



Fishery Monitoring and Advisory Committee

REPORT

September 10, 2025

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm AKDT

Committee members present: Nicole Kimball (chair), Bob Alverson, Chelsae Radell, Beth Concepcion, Ruth Christiansen, Kathy Hansen, Stacey Hansen, Julie Kavanaugh, Jack Meyers, Michael Lake, Courtney Paiva, Chad See, Haley Anderson, Abigail Turner-Franke, Paul Wilkins, Michael Lake

Council/NMFS/ADF&G Staff: Sara Cleaver (NPFMC), Jennifer Cahalan (PSMFC), Geoff Mayhew (NMFS AFSC), Gwynne Schnaittacher (NMFS AFSC), Lisa Thompson (NMFS AFSC), Josh Keaton (NMFS AKR), Melanie Rickett (NMFS AKR), Joel Kraski (NMFS AKR), Mike Vechter (NMFS AFSC), Jason Jannot (NMFS AFSC), Karla Bush (ADF&G), Pearl Rojas (NMFS AFSC), Cindy Tribuzio (NMFS AFSC), Jen Cahalan (PSMFC), Maggie Chan (NMFS AKR), Alex Perry (NOAA OLE), Patrick Barry (NMFS AFSC), Phil Ganz (NMFS AKRO)

Other Attendees: Pam, Eric Torgerson, Heather Mann, Ernie Weiss, Jacob, Olivia, Sarah Williamson, Susie Zagorski, Julie Bonney, Rob Wurm, Jim Armstrong, Wayne Walter, Cara, Jacob

This list may not be comprehensive as some attendees did not use full names.

1. Introduction

The chair of the Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (FMAC) opened the meeting and gave an overview of the agenda, and attendees introduced themselves. This was a hybrid meeting; it was hosted and available to join remotely with an in-person option at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) in Seattle. The main purpose of this meeting was for the committee to review National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF) Electronic Monitoring (EM) proposals and receive updates from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff. Opportunities for public input were provided throughout the meeting though no formal comments were given.

2. NMFS updates

The FMAC received brief updates from agency staff. In response to the final rule to update the confidentiality requirements of the MSA ([89 FR 102000, Dec 17, 2024](#)), the Agency is working on a manual to document current confidentiality practices and working with state partners to ensure consistency with state confidentiality practices. In brief, there are no expected changes to the way data are handled regarding confidentiality.

NMFS continues to be short staffed. The Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis (FMA) Division noted that because of this, there may be delays in solving monitoring-related issues. The Alaska Regional Office (AKRO) lost substantial institutional knowledge over the last few months, with the lack of programming staff being the most significant issue. The biggest priorities for AKRO are keeping the Catch Accounting System (CAS), eLandings, and key monitoring programs running. The lack of capacity means that any large scale changes to monitoring programs need to be carefully considered.

3. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Grant Program Proposals

The FMAC heard from several committee members on proposals intended to be submitted for NFWF funding, summarized below. The deadline for proposals is September 24, 2025. The committee noted general support for these proposals, though not all proposals were fully fleshed out. The Agency explained that with current resources, they may not be able to provide much guidance on projects but encouraged proposers to move forward.

Freezer Longline Coalition (FLC) & FlyWire: Chad See (FLC) and Jacob Isaac Lowry (FlyWire) provided a presentation on a proposal to be submitted by FLC in partnership with FlyWire. The proposed project seeks to continue the FLC work previously described at the FMAC and supported by the Council in October 2024. **The project seeks to identify the limits and capabilities of EM in replicating human observer-derived data in the Bering Sea Pacific cod catcher processor (CP) sector, which is currently required to have full observer coverage.** The project continues to examine if the use of EM in the fleet could allow for a certain number of trips per year to be completed without a human observer on board, provided the vessel has a functioning NMFS-approved EM system to use in lieu of an observer.

Mr. Isaac Lowry provided a recap on the work that has been done on the first phase of the project, including testing the FlyWire hardware in the North Pacific environmental conditions on the Bering Leader. The project leads have received feedback throughout the project from FMA and the stock assessment team, and FLC is ready to receive feedback from FMA on the quality of the data obtained on the Bering Leader and on the sampling methodology.

The NFWF Proposal seeks funding for 2026 for the second phase of this project, which has two goals. The first goal of the project is to explore whether EM can replicate trip-level observer reports by providing equivalent information on catch composition, bycatch, discards, and fishing effort at the trip level. The second goal is to look at real-time fishery monitoring and feasibility of integrating EM with existing electronic logbook systems, preserving real-time data availability for management while ensuring accountability through independent EM verification. The proposers explained that EM use in this fleet could alleviate the demand for fixed-gear Lead Level 2 observers, reduce costs for freezer longline operators, and minimize the observer training and debriefing burdens for the observer program. The project proposers plan to present findings to NMFS and the Council at the conclusion of this project. The AKRO explained that conversations with FLC on the second phase are ongoing, and that the second goal may be harder to implement given the changes that would be needed to the CAS. This is the first test of a full coverage fleet use of EM in place of an observer for catch composition, bycatch, discards, etc.

