



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Trawl Electronic Monitoring Committee REPORT

September 17, 2020: 8.30am – 5pm Alaska time; Virtual meeting

The Trawl EM Committee met to review progress on the current trawl EM program, discuss recommended changes for 2021, and review the draft NMFS Alaska Regional Electronic Technologies Implementation Plan update for 2020-2024.

Appointed Committee members in attendance¹:

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

Agency Committee members in attendance²:

Diana Evans (NPFMC)	Lisa Thompson (NMFS FMA)	Benjamin Cheeseman (NMFS OLE)
Josh Keaton (NMFS AKR)	Dave Colpo (PSMFC)	Brent Pristas (NMFS OLE)
Jennifer Mondragon (NMFS AKR)	Courtney Paiva (PSMFC)	Huyen Tran (IPHC)
Maggie Chan (NMFS AKR)	Tom Meyer (NOAA GC)	
Jennifer Ferdinand (NMFS FMA)		

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

Jennifer Cahalan (PSMFC), Dan Falvey (ALFA), Kate Haapala (NPFMC), Stacey Hansen (SWI), Jacob Isaac-Lowry, Brent Paine (UCB), Luke Szymanski (AIS), Mike Vechter (NMFS FMA), Ernie Weiss (AEB)

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

Update on the 2020 Trawl EM program and changes for 2021

The Committee received a report on progress-to-date of the 2020 Trawl EM program for the BS and GOA pollock fisheries, under the exempted fishing permit (EFP), funded by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grants. Project Principal Investigators (PIs) Ruth Christiansen, Julie Bonney, and Charlotte Levy reported on the budget, fleet perspectives, and lessons learned. The EM service provider representatives and data reviewers, Mike Orcutt, Jared Fuller, and Courtney Paiva, reported on EM implementation onboard vessels (29 participating in the Bering Sea and Central GOA, and 16 vessels plus 3 tenders in the Western GOA) and the quality of EM data. Stacey Hansen briefed the Committee on shoreside monitoring, and Benjamin Cheeseman noted there have been no enforcement concerns in 2020. **Overall, the project has transpired successfully in 2020 despite the disruptions of COVID-19.**

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, IPHC = International Pacific Halibut Commission

Project leads highlighted the importance of direct communication with participants, both harvesters and processors, to quickly correct problems. The project leads, EM service providers, video reviewers, observer provider, and NMFS representatives have been meeting regularly throughout the year, which has been very effective to resolve issues in real time. These regular communications, and outreach and training to the fleet and processors, have allowed vessels to resolve unforeseen issues, reduce equipment problems, and improve data quality over the course of the year. A key lesson learned is the importance of designing an integrated shoreside observing program and involving the processing partners during the initial stages of the project: at the beginning of the year, there was inefficiency and perceived inequities (and effects on morale) in the duties of EM vs Amendment 91 shoreside observers. The shoreside restructuring that was necessitated by enforced COVID-19 processing plant changes helped to allow observers to divide their work more collaboratively.

Two difficulties as a result of COVID-19 restrictions have been the increased cost of observers for shoreside monitoring and coordinating the transfer of EM logbook data within the specified timeframe. The project leads noted that the EFP is working better for AFA pollock than for the GOA pollock fishery, largely because of the unpredictability of the race for fish in the GOA. Under COVID-19 quarantine restrictions, the logistics and extra cost of ensuring observers are available to monitor EM EFP offloads when needed has been very challenging. Under both NFWF grants, the cost of observers has significantly exceeded originally estimated amounts, but both grants have been able to save some costs in other areas to help compensate. Additionally, the Aleutians East Borough was able to contribute an additional \$80,000 from CARES Act funding to supplement a shortfall in the Western GOA program budget from observer costs. For the logbooks, the challenge has been to get vessels that are not used to having a logbook requirement to both submit and the processor to input the logbook along with the eLandings report; this transfer has become even more difficult as vessel operators are no longer allowed access to the plant to personally deliver hard drives and logbooks together. Nonetheless, the project team has built on lessons from last year and specific outreach to the processors during the course of this year to work on resolving the issue.

