

performance standards and data review, should be sufficiently robust to allow the technology to be updated on an ongoing basis.

We also ask that the workgroup be tasked with considering fleet compatibility when developing EM approaches. Clearly the EM approach that works in one fishery or on one class of boats may not be suited to another fishery. Fishery specific management needs, along with fleet physical and operational characteristics, are an essential part of developing the EM integration context.

Finally we believe the EM workgroup should be tasked with identifying a process that synthesizes the four cooperative research “tracks” into a document that includes a timeline, milestones, and decision points for the Council related to integrating an operational EM program for the fixed gear fisheries. Our expectation is that the document outlining this process would be presented to the Council at the June 2014 meeting.

In sum, we believe some important progress has been made toward integrating EM with the observer program but there is much work to be done and we ask that Council’s support in expediting this process. Specifically, we ask that the Council recommend NMFS provide observer releases to vessels carrying EM as part of the cooperative research “Track 1” by May 2014; we ask that an EM Work group be established as an extension of the ad hoc working group; and, finally, we ask that the Workgroup be tasked with identifying alternative approaches to integrating EM and synthesizing these approaches into a decision document for the Council by June 2014 that defines an integrated and operational EM program.

Sincerely,



Linda Behnken
(Executive Director)