

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON ELECTRONIC MONITORING
UPDATE

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received reports from Mr. Brett Wiedoff, Council staff; Mr. Ryan Wulff, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS); and Mr. Brent Paine, Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Committee (GEMPAC) member, regarding updates on electronic monitoring issues and potential solutions related to draft implementing regulations. The GAP also reviewed [NMFS Report 1](#) and supplemental joint GEMPAC/Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Technical Advisory Committee (GEMTAC) [Report 1](#) under this agenda item.

The GAP appreciates the GEMPAC/GEMTAC work done to date and sees this work as a beneficial process to find solutions to problems that were identified during the original amendment and rulemaking. We acknowledge there is no Council action associated with this agenda item at this meeting. However, with an electronic monitoring (EM) program implementation date of January 1, 2024, the GAP urges the Council and the GEMPAC to stay on task in developing recommendations that will achieve the stated goals for undergoing a “re-do” of the current NMFS-recommended EM regulations.

The GAP continues to be concerned about EM being too cumbersome and too expensive for all users, especially for the bottom trawl and fixed gear sectors. One of the original intentions of doing an exempted fishing permit (EFP) for EM on bottom trawl vessels was to find a less expensive alternative (and provide more flexibility to fishermen) to ensure 100 percent monitoring versus paying for observers in the rationalized fishery. The trawl catch shares program has not returned the monetary benefits of the program as expected. In short, under the current EM program design, it may be less expensive for bottom trawl vessels to use human observers, thereby negating the EM EFP and work that has been done to date to make EM work for trawl vessels.

The GAP urges the Council and NMFS to continue to work toward finding efficiencies in the EM program that would make it more cost effective.

Additionally, the GAP notes EM may become a useful tool that could be used on smaller vessels, should the need arise, but it will be critically important to keep costs on par or lower than human observers for fishermen participating in those fisheries.

PFMC
04/11/22