

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON ELECTRONIC MONITORING REGULATORY PROCESS FINAL PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES AND NEXT STEPS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) heard a report from Mr. Brett Wiedoff describing the draft electronic monitoring analysis and the Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Advisory Committee (GEMPAC) report. The GAP offers the following comments and recommendations.

Overall, development of electronic monitoring (EM) regulations remains a high priority for the GAP. We continue to believe that it holds significant potential to reduce monitoring costs and increase operational flexibility. With that in mind, we recommend that the Council select final preferred alternatives for EM regulations in the whiting, fixed gear, and bottom trawl sectors.

Specifically, the GAP supports the entire suite of GEMPAC recommendations with one modification.

The whiting representatives on the GEMPAC were unable to determine whether to use a video census (alternative 2) or logbooks and video audit (alternative 3) as the primary data source for discard accounting (Step 1, Table 2-9, pg. 91, Draft Analysis of an Electronic Monitoring Program for the Pacific Coast Limited Entry Trawl Groundfish Fishery Catch Shares Program). This was in large part because the whiting exempted fishing permit (EFP) approved in June 2014 is designed to answer which of these options will be most cost effective and least burdensome for the fleet. Without that information, and with an approved EFP soon to test that question, the GEMPAC did not feel comfortable recommending a final preferred alternative for this step. Further, the understanding of the GEMPAC was that an overall final preferred alternative for the whiting fishery could not be selected without making a decision on this question.

In our GAP discussions, we heard from Dr. Steve Freese that we likely could take final action on whiting EM by either 1) taking final action on all other EM items as recommended by the GEMPAC but leaving this question open until EFP data is available that suggests a specific course, or 2) picking the most likely of the alternatives and validating or modifying that selection based on EFP data. Further discussions with Dr. Freese suggested that by not taking final action now, we would delay EM regulations significantly. Because of that potential delay, and based on the new understanding of how we could move forward, the GAP believes we should take final action now on whiting leaving the question in Step 1 open and validate our choices or modify as needed based on the results of the EFPs.

Finally, the GAP notes that EM for the bottom trawl sector is likely to be slowest to come on line. The GAP believes that the bottom trawl sector is also most in need of economic relief as well as the increased operational flexibility EM could provide. The GAP believes it is important to consider how to create a financial bridge for the bottom trawl sector until EM becomes available. The GAP discussed four potential ways to do this: 1) maintain the observer subsidy until EM is available, 2) transfer the subsidy from those vessels transitioning to EM to those vessels that don't yet have EM, 3) move as expeditiously as possible with development of EM regulations, 4) allow additional participants in the second year of the EFP if the first year proves successful.

The GAP urges the Council to use its authority to help create this bridge, and specifically recommends moving forward with final action for all three sectors.

PFMC
09/16/14