

RE: C6 Pelagic Trawl Gear Definition – Initial Review

Pelagic, or midwater trawls have a cone-shaped body and a closed 'cod-end' that holds their catch. Pelagic trawls are generally much larger than bottom trawls and can be towed by one or two boats (pair trawling). They are designed to target fish in the mid- and surface water. The pelagic trawlers are bigger than bottom trawlers, so if they drag on the bottom they will cause more damage. Pelagic by definition are surface and mid water trawlers. The key issue is to both prohibit bottom trawling by pelagic vessels AND institute automated technology that prevents bottom trawling by pelagic vessels and documents actual compliance. A regulatory standard must require a the cone to be at a maximum percentage of depth, i.e. 50% of the total depth to the seafood to prevent bottom drag. A mechanical means to prevent lower of the cone beyond the standard must be put into place. A multibeam echosounder or equivalent device can provide seafood depth and a datalogger could documents the data for each trip. The definition must provide explanation of the activity, the prohibition of bottom dragging and the means to prevent bottom dragging and automated documentation of compliance.