

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON ELECTRONIC MONITORING ALTERNATIVES

The Groundfish Advisory Panel (GAP) heard a report from Mr. Brett Wiedoff describing the electronic monitoring (EM) alternatives development framework and timeline, as well as an update from the most recent Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Advisory Committee (GEMPAC) meeting.

Before commenting on the GEMPAC report, the GAP offers the following overarching comments and recommendations. As highlighted in our past statements, and as reinforced most recently by the moving testimony from Jiri Nozicka, skipper of the F/V San Giovanni, the GAP believes that the high costs and reduced operational flexibility of human observer coverage could force many participants out of the fishery. In addition to hardship on the trawl sector, loss of trawl vessels could cause ripple effects for other fisheries as the high volumes landed in the trawl sector are often what anchors infrastructure in a port. With that in mind, the GAP is deeply concerned with the regulatory timeline presented in the report. Implementation in September 2015 or January 2016 is simply too late.

The industry intends to submit an off cycle electronic fishing permit (EFP) application at the next council meeting. We request that the council make room on the March agenda to discuss this critical action. The overarching consideration for the GAP is that an EM program for those willing to conduct their fisheries under “maximized retention” protocols should be implemented and on the water by January 1, 2015.

The whiting sector operated under an EFP based EM program for many years. The industry and the government have the talent, experience, and governing structure to do this.

GEMPAC Report

The GAP supports the GEMPAC committee recommendations with one exception. The GAP believes the initial range of alternatives should be narrowed to include only two alternatives, the no action 100 percent human observer coverage option, and an option that authorizes observers or EM. The GAP does not support option three which would have required mandatory use of EM with no observer option.

In addition to our strong interest in the EFP described above, the GAP believes it is important that the regulatory process continue to develop for that segment of the fishery that cannot or is not interested in participating under maximized retention rules.

Self-governance concept

The GAP also received a report from Mr. Dayna Matthews about a self-governance concept for EM. Enforcement believes that this option, authorizing groups or individuals to be exempt from the one hundred percent observer coverage requirement in exchange for complying with certain criteria as laid out in his report, will allow for a much quicker response to potential rulebreakers than could occur under an enforcement action. Experience in numerous co-operatives in the

North Pacific and here on the West Coast under the whiting EFP suggest that this approach can be quicker and more effective than typical enforcement actions at reduced cost. The industry intends to incorporate many components of this concept into its EFP application.

PFMC
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