North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Trawl Electronic Monitoring Committee

REPORT

May 21, 2021: 8.30am – 4pm Alaska time; Virtual meeting

The Trawl EM Committee met to review progress on the current trawl EM program, and agree on a draft set of alternatives for the regulated Trawl EM program for Council approval at the June meeting.

Appointed Committee members in attendance[1]:

Bill Tweit (Chair)	Tom Evich (fisherman)	Heather Mann (MTC)
Julie Bonney (AGDB)	Jared Fuller (SWI)	Mike Orcutt (AMR)
Ruth Christiansen (UCB)	Charlotte Levy (AEB)	Caitlin Yeager (Unalaska/ Dogboat)

Agency Committee members in attendance[2]:

Anna Henry (NPFMC)	Maggie Chan (NMFS AKR)	Dave Colpo (PSMFC)
Josh Keaton (NMFS AKR)	Jennifer Ferdinand (NMFS FMA)	Courtney Paiva (PSMFC)
Jennifer Mondragon (NMFS AKR)	Lisa Thompson (NMFS FMA)	Tom Meyer (NOAA GC)

Others in attendance included (note list is not exhaustive):

Kate Haapala (NPFMC), Sara Cleaver (NPFMC), Rachel Baker (ADFG), Kendall Henry (ADFG), Angela Forristall (Alaska Sea Grant), Dan Falvey (ALFA), Brent Paine (UCB), Mike Vechter (NMFS FMA), Ernie Weiss (AEB), Aileen Smith (PSMFC), Melissa Mahoney (EDF), Steve Barbeaux (NMFS), Cindy Tribuzio (NMFS)

The Chair opened the meeting with introductions and approval of the agenda.

PCFMAC report on other EM NFWF proposals

The Committee discussed other EM projects that are either currently funded by, or likely to request future funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). The deadline for the current NFWF funding cycle is June 16, 2021. These include the following projects that were reviewed by the Partial Coverage Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (PCFMAC) in April: 1) the current NFWF-funded Portable EM Systems project of The Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA) and the North Pacific Fishermen's Association (NPFA) that is testing portable EM systems for deployment in remote ports; and using machine learning to improve data quality. 2) A potential project evaluating the possibility of getting shark and/or sablefish lengths from EM data to support stock assessments. There is not likely to be a proposal for this project during the current NFWF funding cycle. **The Committee agrees with the**

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[1] AGDB = Alaska Groundfish Data Bank, UCB = United Catcher Boats, SWI = Saltwater, Inc., AEB = Aleutians East Borough, MTC = Midwater Trawlers Cooperative, AMR = Archipelago Marine Resources, Inc.

[2] NPFMC = Council staff, NMFS AKR = NMFS Alaska Regional office staff, NMFS FMA = staff of the Fishery Monitoring and Analysis Division at the NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center, PSMFC = Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, NMFS OLE = NMFS Alaska Office of Law Enforcement

PCFMAC recommendations to support ongoing EM NFWF-supported projects, and expand the size of the fixed gear EM pool.

The Committee also discussed a third project that was not reviewed by the PCFMAC but is likely to be included in the trawl EM proposal and request one-year of funding from NFWF: 3) A project from Aleutians East Borough (Charlotte Levy, PI) to use current trawl EM systems on boats using fixed-gear in the WGOA. This project will test the efficacy of the same EM system for both trawl and fixed-gear types and identify catch handling procedures specifically for pot boats that improve the ability to use EM data for catch monitoring**. The Committee concluded that this project was consistent with the Council's recommendation to continue to explore ways to control monitoring costs and the NMFS recommendations in the annual report to collaborate with industry partners to explore alternative EM review protocols to minimize changes in catch handling required by EM participants**. **The Committee recommends that, if requested, the Council provide a letter of support for this work.**

FMAC report on Alaska Region Electronic Technologies Implementation Plan

Josh Keaton (NMFS AKR) presented the Alaska Region Electronic Technologies Implementation Plan, highlighting changes that were made since the Committee reviewed a draft in September 2020 and recommendations from the FMAC review on May 17, 2021. This document is a tool for developing EM programs and is a living document that will be periodically reviewed by the Committee and updated by NMFS.

