



FACT SHEET: ELECTRONIC MONITORING

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At-sea monitoring of all fishing trips (100% monitoring) is required as part of the Council's groundfish trawl catch share program in order to account for discards. Currently, this monitoring is conducted by human observers; however, the Council recommended in April 2017 that electronic monitoring (the use of video technology to track catches and discards) be used in the non-whiting midwater trawl and bottom trawl fisheries as a less expensive and more flexible alternative to human observers. The decision came after several years of using exempted fishing permits to study the use of electronic monitoring.

Electronic monitoring should not be confused with vessel monitoring systems, which track the location of fishing vessels.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

In April 2017 the Council selected a preferred alternative for the electronic monitoring program and forwarded its recommendations to NMFS. Among other things, the Council recommended that NMFS have Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission review electronic monitoring video, as they have done in the past, but find ways to transfer financial responsibility for this video review to the industry. NMFS, Council staff, and advisory bodies will discuss ways to reduce video review to the minimum level necessary to audit logbooks. They will also develop new discard mortality rates for halibut when vessels use electronic monitoring.

Further details on the Council's April decision are available at <http://tinyurl.com/y74ahw54>.

BACKGROUND

The trawl catch share program, which began in 2011, required 100% monitoring of all trips. Before the program was put in place, 20% of trips were monitored with observers through the NMFS West Coast Groundfish Observer Program; the observers were paid by the Federal government. The Council considered electronic monitoring while planning the catch share program, but opted to continue using observers and increase the observation level to 100%. The Council also required that the industry, rather



than NMFS, pay for the monitoring. When the catch share program was put in place, NMFS agreed to pay for a portion of the observer costs to help the fleet through the adjustment period. In September 2015, the industry was required to pay the full cost.

For vessels, the requirement to pay for vessel observers is one of the most expensive compliance costs associated with participation in the catch share program. All vessels are billed for observers on a per-day basis, so observer costs are the same for both small and large vessels. Because of this, individual fishing quotas could migrate to vessels with higher revenues, leaving fewer small harvesters in the fleet. Finally, the observer fee system puts pressure on vessels to fish in unsafe conditions. Because vessels are billed per day both for at-sea and for standby time during a trip, vessels may incur higher costs for standing down due to bad weather.

Although much of the information collected by observers for catch share monitoring (mainly accounting for discarded fish) could be collected through electronic monitoring, cameras cannot completely fulfill all scientific monitoring needs. Therefore, observers will still be necessary to collect biological samples to support stock assessments and other important fishery-dependent information, such as interactions with protected species.

For further information, please visit the Council's website at <http://tinyurl.com/y9vnpkn4>.

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