



# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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## Trawl EM Committee REPORT June 2020

*The Trawl EM Committee was scheduled to meet May 20, 2020 in Seattle, WA. Due to health and safety concerns related to COVID-19, an in-person meeting was not possible. The meeting has been postponed to a yet to be determined date. This report provides a brief update on some of the topics that likely would have been discussed at an in-person meeting in May. Thank you to Kate Haapala (NPFMC) and Josh Keaton, Maggie Chan and Jennifer Mondragon (NMFS AKRO) for providing contributions to this report.*

### February National Electronic Monitoring Workshop - West Coast

NOAA and partners hosted a national electronic monitoring workshop in Seattle on February 12-13, 2020 to bring together fishermen and stakeholders to address the opportunities and challenges associated with EM in U.S. commercial fisheries. Agenda topics included: National EM policy; experiences from different regional programs; cost effectiveness; integrating new technology and artificial intelligence; and data access, security, privacy, and enforcement.

Discussion focused on balancing a need for adaptive exempted fishing permits with regulatory programs that keep pace with evolving technology. The recognition that the current regulatory process will likely not be able to keep pace with evolving EM technology led to some discussion about building regular program reviews into EM regulations. Through these program reviews Councils could evaluate program performance against objectives, and consider opportunities for new efficiencies, and technological advancements such as AI, and data retention policies.

A second discussion point centered on how to balance the costs and benefits of EM programs. Councils were encouraged to consider the full range of costs when designing programs including 'soft costs' such as sorting and binning fish that can significantly slow operations in some fisheries. Additional discussion highlighted the cost of data retention and storage, particularly as related to the development of AI technologies.

Participants agreed that an effective EM program design requires building relationships among regulators, service providers and industry and receiving a clear set of objectives from Councils. There was recognition that Council Committees facilitate these types of relationships, though it was noted success requires additional work beyond the committee process.

NOAA will be drafting a report summarizing both this workshop and an east coast counterpart that was held in November. The final report and videos of workshop presentations will be available online at a future date: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/national-electronic-monitoring-workshop-west-coast>

### Alaska Region Electronic Technologies Implementation Plan

Last June NMFS Headquarters requested each region update their respective Regional Electronic Technology Implementation Plans. Given shifting current priorities, the deadline for these updates has been extended to February 1, 2021. This will ensure adequate opportunity for regional NMFS staff to present a draft to the Council and get input from committees. In the meantime, it is still appropriate to refer to the existing implementation plan and the amendment that was done in September 2018:

- Original Alaska EM/ER implementation plan: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/alaska-region-electronic-technologies-implementation-plan>
- Amendment: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/amendment-alaska-region-electronic-technologies-implementation-plan>

## **NOAA Fisheries Data Retention Guidance**

NOAA Fisheries developed final guidance for Councils and NOAA Fisheries to develop data retention requirements for EM programs. The guidance recommends that programs retain EM data for at least 12 months once fishing is over and the catch monitoring processes are completed. When developing these recommendations, NOAA Fisheries attempted to balance the fishing industry's request to reduce unnecessary costs, while considering the length of time data must be retained to meet various program objectives. NMFS notes that they may revisit this guidance in the future as more is learned about program functions and costs.

- Final procedural directive: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/laws-and-policies/science-and-technology-policy-directives>

## **National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Data Retention Rulemaking**

NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology submitted a formal request to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to establish a new retention schedule of 5 years for EM data that are created or received by NOAA Fisheries and subject to the Federal Records Act. The retention schedule would only apply to the raw data (i.e., imagery and sensor data), not the summary information that would be stored and used for fisheries management and science long-term. NARA will publish a Federal Register notice and allow for a 45-day public comment period, however the timing of this is uncertain. When the Federal Register notice is published NOAA will rollout a website to provide more information.

## **2020 Trawl EM EFP update**

An Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) was issued on January 6, 2020 to evaluate the efficacy of electronic monitoring systems and shoreside observers for pollock catcher vessels (CVs) using pelagic trawl gear in the eastern Bering Sea (BS) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA). The EFP exempts participants from regulations that currently prevent full or maximized retention of all catch, and observer coverage requirements. The project combines EM systems that provide at-sea monitoring of vessels for compliance with fishery management objectives to achieve maximized retention, electronic reporting of catch and discard information, and shoreside observers to monitor salmon bycatch and collect biological information. The partners for this EFP include National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Alaska Region, NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center, EFP permit holders (Ruth Christiansen of United Catcher Boats, Julie Bonney of Alaska Groundfish Data Bank, Inc., and Charlotte Levy of Aleutians East Borough), EM providers (Saltwater Inc., and Archipelago Marine Research Ltd.), video reviewers (Saltwater Inc., and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission), and an observer provider (Saltwater Inc.).