EM cost metrics- subgroup report on cost roll-up table

Mike Orcutt (Archipelago) reported an update of the work done by the cost sub-group to develop a cost reporting format that can be used across similar EM programs, allow for better cost transparency, and simplify cost reporting and budget predictions. The subgroup has successfully begun to develop a cost roll-up table that meets these objectives and includes the following six cost categories: 1. EM Service Provider Fees and Overhead, 2.Equipment maintenance and upkeep, 3.Data Transmittal, 4.New Equipment Purchases and Installation, 5. Data Processing and Storage, 6.Observer Provider Fees and Overhead (EM plant observers). Continued work is necessary to refine sub-categories under categories 5 and 6, and to specify reporting methods for one-time EM purchase costs.

The Committee recognizes the productive and efficient work to date of the cost sub-group and recommends an additional meeting of the current cost metrics sub-group plus a representative from PSMFC (Courtney Paiva) to work on these outstanding issues and finalize this reporting structure for use reporting costs of the 2021 trawl EM program and in the regulatory analysis. The cost metric subgroup may provide a report from this next meeting to the Trawl EM Committee via email.

2021 Trawl EM program update

The Committee received a report on the trawl EM program for 2020, and 2021 through April/May. NMFS approved an experimental fishing permit (EFP) in January 2020, to test the feasibility of EM aboard pollock trawl catcher vessels for compliance monitoring. The EFP provides exemptions for participating vessels from current regulations related to onboard observer coverage and vessel discard requirements, to help determine whether utilizing camera systems in lieu of human observers proves both cost effective and operationally effective for monitoring of catch and discards per Council and NMFS requirements. The EFP encompasses two separate pollock EM projects: one involving catcher vessels delivering to shoreside processors in the BS and (primarily Central) GOA and the other involving catcher vessels delivering to tender vessels and shoreside processors in the Western GOA. The BS/GOA portion

of the project included 29 vessels in 2020 and 52 in 2021 while the WGOA project included 16 CVs and 11 tenders in 2020 and 18 CVs and 11 tenders in 2021.

EFP Principal Investigators (PIs) Ruth Christiansen, Julie Bonney, and Charlotte Levy reported on the overall EFP including a summary of goals and participations, EM EFP fishery metrics, cost metrics, GOA pollock trip limits and MRA performance standards, impacts to shoreside monitoring, WGOA tendering operations, collection of biologicals, and issues and modifications made for 2021. The EM service provider representatives and data reviewers, Mike Orcutt, Jared Fuller, and Courtney Paiva, reported on EM implementation and EM data quality noting that data quality and EFP reporting compliance are continually improving. Jennifer Mondragon (NMFS) reported on data integration highlighting that data from the program are currently used in the management process and the next steps involve building a system for comparisons between self-reported data and video review data and working with AKFIN to create the infrastructure to connect spatial location of hauls as recorded by the GPS of the EM systems to the haul level data that can be accessed by stock assessors. The Committee discussed that data sources from the EM project have improved data collection for herring and crab PSC and salmon PSC particularly for tender deliveries.

Overall the report concluded that EFP objectives are being met: maximized retention can be achieved, EM can capture discard events and video data can be used to verify vessel logbook discard entries, at-sea observers can be replaced with observers at shoreside processing plants while maintaining data needs, and salmon bycatch accounting improved. Additional lessons learned include: initial comparisons indicate that EM is more cost-effective for compliance monitoring in pelagic pollock fisheries, especially in the Bering Sea, when compared to at-sea observers and the use of EM for compliance monitoring functions better in a rationalized fishery with an established and well-defined fishing/processing schedule. The PIs, EM service providers, video reviewers, observer providers, and NMFS representatives have held regular weekly or bi-weekly check-ins to ensure consistent and timely communication. These meetings of the "EFP team" were essential for identifying and resolving issues, and are expected to continue.

