

## **Supplemental NMFS Report Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Program Implementation Schedule**

On June 19, 2019, NMFS approved a final rule to implement an electronic monitoring (EM) program for two sectors of the limited entry trawl fishery. The rule allows catcher vessels in the Pacific whiting fishery and fixed gear vessels in the shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fishery to use EM in place of observers to meet the requirements of the Trawl Rationalization Program for 100-percent at-sea observer coverage. This action is intended to increase operational flexibility and reduce monitoring costs for vessels in the trawl fishery by providing an alternative to observers. Data from the EM program will be used to debit discards of IFQ species from IFQs and mothership cooperative allocations.

Among the approved measures are:

- an application process for interested vessel owners;
- performance standards for EM systems;
- requirements for vessel operators;
- a permitting process and standards for EM service providers; and,
- requirements for processors (first receivers) for receiving and disposing of prohibited and protected species from EM trips.

Through the final rule, NMFS also implemented optimized retention for fixed gear vessels. Optimized retention was the Council's preferred alternative and will allow fixed gear vessels to discard any species that could be differentiated on camera, except for salmon. NMFS also approved a three-year retention period for EM data and other records held by EM service providers on behalf of vessel owners. Three-years was the Council's final recommendation when the Council deemed these regulations in April 2016. As the Council is aware, NMFS is developing a national policy on the length of time EM service providers must store vessel owners' EM data. NMFS will be presenting a draft framework for this policy under agenda item D.6. NMFS anticipates revisiting the three-year retention period with the Council once the national policy is finalized.

The approved measures will take effect in 2021. Until then, interested vessel owners may still apply to participate in the EM Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Program. The current EM EFPs are valid through December 2019 and NMFS anticipates extending the EFPs through December 2020.

### **Implementation Schedule**

Applications from EM service providers for 2021 will be due June 1, 2020, and applications from vessel owners will be due October 1, 2020. NMFS is currently developing the EM Program Guidelines that EM service providers will use to complete their applications and intends to make them available on or about January 1, 2020. NMFS is on schedule to present draft guidelines to the Council for review in September 2019 and final guidelines in November 2019. Following the November meeting, NMFS will publish a notice in the Federal Register notifying the public of the availability of the final guidelines. The final guidelines will be posted with

other application materials on the West Coast Region website. Below is the planned implementation schedule.

**Table 1. Implementation Schedule**

September 2019	Consult with the Council on draft EM program guidelines (first of two meetings). Extend EM EFPs through 2020.
November 2019	Consult with the Council on draft EM program guidelines (second of two meetings)
December 2019	Post final EM program guidelines on the West Coast Region website; publish EM program guidelines in the Federal Register under notices
June 2020	EM provider applications due
October 2020	EM vessel applications due
December 2020	EM authorizations issued
December 31, 2020	EM EFPs expire
January 1, 2021	EM program takes effect