

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING  
PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS

Mr. Brett Wiedoff briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the Electronic Monitoring (EM) Program Development process (Agenda Item C.1.a) and the alternatives being explored by the Council (Agenda Item C.7.a, Attachments 1-3). The briefing was informative, and the SSC had minor questions for clarification. Data from fish tickets and logbooks could be compared for the bottom-trawl fishery to explore the precision and accuracy of visual estimates of landings. This level of precision and accuracy would reflect a best-case scenario in terms of what could be expected for visual estimates.

Mr. Dave Colpo gave a presentation to the SSC on the EM Field Program run by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (Agenda Item C.1.b). The SSC concluded that this is a very informative initial study and gives a general summary of some of the issues an EM program might encounter. There was greater agreement between compliance monitors and the video for fish counts than for fish weights. There was also better agreement for retained catch than discards. When catch is not sorted, identifying catch to the species level was difficult. Even when landings were sorted, such identification could still be challenging, especially for small fish, rockfish, and flatfish.

Many of the discrepancies between the compliance monitors and the video were when the video observed a discard event but the compliance monitor did not, and vice-versa. This indicates that some discard events may be unobserved by compliance monitors and that the video will also miss some events. There were also questions as to whether the agreement between compliance monitors and video might be different for different vessels, but any of these discrepancies will likely be negligible once one takes into account the all-volunteer nature of the data. The all-volunteer nature of the participation in the study makes the extrapolation of the results to the rest of the fleet difficult. This raises the question if sampling is representative of the entire fleet.

While the project provided useful estimates of the cost of reviewing the video, these estimates do not account fully for the costs to industry and the public. Also, these costs were only for a single reading, and these costs will increase if double-reading is necessary due to inter-reader variability.

The SSC was tasked with evaluating the scientific merits of the exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications and reviewing the applicants' approaches to addressing their respective questions. While EFPs can be useful for informing EM program design and may answer some of the questions previously proposed by the SSC (Agenda Item 1.4.c Supplemental SSC Report from April 2012), the EFPs provided to the SSC were not specifically designed to answer such questions. If an EFP were to be designed to answer specific questions in a scientific manner, the applicant would likely need either full retention or have observers onboard who would collect both the amount of discards as well as their biological characteristics. In addition to this, a research design should have explicit contingency plans for equipment failure and situations when catch cannot be identified to the species level in the video. Standards of research design should be established if the Council wishes EFPs to be designed to answer specific questions in a scientific manner.