The Committee agreed to discuss and communicate what should be common metrics for reporting on the program at the next Trawl EM Committee meeting, to allow for consistency among service providers.

Recommendations for changes to the 2021 Trawl EM EFP

The Committee discussed various changes [proposed by the project PIs](#) to be considered for 2021. First, **the Committee supports the recommendation to expand the Trawl EM EFP to add 26 new vessels in 2021.** With this expansion, (some of which is already supported through the NFWF grant funding and some of which is anticipated through an upcoming NFWF grant award), all eligible trawl vessels currently participating in the pollock fisheries would have EM equipment installed. Secondly, **the Committee also supports the recommendation to allow all salmon sharks and sleeper sharks be discarded regardless of size (all dogfish sharks would be required to be retained).** It was noted that it is often very difficult for the video reviewer to estimate whether a shark is longer or shorter than the current standard of 6 feet. Additionally, vessels are asked to record the length of sharks in their logbooks prior to being discarded.

Secondly, **the Committee supports several changes to the 2021 EFP in principle, which will be worked out in detail through the EFP's agency-industry-service provider workgroup.** These include:

- Simplified vessel performance standards (which are currently not unique to each BS and GOA area) for 2021.
- Some relaxation of the requirement to conduct an EM function test before departing from the dock (while noting that skippers should be encouraged, as a best practice, to get in the habit of always doing a function test before leaving dock regardless of whether their initial intent is to engage in a pollock fishery).

- Changes to the requirement to estimate the quantity of jellyfish discards. Some recording of presence/absence may still need to be captured, however.
- Changes to the requirement to review and perhaps also to record the entire pollock offload. The Committee suggested several alternatives for the workgroup to explore, including installing cameras on the dock, low frame rate video of the offload, post-selection review, and identifying specific conditions (such as deck loads) where more thorough review may be necessary. The effectiveness of different mechanisms should be tested in the 2021 EFP.
- Reclassifying the stern ramp camera as non-critical, which would allow vessels more flexibility to conduct or finish a trip before fixing camera problems. NMFS noted that they would need to consider the implications of this change further before providing input.
- Change to the requirement to estimate and record in the logbook discards that result from cleaning the net. The Committee agreed that these fish do not represent a conservation concern. Although there is an implication for total catch accounting in tracking these fish, this is not a critical issue for the EFP.

Finally, the Committee did not endorse the PIs' discussion topic on whether logbook pages need to continue to be sent to the reviewer (in addition to their eLandings input at the processor). Logbook data provides haul by haul information and elandings provides at-sea data in aggregate, it remains important for data reviewers to have access to the logbook pages. The Committee agreed, however, that the long-term solution should be electronic transmission.

EM implementation schedule

The Committee recommends that the Council continue to pursue its goal of having a trawl EM program implemented in 2023. Working backwards from that implementation goal, the following are target milestones for trawl EM development:

- Jan-Nov 2021 – develop regulatory analysis to allow the use of the EM in pollock trawl fisheries
- June 2021 – Council approves alternatives for analysis
- December 2021 – Initial review of regulatory analysis (timing allows for inclusion of data from the 2021 pollock A season)
- February 2022 – Final action on regulatory analysis (latest date possible to allow for 2023 implementation)
- January 2023 – implementation

The Committee requests the Council authorize two Trawl EM Committee meetings next year in support of this schedule, one before June to approve an alternative package for the analysis, and a second meeting prior to December to provide recommendations on the initial review analysis.

