



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
Sustainable Fisheries Division
510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 103
Lacey WA, 98503

May 20, 2015

Dorothy M. Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

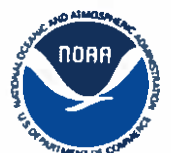
Dear Dorothy 

I am writing regarding the four exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications to test electronic monitoring (EM) in the Pacific coast groundfish fishery that the Pacific Fishery Management Council accepted at its June 2014, meeting. I am pleased to inform you that all four applications have been approved and participating vessels will begin fishing under the EFPs this month. Based on the 4 EFP applications approved by the Council, we have issued 6 different EFPs to a total of 36 vessels under 4 umbrella projects. The breadth and depth of the program is illustrated by the attached diagram.

To develop these EFPs, we worked with the applicants to design a comprehensive, realistic EM program that would inform the Council's regulatory amendment for the Pacific coast groundfish fishery. This necessitated crafting policies and terms and conditions to address everything from EM system specifications to equipment malfunctions at sea. In approving these EFPs, similar to a proposed rulemaking process, NMFS also had to address the Council's guidance, the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Paperwork Reduction Act, and other legal/policy requirements. The process required a "team" effort including: the Sustainable Fisheries Division, NOAA's Offices of Law Enforcement and General Counsel, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC), the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP), Council staff, and the applicants and their service provider, Archipelago Marine Research, Ltd.

Some highlights of the program include the following:

- Participants include vessels from the mothership and shorebased whiting fisheries, the non-whiting midwater trawl fishery, the bottom trawl fishery, and fixed gear fishery.
- Four different retention strategies will experiment with discarding of minor operational discards, protected species, depredated fish, and some identifiable individual fishing quota (IFQ) species.
- One vessel will test using EM data to validate fish tickets as well as logbooks.
- An integrated global position system (GPS) and control center will log each vessel's location every 10 seconds.



- WCGOP will provide observer coverage at pre-IFQ levels (approximately 25 percent) to maintain scientific data collection and provide additional information that may be used to evaluate EFP performance.

We have already learned much from the development of the EFPs that will inform eventual regulations for an operational EM program. In the coming months, we will be working with the EFP participants and PSMFC to troubleshoot issues, test audit procedures, and collect data on the program's performance. We look forward to sharing the preliminary results with the Council at its September meeting. If you would like additional information about the project at this time, please contact Melissa Hooper (206-526-4357).

Thank you for your support of this important initiative and for your continued commitment to implementation of electronic technologies in our fisheries.

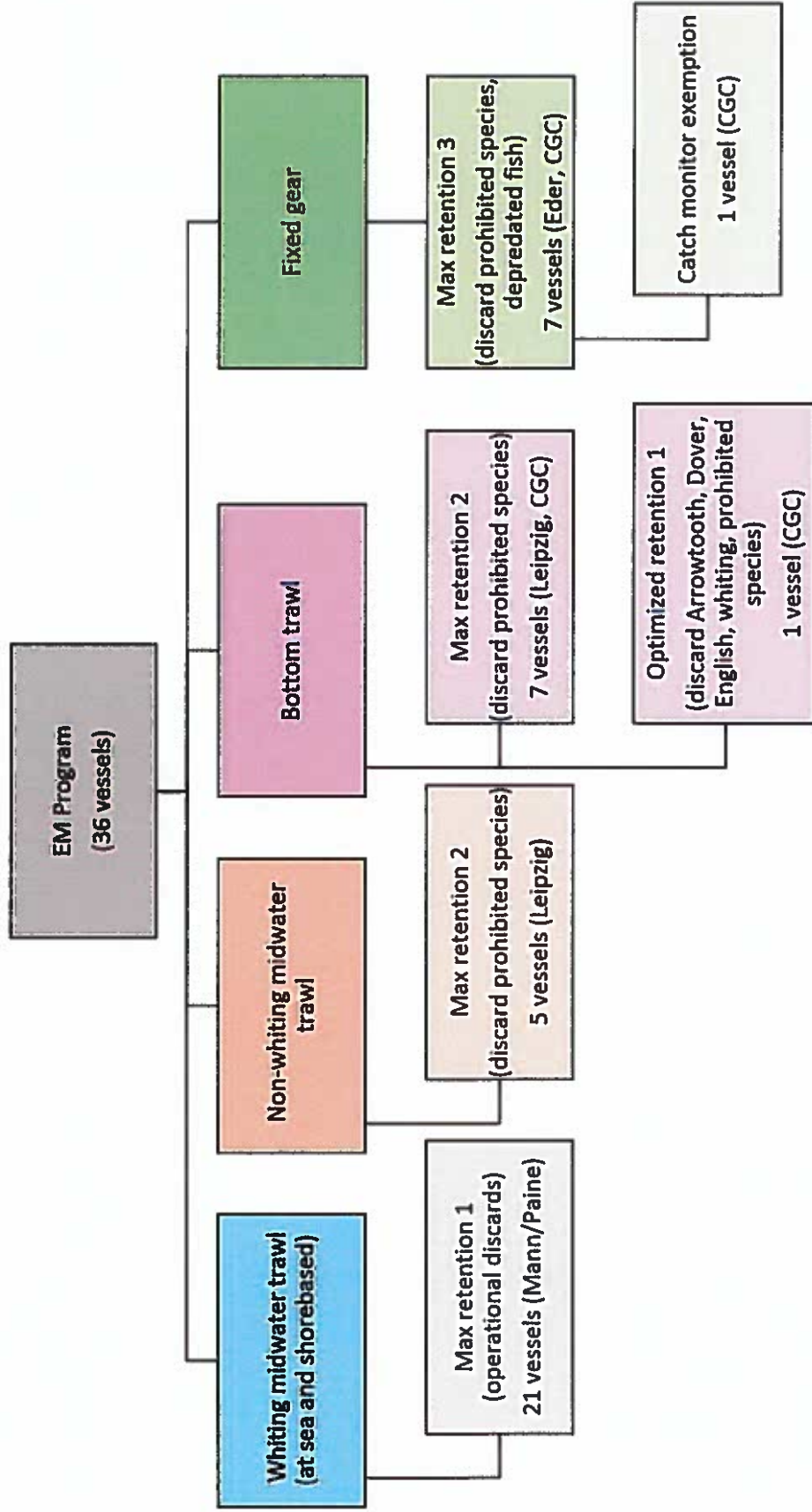
Sincerely,



Robert Turner
Assistant Regional Administrator
Sustainable Fisheries Division

Attachment

Exempted Fishing Permits by Gear Type



*CGC = California Groundfish Collective