

WEST COAST REGIONAL EM PROGRAM SUMMARY

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

Electronic monitoring is being proposed for two west coast fisheries – the limited entry groundfish trawl fishery and the California-based swordfish drift gillnet fishery.

Groundfish Fishery

EM is being proposed as an alternative to human observers to meet the requirements for 100-percent at-sea observer coverage in the catch share program. The catch share program requires 100-percent industry-funded observer coverage at-sea and shore-side to ensure accountability for catch of allocated species. Due to the costs of observer coverage (approximately \$500 per day), EM is being explored as a potentially more affordable alternative. Catcher vessels targeting whiting in the at-sea mothership sector and shore-based vessels targeting whiting and other species in the individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery would be able to apply for an exemption to use EM in place of an observer. Vessel operators and crew would need to comply with new catch handling requirements, species retention and discard requirements, reporting requirements, and other conditions. Logbooks and EM data would be used to account for IFQ and mothership catcher vessel discards at sea in lieu of human observer discard estimates. The proposed program would be voluntary and includes eligibility requirements to use EM and a process for vessels to declare their intention to use EM prior to fishing. Other components would include but are not limited to individual vessel monitoring plans, equipment and installation requirements for a video monitoring system, video data processing protocols, and compliance measures. Vessel owners would be responsible for funding the costs of reviewing and storing the EM data beginning in 2020, after an initial transition period.

The proposed EM program is not intended to meet the needs for collecting biological data or monitoring for other scientific information. Human observers would still be necessary to collect this information at an appropriate level to support scientific needs; therefore, on EM trips the vessel could be randomly selected by NMFS to carry an observer for the purpose of collecting scientific information. Vessel operators would continue to make arrangements with third party observer providers to secure an observer if required to do so; however, NMFS would revert to pre-catch share program levels of 20 to 25 percent coverage. NMFS would bear the cost of the scientific observers.

A [proposed rule published in September 2016](#) proposed EM regulations for two components of the trawl fishery – the Pacific whiting fishery and fixed gear vessels in the shore-based IFQ fishery. The Pacific Council will be taking final action on EM regulations for the remaining components of the trawl fishery in 2017.

Swordfish Drift Gillnet Fishery

The NMFS West Coast Region and Pacific Council are also developing an EM program for the swordfish drift gillnet fishery. In 2015, the Council approved requirements for

hard caps of bycatch of protected species and 100-percent observer coverage or EM to monitor the new caps beginning in 2018. NMFS is working on developing the proposed regulations for the EM program, but the EM program is suffering from a lack of interest by vessel owners.