The EFP is currently approved and likely funded for 2020 and 2021, but the Committee acknowledges the need to find a mechanism to continue the Trawl EM program during the 2022 gap year before implementation. **The Committee recommends that the Council ask NMFS whether it is possible to extend the existing EFP through 2022, and also recommends that the Council support industry project leads as they pursue whatever mechanisms are available to fund the program in 2022.**

Alaska Regional Electronic Technologies Implementation Plan

Josh Keaton, Jennifer Mondragon, and Jennifer Ferdinand provided an overview of a draft update to the Alaska Regional Electronic Technologies Implementation Plan for 2020-2024. The plan also includes guidelines for EM cost reporting across Alaska EM programs. The region has been asked by NMFS headquarters to submit the revised Plan in February of 2021, however, this timing does not accommodate the ability for NMFS to seek feedback from the Council's FMAC. As a result, the Alaska Regional Office

proposes to submit a preliminary version of the revised Plan in February, with the caveat that the Region will seek review and input from the FMAC and the Council in May and June of 2021, and will then submit a final Plan.

The Committee provided feedback on the Plan as follows:

Section 2 – vision statement and goals and objectives. The Committee suggests adding wording to the vision statement to note that we expect Alaska’s electronic technology programs to be holistic and adaptive. Also, in the goals, it should be clear that programs need to be cost effective for both the industry as well as the agency, given that industry funds most of the cost for ET programs in Alaska.

Section 3 – priorities. The Committee notes that EM options in processing plants are a viable platform, and should be indicated as such without caveat. The priority referencing a multi-faceted program should reference coordinating EM participation across all Alaska programs and fisheries (and not just between trawl and pot gear types), and should also emphasize the importance of coordinating EM program participation in both the West Coast and Alaska. For example, NMFS might consider multi-regional vessel monitoring plans between Alaska and the West Coast, or a single NMFS approval point for multiple regions.

The Committee also recommends that Section 3 reference future priorities for EM work, and not only existing programs. The Committee suggest that the Council’s next priorities for EM are as follows:

- Allow trawlers with EM systems to also use them in fixed gear (already endorsed by Council, an example of low-hanging fruit)
- Quantification and automated image identification of salmon species to generate salmon bycatch census counts in plants, to be used in rockfish and pollock fisheries
- EM on rockfish vessels to verify no at-sea discards
- Expansion of EM to non-pelagic trawl tender deliveries

Section 9 – EM Cost Reporting. The Committee discussed this topic at length, as it is important for the trawl EM regulatory analysis as well as for evaluating the success of EM programs. With the development of different EM programs in Alaska, first with fixed gear and now pollock trawl, the goal is to identify consistent reporting metrics for Alaska EM costs that can be used across programs, and that also dovetail with NMFS requirements to report costs in specific categories (laid out in the 2019 EM cost reporting procedural directive). **The Committee created a cost subgroup to crosswalk the various reporting categories used to date in fixed gear and trawl fisheries with the NMFS framework, and Alaska needs.** The subgroup will develop a preliminary framework prior to the February deadline for submitting the revised Plan, but with the understanding that this would be vetted by the Trawl EM Committee and also the FMAC at the 2021 meetings. It was also suggested that as a secondary task, the subgroup should tackle the question of how to report EM costs by program without doublecounting when the same equipment is being used in multiple fisheries. Subgroup members are Josh Keaton, Mike Orcutt, Jared Fuller, Ruth Christiansen, and a representative from the fixed gear fishery (likely Dan Falvey or Abby Turner-Franke).

Section 10 – EM Cost structures. The Committee agreed with the three potential cost structures laid out in the draft Plan for funding EM programs: pay as you go, observer fee, and cost recovery. The Trawl EM program will likely include a combination of all of these components. **The Committee tasked the cost subgroup with identifying potential funding mechanisms appropriate for each EM cost category.** For the Trawl EM program, these will also be considered in the regulatory analysis as options under the alternatives.

Public Testimony. Dan Falvey provided public testimony on the Plan, including specific recommendations for NMFS to consider as they prepare the preliminary draft. As a member of the FMAC, Dan will also have an additional opportunity to review the revised draft next year.