

GROUND FISH ELECTRONIC MONITORING POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
REPORT ON PRELIMINARY EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT APPROVAL

The Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Advisory Committee (GEMPAC) discussed the potential expansion of the limited number of vessels under the current electronic monitoring (EM) exempted fishing permits (EFPs) for 2016 as noted in the National Marine Fisheries Service report under Agenda Item I.5.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 2. The GEMPAC recommends removing the limit for vessel participation under the current EM EFPs. Bottom trawl gear continues to have low participation under the EFPs, and adding these vessels could increase the sample size (i.e., number of trips for analysis and testing methodology). In addition, expansion of the number of EFP vessels would share the EM program fixed costs among a larger pool of vessels and thereby reduce costs per vessel. The GEMPAC is mindful of the potential impacts on observer and catch monitor availability/costs in ports with low activity.

The GEMPAC also encourages the Council to consider the potential for extending the EFPs beyond the approved two-year cycle of 2015-2016. We are concerned that the forthcoming information for bottom trawl and midwater non-whiting trawl may not be robust enough to develop the suitable methodology or regulations for an EM program. The whiting and fixed gear fisheries have a high percentage of participation and the EM methodology is well-developed, however; if regulations are not ready for implementation by January 1, 2017 an extension would be needed.

PFMC  
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