GROUNDFISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON VESSEL MOVEMENT MONITORING

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received an update on the vessel movement monitoring issue (VMM) from Mr. Brian Corrigan, with the NMFS Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), and reviewed the documents under this agenda item.

Referencing NMFS Report 1, the GAP appreciates the time and effort NMFS, OLE and the Enforcement Consultants (EC) have put into discussion of this issue. Working with Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) vendors to find ways to mitigate costs to fishermen is extremely helpful to the industry, as increasing ping rate costs are difficult to absorb. Potential changes include doing store-and-forward pings (sending a compilation of data during one ping per hour) and the possibility of approving cellular transmission units. Coordinating with other councils to approve a variety of VMS units would also improve efficiency across regions. The GAP supports moving forward with the development of alternative type-approved VMS units – anything to save the industry costs is helpful.

Management Measure 1

- Preferred Alternative 1a, Increasing the ping rate to four times per hour with NMFS type-approved units

  The GAP understands the reasoning to increase the ping rate to four times per hour for everyone for consistency. However, the GAP feels the concern over exempting mid-water trawl whiting vessels from this requirement (due to changes allowing multiple gear types on board) is not compelling. Mid-water whiting vessels are unlikely to have multiple gears on board. The allowance to fish within a rockfish conservation area (RCA) with midwater gear also is not a compelling reason for an increase in ping rate, since the vessels are 100 percent monitored.

  Similar arguments apply to vessels that use mid-water *non*-whiting gear and bottom trawl gear. These vessels may indeed have both gears on one fishing trip. These vessel trips are also 100 percent monitored.

- Preferred Alternative 1b, Maintain the ping rate of one per hour for vessels with electronic monitoring (EM) with NMFS type-approved units

  The GAP understands the concerns about vessel operators possibly forgetting to adjust the ping rates or VMS declaration report on a trip-by-trip basis but given the small number of vessels affected by this (46), it's unlikely to increase the enforcement burden by much. Furthermore, most vessel owners, if contacted by law enforcement and made aware of the oversight, will pay much closer attention the next time.

  While NMFS originally noted concerns about Management Measure 1, including Alternatives 1a and 1b, in its report, the GAP understands the Enforcement Consultants now support these exemptions, as noted in the EC Report under this agenda item. The GAP supports these exemptions as well.

- Preferred Alternative 2, Allow the use of enhanced [non-type approved] VMS units

  The GAP recognizes the conflict with National Standard 7 and the wasted time and energy on redundant infrastructure to allow these units. However, it's unfortunate. Several vessels have been testing units such as data loggers that show promise. The GAP hopes more kinds of units can be type-approved to meet the standards necessary for accurate and efficient tracking while minimizing the costs to the fleet.

Management Measures 2 and 3

Consistent with the EC Report under this agenda item, the GAP supports moving these two measures forward.

Furthermore, GAP members support moving Management Measure 3, including Alternatives 2 and 3, forward as soon as possible. This would help individual fishing quota vessels fishing in the south of 36° N. lat. in the fall of 2019.

Definition of "continuous transit"

The GAP concurs with the EC report that the definition was approved for revision under VMM Management Measure 1 and should continue to move forward. That wording, from page 29 of the Vessel Movement Monitoring Public Scoping Document (April 2016 Agenda Item D2, Attachment 1) is: "Continuous transiting or transit through means that a vessel crosses a groundfish conservation area or [essential fish habitat] conservation area on a heading as nearly as practicable to a direct route, consistent with navigational safety, while maintaining headway through the transit without loitering or delay."

PFMC
04/15/19