



## Pacific Fishery Management Council *NEWS RELEASE*

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**DRAFT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Thursday, April 27, 2017

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### PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL RECOMMENDS ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM FOR SOME WEST COAST GROUND FISH FISHERIES

The Pacific Fishery Management Council has recommended regulations governing the use of electronic equipment to monitor at-sea discards of target, non-target and prohibited fish for certain West Coast groundfish fisheries. If approved by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), this will mark the culmination of a four-year process to develop and implement regulations for electronic monitoring system use in West Coast groundfish fisheries.

Council Member Dorothy Lowman said, "For many fishing operations, electronic monitoring will provide a more cost-effective way to meet 100% monitoring requirements. This will allow fishermen the flexibility to choose the monitoring method that makes the most sense for them while maintaining full accountability."

Under the Council's catch share program, every vessel must carry a human observer to help monitor catch that is allocated to each vessel owner, including discards that happen at sea. Each owner has a share of the total catch allocation and the program requires that each vessel have "quota pounds" to cover its catch of nearly all groundfish species. The catch share program relies on at-sea monitoring to ensure that discards are accurately identified with an estimated weight so that vessel quotas are properly tracked. However, fishermen must pay as much as \$500 per day for an observer, and must schedule deployment of an observer when a vessel is ready to fish. The electronic

monitoring program is expected to increase flexibility while reducing operating costs for fishermen.

An electronic monitoring system collects video images of fishing activity with cameras, uses gear sensors to trigger recording and monitor use, and includes a Global Positioning System to collect location data. It then stores this information on a computer hard drive for review at a later date at a mainland facility, where a person reviews the video to monitor the fishing activity. Under the West Coast electronic monitoring program, the video images will be used to verify the species and amount of discarded fish that is recorded in a fisherman's logbook. Observers may still be deployed on vessels to collect scientific data such as fish length measurements, interactions with protected species (marine mammals and seabirds), and other data to support fisheries management.

The use of electronic monitoring systems would be voluntary, and could apply to the midwater trawl fishery for whiting (sometimes called hake), the midwater trawl fishery for rockfish, the bottom trawl fishery, and the fixed gear fishery (which uses longlines with hooks and lines or pots).

The Council's decisions were informed by several years of collaborative work with the fishing industry, managers, and others to test electronic monitoring systems using "exempted fishing permits." An exempted fishing permit allows exemptions from some regulations in order to study the effectiveness, bycatch rate, or other aspects of experimental fishing methods.

"I want to thank the industry and other stakeholders, NMFS West Coast Region, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission for their help in developing and testing this program, and especially NMFS headquarters for their policy and financial support for establishing the first large scale electronic monitoring regulatory program for U.S. fisheries," said Council Executive Director Chuck Tracy.

The Council recommends management measures to NMFS for fisheries off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington. It is one of eight regional fishery management councils managing fisheries in US. Federal waters (3-200 miles offshore).

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## On the Web

- Pacific Fishery Management Council: [\*\*http://www.pcouncil.org\*\*](http://www.pcouncil.org)
- Chronology of the Council's Regulatory Development Process for an Electronic Monitoring Program: [\*\*http://tinyurl.com/mp9xqtn\*\*](http://tinyurl.com/mp9xqtn)
- Electronic Monitoring Program Public Scoping Timeline: [\*\*http://tinyurl.com/khzpevz\*\*](http://tinyurl.com/khzpevz)
- More information on the catch share observer program (from NMFS): [\*\*http://tinyurl.com/kn877ew\*\*](http://tinyurl.com/kn877ew) and [\*\*http://tinyurl.com/mcgdkdf\*\*](http://tinyurl.com/mcgdkdf)