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.