

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON TRAWL RATIONALIZATION TRAILING ACTIONS – ELECTRONIC MONITORING REGULATORY PROCESS

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) had the opportunity to engage Mr. Dave Colpo (Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, [PSMFC]) and Mr. Jim Seger (Council staff) in a discussion regarding the possible design and implementation of an electronic monitoring program for some or all sectors in the West Coast groundfish fisheries. The GMT's discussion revolved around two main themes: the importance of developing performance standards that will adequately measure progress relative to the goals and objectives highlighted in the Electronic Monitoring Workshop Report ([Agenda Item D.7.b, April 2012](#)); and how to measure and verify that the quality of data collected from electronic monitoring technology is comparable with (or better than) what is currently collected by human observers. This latter issue acknowledges the difficulty of quantifying discards when using electronic monitoring technology without human observers to verify what is captured by the implemented technology. The former issue highlights the team's agreement that effective performance standards can only be developed when program objectives are clear. More discussion on these and additional items are presented below for Council consideration.

Consider Adopting Regulatory Goals and Objectives

We spent the bulk of our discussion time on the proposed regulatory goals and objectives appearing on p. 4-5 of the Electronic Monitoring (EM) Workshop Report. We do not weigh in on the question of whether the Council should adopt them or not, but instead offer the following thoughts in hopes that they may help with that decision.

We focused mostly on Objective 8, which is to develop the program while “maintaining current individual accountability for catch and preserving equitable distribution of monitoring coverage among members of the fleet.” Its meaning was unclear to some. Those team members having attended the workshop explained their recollection of the intent behind it, which was: (1) that EM should not undermine the core incentive in the individual fishing quota (IFQ) and co-op fisheries; and (2) that quota pounds (QP) should be monitored to a similar degree of precision and accuracy whether taken by a vessel carrying a human observer or an electronic-monitoring system.

On the first part, the strength of the individual accountability incentive is directly proportional to the strength of catch accounting. The IFQ program is intended to account for very small amounts of fish, yelloweye and cowcod being the extremes. Catch accounting has to be very precise to make participants individually accountable for these small amounts. Catch accounting relates to monitoring the trawl allocation and ultimately the annual catch limit. Greater precision is more important for species in which the trawl allocation and the ACL are attained at a high rate (e.g., sablefish, petrale sole, etc.). Another example discussed by the team is the special case of halibut. For halibut, the Council set up the extra incentive to improve the survival of discards by

encouraging individual accountability through halibut viability metrics, instead of using fleet wide averages.

On the second part of objective 8 about equitability, some participants at the EM Workshop remember the point being more that QP are not necessarily equivalent units if measured under systems that differ in their precision of catch accounting. Hypothetically, one system might be able to track catch to the nearest pound and another only to the nearest 100 pounds. Such differences in monitoring might also raise issues of fairness in a system where QP are traded as if they were equivalent. The way Objective 8 reads in the EM Workshop Report might be interpreted differently to mean that monitoring options are fairly available to all. This may also be a valid point, but it is different those that address catch accounting.

Importantly, we do not mean to imply that EM cannot be as accurate or precise as observers. Future analysis could explore the differences between the two methods, understanding that the true catch is unknown. It may be difficult to quantify the differences between observers and EM in terms of precision and accuracy. Nonetheless, there may be ways to compare the relative precision of various alternatives.

Lastly, some note that Objective 12 is somewhat of an outlier. It speaks more to the process for implementation while the other objectives speak to desired qualities and characteristics of the outcome.

Definition of total catch for catch accounting

An additional question that needs to be resolved before electronic monitoring (EM) can be effectively evaluated for compliance monitoring is:

What should be included in “total catch” for catch accounting purposes?

Following our discussion with Mr. Colpo, it became clear to the GMT that the definition of “catch” is uncertain and not clearly defined under the objectives of the EM or in Groundfish Mortality Reports. In other words, the definition is unclear regarding the “observable” fishing mortality that should be included for catch accounting purposes. This is exemplified in the EM Workshop Report provided by the Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission under [Agenda Item D.7.c, PSMFC Report 1, April 2013](#). In this study, it was shown that discard reported by video occasionally exceeded that reported by the human observer. For example, fish bled from codends by whiting mothership catcher vessels prior to transfer to the mothership was recorded using EM, whereas the human observer sometimes did not record these fish. A fair and accurate evaluation of the performance of EM requires a clear definition of “catch” used for accounting purposes. This should be clearly defined for each fishery under consideration.

Option for electronic monitoring co-op

The GMT believes that electronic monitoring cooperatives may have either been explored or are already in use in other regions. There is merit in summarizing the experiences from other areas to inform the potential for electronic monitoring co-ops on the West Coast.

GMT Recommendations:

- 1 The GMT recommends that the Council provide guidance on defining “catch” needed for catch accounting.**
- 2 If the Council wishes to consider EM co-ops, the GMT recommends looking to other regions for their experiences.**

PFMC
04/09/13