

GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL EM PROGRAM SUMMARY

Prepared for the 2nd Nation EM Workshop, Nov 30 – Dec 1, 2016, Seattle, WA

REGIONAL EM OVERVIEW:

- Electronic monitoring (EM) is expanding as an alternative to existing at-sea monitoring tools to increase catch monitoring, accountability, and compliance.
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is issued an exempted fishing permit (EFP); participants from groundfish sectors use EM instead of human at-sea monitors to account for quota managed groundfish discards. On a subset of EM trips, vessels also carry Federally-funded fisheries observers for data comparison.
- The Gulf of Maine Research Institute and Environmental Defense Fund intends to test the “maximized retention” model under an EFP in the groundfish fishery beginning May 1, 2017. Participants would retain 100 percent of certain species, discard others, and EM would be used for catch retention compliance monitoring.
- In the Atlantic herring and Atlantic mackerel fisheries, NMFS is evaluating EM to increase monitoring to address concerns about the incidental catch of river herring, shad, and haddock, as well as the amount of discarding at sea. NMFS has implemented a voluntary EM study to verify catch retention and identify discard events on 12 midwater trawl vessels in 2016 and 2017.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- Groundfish Audit Model: 1) Evaluate third-party video review for discard monitoring; 2) Develop audit methodology by comparing discards from EM and fishermen’s reports; and 3) Refine catch handling and video review protocols.
- Groundfish Maximized Retention Model: 1) Examine discard compliance monitoring in a mixed-species fishery; 2) Develop a pilot dockside monitoring program to verify catch retention and monitor potential changes in fishing behavior.
- Herring and Mackerel Midwater Trawl Project: 1) Examine the utility of EM in an operational setting and develop program requirements; 2) evaluate the information that can be gathered with EM systems; and 3) refine EM cost estimates.

VESSELS IN FLEET:

- Groundfish: ~200 active vessels; 12 vessels under the current EFP. Next year, we’ll add more vessels and add 3-4 vessels for the maximum retention project.
- Herring/Mackerel Midwater Trawl: ~13 active vessels; 12 vessels in the EM project.

PERCENT COVERAGE OF EM PROGRAM:

- Groundfish Audit Model: EM is running on 14% of all trips (observer coverage target for the year), and 100% of the video is reviewed from each EM trip.
- Groundfish Maximized Retention Model: EM would run on 100% of all trips and 100% of the video would be reviewed from each EM trip.
- Herring and Mackerel Midwater Trawl Project: EM is running on 100% of all trips and 100% of the video is being reviewed from each EM trip.

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EM PROGRAM FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

- Groundfish Audit Model: Funded by National Fisheries and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and groundfish sectors
- Groundfish Maximized Retention Model: Funded by NFWF with additional financial support from NMFS for dockside monitoring
- Herring and Mackerel Midwater Trawl Project: Funded by NMFS

SUCCESS FACTORS OF EM PROGRAM: Groundfish Audit Model

- Strong support for EM from NGOs, some fishing industry groups, public and private funding sources, Congress, and NMFS.
- Some fishermen in the fishery are committed to EM and motivated to have their observations on the water verified/used in the management and science process.
- The EFP creates incentive for fishermen to use EM by removing the logistical challenges associated with carrying at-sea monitors.
- Some consistency in species identification, weight estimation, and piece counts by EM service provider and NMFS video reviewers.
- Communication/coordination between project partners, EM providers, and NMFS

CHALLENGES OF EM PROGRAM: Groundfish Audit Model

- Minimal participation due to low monitoring coverage in the fishery and continued NMFS funding of the monitoring program. The EM program remains voluntary resulting in a lack of regulatory or economic incentives to participate.
- The fishing industry does not trust NMFS; reduces the willingness to collaborate.
- There is a need to further develop EM specifications, data analysis protocols, and design for the audit-model (i.e., % of video reviewed and pass/fail criteria).
- Limited NMFS resources for EM development and subsequent approval
- Identifying all species and developing consistent video quality and data.

SUCCESSSES OF EM PROGRAM: Herring and Mackerel Midwater Trawl Project

- Moderate support for EM from the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils, the herring and mackerel fishing industry, some NGOs, the public, and NMFS.
- The vast majority of the fishery is participating in the EM project.
- The project will inform New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council EM and portside monitoring alternatives for the herring and mackerel fisheries in the Industry-Funded Monitoring (IFM) Omnibus Amendment.

CHALLENGES OF EM PROGRAM: Herring and Mackerel Midwater Trawl Project

- The fishery is currently active making EM installation difficult (2-3 days needed).
- Fishing industry is concerned about the economic impacts associated with EM.

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- The results of the EM project may be too late to inform the Councils' selections of preferred alternatives for the IFM Amendment.