

**GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON ELECTRONIC MONITORING -
REVIEW OF EXISTING AND OUT-OF-CYCLE EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS (EFPS)**

Mr. Brett Wiedoff provided the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) with an overview of this agenda item. The GAP offers the following comments and recommendations.

Extension of exempted fishing permits

Since the rule making packages have been repeatedly delayed and are not guaranteed to be complete and implemented by the end of 2018, the GAP strongly recommends extending the electronic monitoring (EM) exempted fishing permits (EFPs) for all catch share fisheries through 2019. While the rules for the fixed gear and whiting sectors are likely to be completed sometime during 2019, the GAP recommends that EFP participants be allowed to continue to fish under EFPs throughout the year.

Making the transition to fishing under full regulations for current EM EFP participants midyear is likely to create confusion as a number of important considerations have not been discussed or developed by the Council and NMFS. Relatedly, the GAP is deeply troubled that the transition to third party monitors is scheduled for January 2020, but there does not appear to be a transition plan.

With regard to the bottom trawl sector, there are still a number of important issues to work out in order to make EM a truly viable tool to reduce monitoring costs. Extension of the EFPs will provide stakeholders and NMFS time to work together to continue testing how to optimize EM for certain trawl applications like “beach dragging” – that is, primarily trawling for flatfish in shallow water.

Scheduling additional Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Advisory Committee meetings

Related to the transition issue described above, the GAP strongly recommends that the Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Advisory Committee (GEMPAC) meet over the winter and in the spring to develop recommendations for that transition.