

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM

At its February meeting, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) was briefed by Ms. Becky Renko on the status of the proposed rule for implementing a vessel monitoring system (VMS). The VMS system will be used for tracking vessels under the depth-based management regime as adopted for 2003. GMT members were provided with a copy of the draft proposed rule and were asked to provide comment. The GMT offers the following comments and recommendations regarding the use of VMS in managing the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery.

VMS systems produce accurate and timely information of vessel fishing locations over large geographical areas. These data can be used to better understand individual vessel and fishing fleet distribution. Accurate and timely data on fishing fleet distribution are needed to assess how fishing effort shifts as a result of new management measures and for assessing the effectiveness of closed areas. The GMT recommends that VMS data be available to federal and possibly state managers and scientists to improve their understanding of the fishery. If necessary, the data could be aggregated and/or disassociated from a vessel's identification code to protect confidentiality.

The requirements for a declaration system, where skippers must declare their intent to fish in a conservation area with an allowed gear, are also contained in the draft proposed rule. The GMT was updated on the development of a telephone call-in system that will be used to submit federal declaration reports. The GMT believes that declaration reports will aid enforcement in monitoring compliance with the depth-based restrictions and supports the development of a federal declaration reporting system.

PFMC
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