

penult changes by Bill Robinson
5:49 pm
10/31/02

Council Action on Vessel Monitoring Plans

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) adopted the following motion relative to the implementation of a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) plan at the November 2002 council meeting. The Council recommends that NMFS, in consultation with the ad hoc VMS Committee, prepare a proposed rule for a pilot VMS program for implementation at some point in 2003.

The proposed rule should include:

Monitoring System and Declaration Requirements: The basic VMS transceiver and mobile communication system would be required equipment.

A declaration for legal fishing incursions into Groundfish Conservation Areas (GCA) would be required for all federal limited entry, exempted trawl, and tribal trawl vessels; open-access line-gear would not be subject to the declaration requirements. Declarations would be required prior to leaving port and would remain in effect until the vessel changes its intent with another declaration.

Coverage: Federal ^{GF} limited entry vessels that actively fish on the West Coast are required to carry an operating VMS unit.

Expenditures: The council recommends that NMFS fully fund all VMS requirements, or, if that is not possible, any vessels which have incurred VMS expenses ~~Federal~~ be eligible for reimbursement as federal funding becomes available.

Gear Type: Only one groundfish gear type can be onboard when fishing in a GCA and no active fishing inconsistent with the regulations of the GCA may occur on the trip. ~~Offloading of groundfish would not be required after declaration of a change in fishing strategy intent and prior to engaging in the different fishing strategy.~~

Gear Stowage : When transiting a GCA, trawl gear must remain below deck or covered on the deck of a vessel, or the net must be disconnected from the trawl doors and the trawl doors hung on their stanchions.

Note: The motion did not specify a recommended date, subsequent to final rulemaking completion, that VMS equipment would be required to be on-board vessels and enforcement of the regulation provisions would begin.

4 pm
October 31, 2002