2021 EFP changes and thoughts for 2022 EFP

NMFS reported that all changes recommended by the Committee in 2020 were made and implemented into the 2021 EFP but the agency has not yet had robust discussions regarding potential changes for 2022. The PIs reported issues that may benefit from more discussion or revisions to the EFP in 2022 including: 1) catch handling of skates that are causing problems at the pump, 2) the potential for split offloads between tenders, 3) modifying ODDS such that when boats close out trips they are matched to e-Landings to improve tracking of CV deliveries to tenders, 4) expanding participants in 2022. This is not a comprehensive list and NMFS assured the PIs that the agency would continue to receive suggestions until the modifications for the 2022 EFP are due in November 2021, noting that anything that requires changes to ODDS would need to occur sooner. **The Committee appreciates the EFP team approach that has been taken, acknowledging the significant leadership role of the PIs and agency staff and recommends continuing that approach with these and future requests for EFP modifications.**

Update on budget and funding

The Committee discussed potential funding strategies, given a new timeline for implementation of a regulated program in 2024 rather than 2023, thus requiring an additional year of funding for the EFP. Participants are planning to apply for NFWF funding to support the EFP in 2022 and 2023 and were encouraged to submit one grant request that includes two years of funding and identifies areas where funding scope may be scalable if needed. There was some discussion of contingency planning in lieu of NFWF support. Although there are large uncertainties regarding future observer costs (mostly due to

COVID-19 related restrictions), lack of NFWF support could be challenging and, depending on participants, may result in a gap in participation if funding requirements rely on industry. The Committee recognized that a one-year hiatus of the program would be problematic because benefits in terms of improved data and cost efficiencies are already occurring and helping to achieve these objectives within the overall fishery monitoring program. **The Committee recommends that the Council provide a letter of support for a two-year request for NFWF funding, and advocate for other funding if needed, to support the program through 2023.**

Develop alternatives for regulated Trawl EM program

Anna Henry (NPFMC) and Josh Keaton (NMFS) presented a draft of the purpose and need, alternatives and list of program elements and regulatory timeline for implementation of a regulated trawl EM program. The draft was provided as a framework to encourage Committee discussion regarding the purpose and need and structure of the program, recognizing that every detail has not yet been worked out but to highlight issues that will be decision points during the analytical process. The draft will be revised based on the Committee discussion and recommendations prior to the June Council meeting when the Council will adopt a purpose and need and draft alternatives. The Committee had the following discussion and recommendations for each section of the document:

Purpose and need

The Committee made no changes to the purpose and need and recommends supporting the current purpose and need as written in the draft document.

Draft alternatives

The Committee recommends changing Alternative 2 to read "Electronic Monitoring implemented on vessels (both catcher vessels and tenders) in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska." Based on the specifics of the program and the fact that some vessels are operating in the West Yakutat pollock fishery, this wording describes the current program more accurately than the wording in the draft specifying Central and Western GOA.

There was not unanimous Committee support for Alternative 3. Committee discussion focused on whether the inclusion of Alternative 3 is warranted with some members supporting a structure that includes only Alternatives 1 and 2. Some members voiced concern that a lot of work has been done under the EFP to test EM systems on tenders and including Alternative 3 would discount that work and preclude a large portion of the WGOA fleet from the regulated program and create unnecessary controversy. Other members discussed that the fisheries operate differently in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska and on CVs and tenders and that an alternative structure that includes Alternative 3 will help identify these differences in the analysis.

List of program elements for implementation

Committee discussion on program elements focused largely on possible funding options and concern over whether funding data review through AFA cost recovery was consistent with the NMFS Policy on Electronic Technologies and Fishery-Dependent Data Collection, and NMFS definitions regarding funding in the West Coast EM program. The agency is actively discussing this with representatives from Headquarters, the West Coast region, and the Alaska region. **The Committee recommends that the confusion regarding cost recovery and the NMFS procedural directive be resolved prior to the June Council meeting.**

The Committee recognized that continuing to define the program elements and specifications will require a lot of effort and coordination and acknowledged that the collaborative approach taken in the Alaska region and the work by the EFP team has been a positive model and should continue throughout the development of the regulatory program.

Potential regulatory timeline

The Committee discussed an outline of the timeline to implement a regulated trawl EM program by January 2024 including a preliminary review in February 2022, initial review in April or June of 2022 and final review in June or October 2022. **The Committee recommended that the current EFP team process continue to be utilized to assist in the development of the preliminary review draft and that unless other issues are identified by the EFP team that require Committee input, the next Trawl EM Committee meeting be held prior to initial review.**

Other issues

The Committee closed with a brief discussion of representation on the Committee and the EFP team and concluded that the current representation is working well.