Saltwater, Inc and Chordata LLC: Nancy Munro of Saltwater, Inc and Eric Torgerson of Chordata LLC presented information on a proposal to investigate the possibility of using AI to find visible characteristics in chum salmon in the Bering Sea that could be predictive of the stock of origin. Currently, shoreside observer duties include weighing, measuring, and speciating every salmon caught in the pollock trawl fishery. This project would seek to automate some of that data collection by creating a dataset that includes this information. By matching imagery with genetic data, this could provide a tool to rapidly distinguish between stocks. *[Note: post committee meeting, staff were made aware that this proposal is not ready for submission in 2025.]*

Real-time Data: Abigail Turner-Franke presented a proposal on behalf of Real Time Data to continue a project which has replaced paper logbooks with eelogbooks in the fixed gear halibut and cod fleets (Deckhand). This project was previously funded for phases 1-3, and Deckhand is now an officially approved NMFS logbook. This proposal, for phase 4 of the project, would expand the number of funded

devices for 30 vessels while placing a greater emphasis on education and outreach regarding the data collection. The Agency has completed the programming steps to transfer the data to the Agency.

Other: Ms. Turner-Franke also that the North Pacific Fisheries Association (NPFA) and the Under Sixty Cod Harvesters decided against submitting a NFWF EM proposal to gather additional crab bycatch data at this time. Oftentimes changes to on-deck protocols place additional burdens on the fleet and crew who are already working under potentially dangerous conditions, and that any changes should be taken seriously. Changes to catch handling protocols for pot cod have been shown to substantially slow operations, and NPFA decided to work in a more stepwise fashion, continue to work on the protocol changes already underway before making any more changes which could potentially come in a future NFWF EM proposal.

4. Other issues

Frequency of Annual Reports

In June, the Council supported doing annual reports less frequently or at times abbreviated versions, considering limited staff resources and in attempts to balance the distribution of priorities. At the FMAC meeting, Dr. Jannot explained that the Agency plans to produce and present the annual report in 2026 as it typically has been produced in recent years because the 2025 Annual Report will inform the Center for Independent Experts (CIE) review, scheduled to occur after the June 2026 Council meeting. The purpose of the CIE review is to review the science behind the proximity allocation method, and the results of that review could inform how and what the Agency reports out in future years. Therefore, any changes would likely occur in 2027, reporting on the 2026 fishing year. Dr. Jannot noted that this provides plenty of time for the committee and/or Council to influence any changes to the contents of the Annual Reports. Regardless of potential changes to the process or format, the Agency plans to report out in some form every year.

The committee was pleased to be provided this update, and emphasized that the annual report provides a good format for communication between the industry and the Agency. Committee members described the importance of receiving information on how industry funds are used, and how industry data are gathered and utilized for management. Others noted that the reports are important for justifying the Observer Program and providing information on observer coverage in the North Pacific in other forums, such as at IPHC meetings. Some options for reporting for the future could include biennial full reports with abbreviated reports in between, or full reports only when there are significant changes to the ADP. Committee discussion centered around topics that committee members felt are important to see consistently in annual reports. Committee members described the need for the annual report to continue to reflect any monitoring-related issues that come up throughout the fishing year so that they can be addressed and highlighted. In particular, next year will be the first year of reporting on implementation of the pelagic trawl EM program. Additionally, reviewing information on significant differences between the proximity allocation method and the allocation method previously on the water is important to committee members next year, to better understand the improvements made through the proximity allocation method. Others noted that because EM is still developing and cost reporting has been minimal, receiving annual information on EM cost reporting for both trawl and fixed gear is valuable.

Miscellaneous items

Ruth Christiansen described an issue that has arisen in this first year of the regulated trawl EM program regarding the OLE interpretation of the regulatory language requiring vessels to have their EM systems on from port to port. Ms. Christiansen, the committee, and the Agency agreed that the regulation was intended to capture fishing activity, not transit activity, similar to the EFP that piloted the program and the analysis supporting the Council's final action. Mr. Keaton noted that he expects the Agency will be able

to address this issue through expedited rulemaking and that NMFS is working to fix the regulatory language soon to reflect that EM needs to be on during the fishing trip but not during transit to the fishing grounds.

Jack Meyers, the committee's observer representative, raised a point that fewer observers are likely necessary at the full coverage plants (potentially 2 observers instead of 3-4) as a result of no longer needing to monitor the processing line all of the time. He explained that while it may make sense to decrease to two observers, it might be beneficial to have 1-2 extra shoreside observers during the B season when salmon retention on pollock vessels is expected to be higher than during the A season (suggesting 3-4 observers may be more appropriate during these times).

5. Future Scheduling

The next FMAC meeting typically occurs in May to review the annual report.