

GROUNDFISH ADVISORY PANEL REPORT ON VESSEL MOVEMENT MONITORING ALTERNATIVES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) heard a presentation from Mr. Brett Wiedoff on the Purpose and Need statements and four associated management measures contained within the Vessel Movement Monitoring package. Mr. Dayna Mathews also consulted with the GAP providing the enforcement perspective and answering questions. The Council's task is to determine preliminary preferred alternatives, and the GAP has the following comments and recommendations.

Management Measure 1: Monitoring Restricted Areas with Vessel Monitoring Systems

The GAP recommends Alternative 4 as the Preliminary Preferred Alternative for all groundfish sectors with the exception of midwater trawl. The GAP further identifies alternatives 3, 1, and 2 (in that order) as their supporting priorities. For midwater trawl the GAP recommends Alternative 1, no action.

The GAP has consistently resisted the move to increase the vessel monitoring system (VMS) ping rate for groundfish vessels citing concerns about costs and necessity. Alternative 4 could provide increased amounts of information and data that fishermen may find useful while reducing the VMS costs and avoiding increases in the hourly ping rates.

Management Measure 2: Removal of Derelict Crab Pots from Rockfish Conservation Areas

The GAP supports Alternative 1, no action, as its Preliminary Preferred Alternative. This alternative relies on the state derelict gear removal programs currently in place. However, the GAP would note that the most efficient way to deal with derelict crab pots would be to allow fishermen to stop when they come across a pot, make a phone call notifying someone they are picking up the pot, pick up the pot, and then continue with their business. Unfortunately, this is not an option in the suite of alternatives.

Management Measure 3: Fishery Declaration Enhancements

The GAP supports a modified Alternative 3 as the Preliminary Preferred Alternative for the gear-testing portion of this management measure. The Alternative would be modified as follows:

Alternative 3 – Set up formal exemption process to allow *only Shorebased-IFQ trawl vessels* to be exempt from observer coverage for a trip that tests gear. The trip could be during an open or closed fishing season.

For whiting fishery declarations the GAP supports Alternative 2 as the Preliminary Preferred Alternative which allows whiting vessels to change their declaration between the at-sea and shoreside fishery without returning to port to do so.

Management Measure 4: Movement of IFQ Fish Pot Gear Across Management Lines

The GAP supports Alternative 2 as the Preliminary Preferred Alternative.

The purpose of this management measure is to allow these vessels to move pot gear across management lines during a single trip. The measure would allow the vessel to retain the individual fishing quota (IFQ) fish from the primary management area when moving to a new management area to deploy gear.

Vessels may gain efficiencies by either pulling pots from one area then moving them to a second management area, then return to port to deliver fish from the first management area. The vessel could continue to do this until all pots from the first area are moved to the second. Another possible scenario would be to pull pots from the first area, deliver fish, then deploy the pots in the second management area and return to the first management area to continue harvesting fish. Again, the vessel could repeat these steps until all pots are deployed in the second management area. Allowing the pots to be baited upon deployment would provide maximum efficiency for the fishery.

The vessel would not be allowed to harvest fish from any additional management areas with fish aboard the vessel from a previous management area (i.e., fish from multiple management areas could not be mixed during a single trip). The deployed gear could only be retrieved during a separate IFQ fishing trip. Note that, per regulation, there is 100 percent observer coverage on these vessels, ensuring compliance.

The GAP also recommends that, in the future, issues related to trawl gear and management areas need to be examined and addressed.

PFMC
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