

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM – FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received information about this agenda item from Mr. Brett Wiedoff (Council Staff) and Ms. Melissa Hooper (NMFS WCR). The GAP also reviewed the Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Advisory Committee (GEMPAC) [report](#) from the webinar on May 26th. The GAP offers the following comments and recommendations.

As an overarching matter, the GAP continues to believe that electronic monitoring (EM) offers tremendous potential to reduce the costs and other burdens associated with human observers. Reducing those costs, and ensuring a viable EM program for all sectors of the fishery is crucial for the future of the Groundfish Individual Fishing Quota Program. The GAP appreciates the significant work that National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) staff, industry, and other EM stakeholders have put into the EM program to date. More work is needed, along with more collaboration between NMFS and EM stakeholders, to ensure the promise of EM becomes a reality.

In general, the GAP supports the GEMPAC recommendations. Specific recommendations are included below:

1. The GAP recommends that the Council finalize the recommendations in [Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 1](#). The GAP supports the GEMPAC recommendation asking the Council to continue with an amendment to revise the existing final rule to include these changes. The EM Program Guidelines and EM Manual should be updated to reflect these proposed changes, and that process should include consultation with the GEMPAC and other EM stakeholders. Specifically, the GAP supports the new draft regulatory language for Item 6 in [Agenda Item F.3.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 1](#). Allowing EM providers to receive and enter logbook information, rather than submitting to National Marine Fisheries Service will streamline the third party system by reducing the amount of back-and-forth between NMFS and the provider, ultimately reducing costs.
2. The GAP supports the GEMPAC recommendation to add two new changes discussed at the GEMPAC meeting. The first is to change "owner or operator" to "authorized representative of the vessel" in the regulations. "Owner or operator" is ambiguous. "Authorized representative" makes clear who will be allowed to authorize disclosure or use of EM data. The second change is to modify the conflict of interest language to allow companies that sell or service Vessel Monitoring System, aquatic invasive species, and related products to provide EM services. As currently drafted, the conflict of interest rules are overly broad and arguably exclude companies who provide those services.
3. The GAP reiterates its support, and the GEMPAC's recommendation, for a data retention period aligned with the National Policy Directive on EM data retention. Storage for three years at industry's expense, as recommended by the Enforcement Consultants, is overly costly, and more importantly longer than necessary to serve the catch accounting function the EM program is designed to meet.

4. The GAP strongly supports the GEMPAC recommendation to extend the exempted fishing permits (EFPs) until the effective date of the EM rule. In light of PSMFC's disinclination to develop a mechanism to accept industry funds to cover EFP video review costs, the GAP supports the GEMPAC's proposed ways to fund EFP costs in 2021. The GAP also notes that a number of research surveys have been cancelled, resulting in significant savings from ship time and charter services, some of which could be dedicated to covering 2021 EM EFP video review costs.
5. The GAP strongly supports the GEMPAC recommendation to seek a collaborative solution to the challenge of cumbersome catch handling protocols in the bottom trawl sector. The GAP would like to see members of the GEMPAC, GEMTAC, and other EFP holders work with NMFS staff to develop common sense solutions to this issue which is preventing EM from being used on most bottom trawl trips and vessels.

PFMC
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