



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

## Electronic Technologies in Data Collection

**NOAA Fisheries science is world-class, providing trusted information to meet the varied needs of our partners and diverse stakeholders.**

NOAA Fisheries launched a new initiative to evaluate emerging technologies for use in fishery-dependent data collections with the goal of providing timely, accurate, and cost-effective information. Smartphones, laptops, and tablets are common-place in society and hold great promise for better data, better decision-making, and better fishing. We are committed to working with the Councils, our data partners, and other stakeholders to develop a thoughtful approach to integration of emerging technologies into our data collections.

### A Regional Approach

In April 2013, NOAA Fisheries issued an Electronic Technology Policy Directive, supported by a series of white papers and draft best practice guidance, to encourage the evaluation and use of the latest monitoring and reporting technologies. **The policy calls on our regional offices to develop Regional Electronic Technology Implementation Plans** to identify, evaluate, and implement (where appropriate) new technologies to improve their fisheries data reporting and monitoring. Plans also will consider implementation costs, timelines, and evaluation criteria.

Although the Plans are regionally-focused, we will also seek solutions on a series of overarching challenges that span the different regions. Those already identified relate to:

- Law enforcement
- Confidentiality
- Information technology infrastructure needed for broad scale implementation
- Apples-to-apples cost comparisons costs for electronic technologies and observer programs
- Technology advances such as data storage and transfer; and image recognition
- Moving from pilot projects to full implementation (i.e. scalability).

We brought aboard George Lapointe, an expert consultant with extensive experience in fisheries management at the state and federal level, to assist in the development of the regional plans. He also will connect with existing data collection efforts such as the At-Sea Observer Program, Marine Recreational Information Program, and regional Fisheries Information Networks to share information and ensure program coordination.

### Built on a Foundation of Stakeholder Input

**George is conducting listening sessions with the range of partners and stakeholders to inform regional plan development.** Initial conversations focused on NOAA Fisheries staff, Councils, and Commissions to learn more about existing efforts, impediments and opportunities, and other regional issues. A next step will be to expand those conversations to include recreational and commercial fishermen, seafood processors, distributors, and retailers, NGOs, service providers, and other interested parties.

### Share Your Thoughts

We recently released a document, *Electronic Monitoring and Electronic Reporting: Guidance and Best Practices for Federally-Managed Fisheries*, to foster discussion among all fisheries stakeholders to identify, evaluate, and implement electronic reporting and monitoring technologies. Read and comment on the draft guidance at: [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/op/outreach/18\\_em\\_er\\_discussion\\_draft.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/op/outreach/18_em_er_discussion_draft.html). Comments are due by September 30.

Connect with your NOAA Fisheries Regional Office or send ideas and feedback to George Lapointe directly at: [George@GeorgeLapointeConsulting.com](mailto:George@GeorgeLapointeConsulting.com) or (207) 557-4970.