

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON FINAL ACTION ON
REGULATIONS FOR VESSEL MOVEMENT MONITORING

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) heard a presentation from Mr. Brett Wiedoff regarding the three management measures for final action on vessel movement monitoring. The GAP offers the following recommendations and comments on those measures.

The GAP first discussed the new groundfish definition of Continuous Transit which reads as follows:

Continuous transiting or transit through means that a vessel crosses a groundfish conservation area or EFH conservation area on a heading as nearly as practicable to a direct route, consistent with navigational safety, while maintaining headway throughout the transit without loitering or delay.

The GAP has no issues with this new definition.

Management Measure 1: Monitoring Restricted Areas with Vessel Monitoring Systems

The GAP recommends **no action** as the Final Preferred Alternative for all groundfish sectors with the exception of midwater trawl. The GAP also recommends **no action** for California halibut trawl.

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. The GAP understands that costs for the increased ping rate service fees have decreased from the rates we saw last year. But the fact is, they are still going to increase. The Boatrac system fees will be increasing from the current rate of \$34.95 up to \$63.00 which is nearly doubled. The new Skymate I 1500 system fees will be jumping from the current \$38.99 up to \$115.99 with the four ping rate. These are costs that fishermen simply cannot afford, especially smaller vessel operators that are barely getting by as it is now.

The new “enhanced” units are an intriguing alternative but, again, the costs of a new unit purchase will be between \$800 and \$1,000 that fishermen will have to absorb. There is no reimbursement program for VMS available at this time from Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Management Measure 2: Fishery Declaration Enhancements (Gear testing and Whiting Fishery Declarations Changes)

Gear Testing

The GAP supports **Alternative 3** which would set up a formal exemption process to allow *only groundfish 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.

Whiting Fishery Declaration

The GAP supports **Alternative 2** as the Final 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 3: Movement of IFQ Fish Pot Gear Across Management Lines

The GAP supports **Alternative 2** as the Final Preferred Alternative. Allowing the pots to be baited upon deployment would provide maximum efficiency for the fishery.

The purpose of this management measure is to allow these vessels to move baited 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 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). Note that, per regulation, there is 100 percent observer coverage on these vessels, ensuring compliance.

PFMC
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