



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

# NMFS Update on VMM Action

Agenda Item G.7.a  
NMFS Report 1

# Introduction

- Council took final action to adjust VMM management measures in April 2016.
- Included:
  - Monitoring restricted areas with VMS
  - Declarations enhancements
  - Moving IFQ pot gear across management lines
- NMFS identified concerns about implementation and consistency with FMP and MSA.
- Seek Council feedback on addressing concerns, proceeding with the rulemaking for this action.

# Management measure 1

- VMS changes for non-groundfish trawl and other groundfish fisheries
- Alternative 1a (834 vessels)
  - Increase ping rate to 4/hr with NMFS type approved units
  - Concern: complexity of exempting MW whiting trawl vessels from requirement.
- Alternative 1b (46 vessels)
  - Maintain ping rate of 1/hr for vessels using EM
  - Concern: Vessels use EM on a trip-by-trip basis. Can forget to adjust ping rates or VMS declaration report, increasing enforcement burden.

# Management measure 1 (continued)

- Alternative 2 (834+ vessels)
  - Allow the use of enhanced [non type-approved] VMS units
  - Concerns:
    - Program costs and feasibility
    - Need for redundant infrastructure to accommodate both type-approved and non type-approved units.
    - Conflicts with MSA National Standard 7 (*...minimize costs and unnecessary duplication*)

# Management measure 2

- Fishery declaration enhancements
- Alternative 1 (175 LE trawl vessels)
  - Allow MW trawl vessels to change their whiting fishery declaration while at-sea. Other declaration restrictions remain in place.
  - No concerns
- Alternative 2 (affects variable # vessels)
  - Formal process to allow only groundfish trawl vessels to be exempt from observer coverage for a trip that tests gear
  - No concerns

# Management measure 3

- Movement of IFQ pot gear across management lines
- Alternative 2, 3 (15 vessels)
  - Allow IFQ fixed gear vessels to move pot gear from one management area to another management area during a single trip then deploy the gear baited
  - No concerns

# Next steps

- NMFS recommends that Council:
  - Reconsider recommendation for **at least alternative 2 under Management Measure 1**
    - Can accept enforcement complexities of 1a and 1b to move forward with increased ping rate and continuous transit definition
  - Recommend NMFS move forward immediately with rulemaking to implement remaining measures.
  - Coordinate with other Councils to ask HQ OLE to investigate type-approving a variety of VMS units.
  - Petition vendors that produce alternative VMS units to seek type approval.