Fishing under this EFP was successfully implemented in the A season for the Bering Sea catcher vessel pollock fishery, A/B season pollock fisheries in Central and Western GOA, and the West Yakutat pollock fishery. Due to the small A/B season area apportionment in the Western GOA, the ability to test certain provisions, like use of EM on tender vessels in the Western GOA, was limited. EFP partners look forward to working with Western GOA participants in the C/D seasons to test these provisions. Table 1 shows the

total number of participants, landings, and proportion of groundfish catch in the pollock fishery under the provisions of the Trawl EM EFP.

**Table 1. Count of vessels, landings and proportion of catch of groundfish under the trawl EM EFP.**

Trawl EM EFP	Vessels	Landings	Proportion of Catch
Bering Sea (AFA CVs)	18	219	17%
GOA (Western/Central/West Yakutat)	23	208	44%

Check-in meetings with project partners began on January 15, 2020 and occurred weekly during the GOA A/B season, every two weeks outside of the GOA A/B season, and as requested by a project partner. Check-in meetings provided an opportunity for each project partner to give updates on how the EFP was progressing and identify any issues or concerns. During these meetings, the project partners engaged in open and collaborative discussions to troubleshoot issues as they came up and the meetings have proven to be an effective way to quickly address problems.

The adaptability of EFP partners to quickly address concerns was shown when sharks were observed in video review. During check-in meetings, project partners discussed reporting and identification of sharks, which led to a one-page shark guide developed by NMFS staff and made available to project partners. This guide was developed to communicate correct shark identification and reporting procedures. Project partners disseminated this guide to participating CVs and processors in April 2020.

Table 2 shows examples of issues that came up during the first half of 2020 and a synopsis of the resolution that was developed through discussion among the project partners. While there have been many successes during the early implementation of the Trawl EM EFP, there are also challenges that still need to be resolved. One ongoing challenge has been the inability to achieve the shoreside sampling goals for pollock biological samples in the GOA. EFP participants have increased the number of shoreside observers and are also working on some logistical improvements, like easier access and transport of sampled fish from the sorting line to the observer sampling station that may help alleviate some obstacles to meeting sampling goals. However, the nature of a non-rationalized fishery in the GOA leads to pulses of deliveries, that intensifies the workload and scheduling challenges for shoreside observers. Furthermore, pulses of deliveries exacerbate challenges that shoreside observers face in finding the necessary time to collect biological samples before needing to monitor the next vessel offload. Project partners recognize that data collection sampling goals need to be met as this EFP proceeds and this topic remains a key priority during discussions.

Project partners consistently acknowledge the importance of clear communication and cooperative relationships among all partners to successfully execute the EFP. The EFP process has identified challenges and provided opportunities to learn and adapt and these will continue as the project progresses and expands. Numerous vessels are interested in joining the EFP next year which will require additional coordination and support. Participants are looking forward to 2021 and preparing for the grant funding cycle beginning in July.

**Table 2. Summary of issues and resolutions identified during the implementation of the Trawl EM EFP in the first half of 2020.**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
Discards of jellyfish	Jellyfish may be discarded. Vessels record when they discard jellyfish. There is ongoing discussion on how to quantify jellyfish discard.
Offload video interruption during repairs to EM systems	EM provider notifies project partners via email. There is ongoing work on developing a procedure.
Consistency between the video reviewers	NMFS has received video review protocols from video reviewers. There was a meeting to discuss differences in discard definitions and classification. There is ongoing work to translate the reviewer inputs into a common and consistent data stream.
Recording logbooks correctly	EFP permit holders conducted an industry outreach meeting in April 2020 and discussed this as a topic.
Data Delays (due to eLandings Report IDs not being provided to observers)	EFP permit holders conduct regular outreach to processors.
Encounters with Threatened and Endangered Bird Species	NMFS developed a one-page guide on bird identification and reporting procedures, which was made available to project partners in April 2020.
GOA pollock trip limit/MRA overages: collection of overage value for donation	EFP permit holders are responsible for tracking performance metrics and will serve as bookkeepers to directly bill vessels.