the alternatives; however, before proceeding with the analysis it may be most efficient for the Council to provide guidance on a reasonable range of options for the issue of payment for scientific observers.