



Partial Coverage Fishery Monitory and Advisory Committee

REPORT

January 28th, 2020: 1-4pm

Renaissance Hotel, 515 Madison St, Seattle, WA 98104

Committee: Nicole Kimball (Chair), Julie Bonney, Tom Evich, Dan Falvey, Luke Szymanski (phone), Abigail Turner Franke, Mike Orcutt (phone), Bob Alverson, Kathy Hansen (phone), Caitlin Yaeger

Members Absent: Julie Kavanaugh

Agency Staff: Kate Haapala (NPFMC), Diana Evans (NPFMC), Anna Henry (NPFMC), Sam Cunningham (NPFMC), Jennifer Mondragon (NMFS), Maggie Chan (NMFS), Phil Ganz (NMFS), Jennifer Ferdinand (FMA), Craig Faunce (FMA), Lisa Thompson (FMA)

Other Attendees: Stacey Hansen (Saltwater), Molly Zaleski (Oceana, phone)

At this meeting, the Partial Coverage Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (PCFMAC) reviewed the purpose of the Committee, per the Council's October 2019 motion which established the PCFMAC and the specific tasking from October. The PCFMAC reviewed a workplan that evaluates different cost efficiency options for the partial coverage observer program, with the purpose of lowering costs and increasing coverage under the current fee program and made recommendations for the prioritization of future work to meet this objective.

1. Introduction

The Chair of the PCFMAC opened the meeting with introductions and Kate Haapala gave an overview of the agenda.

Diana Evans gave a brief presentation on the purpose and role of each of the Council's monitoring committees (i.e., the Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (FMAC), the PCFMAC, and the Trawl EM Committee). Ms. Evans gave a similar presentation to the FMAC at its September 2019 meeting when the FMAC recommended that the Council formally create a Partial Coverage FMAC stemming from an existing FMAC subgroup. This presentation provided an opportunity for the PCFMAC to ask additional, clarifying questions and to discuss the agendas of the Council's monitoring committees moving forward.

The Chair gave an update on the work completed to-date by the Partial Coverage Subgroup, including the conceptual framework the Subgroup developed at its May 2019 meeting, which created the basis for the Council's October 2019 motion on cost efficiency. **This conceptual framework provides important context for the PCFMAC's work and was valuable to the Committee's discussion as it focuses on developing different monitoring tools for a cost efficient approach to partial coverage that meets data needs and can be supported by industry fees.**

2. Committee Discussion on the Cost Efficiencies Workplan for the Partial Coverage Observer Program

Jennifer Ferdinand and Jennifer Mondragon presented the workplan to the PCFMAC. The presentation reviewed six potential options for improving cost efficiencies guided by the Council's October 2019 motion under the partial coverage program, including: 1) Pelagic Trawl EM EFP, 2) an integrated fixed gear EM program, 3) fixed gear EM optimization for cost efficiency, 4) expanding the size of the fixed gear EM program, 5) changes to the zero selection stratum, and 6) consideration of different cost implications for built-in partial coverage flexibilities.

- a. **Pelagic Trawl EM EFP: The PCFMAC recommends the Council continue to prioritize ongoing work on the pelagic trawl EM EFP.** The pelagic trawl EM EFP has the potential to both improve data quality and improve cost efficiencies by reducing per-day monitoring costs through a combination of at-sea EM systems and shoreside observing, and staff are currently dedicating significant resources to this effort in 2020. The goal is to move pelagic trawl into EM with shoreside monitoring, and the effect of cost savings is expected to result in higher coverage rates on other observed (non-pelagic) trawl sectors.
- b. **Integrated Fixed Gear Monitoring:** The staff presentation emphasized that it is possible an integrated fixed gear EM program could lower the program-wide, per-day cost of monitoring under the partial coverage program. Integrating fixed gear EM data would leverage current investments in fixed gear EM, but overall cost efficiencies will depend on whether EM integration achieves a higher selection rate with a lower daily cost. Currently, fixed gear employs an EM stratum (30% coverage) and an observer stratum (minimum 15% coverage) and EM data do not contribute toward meeting the minimum 15% observer coverage threshold. Integrating fixed gear EM data to contribute towards achieving baseline selection rates for catch accounting purposes and stock assessment would require analysis on how to get average species weight data for catch and bycatch accounting and how to accomplish biological sampling to support stock assessments. This is because fixed gear EM only provides data on encounter rates and numeric catch accounting. **Based on its discussion, the PCFMAC recommends the Council initiate an evaluation of how to integrate EM into the overall monitoring of fixed gear and the 15% hurdle evaluation. The evaluation should determine the level of observer coverage needed to inform fixed gear EM to obtain average weight data for discards and biological samples. The evaluation should also explore existing data sources (e.g., surveys) that could provide information on average weight (as a potential alternative to increased observer coverage to obtain such data).**
- c. **EM Optimization for Cost Efficiency: Another option to 'optimize' the fixed gear EM fleet is to review the** optimal size and composition of the fixed gear EM pool (i.e., the number of annual trips a vessel takes, or the longevity of the vessel within the EM pool) and determine whether the criteria for carrying EM (or equipping new boats) should be modified to achieve more coverage or fill data gaps. Currently, the EM program is voluntary, and was initially implemented to accommodate small vessels that cannot easily carry an observer. Based on its discussion, the PCFMAC recognized the link to cost efficiencies by focusing EM capacity on certain operations, but that this would be a deviation from the current flexibility of the program and could have impacts on smaller vessels with limited bunk space to carry an observer in the existing EM program. **The PCFMAC agreed that there are interlinkages between optimizing the fixed gear EM fleet and changing the definition for zero selection, especially for smaller vessels that could be removed from the EM pool, and that re-evaluating zero selection criteria should be a higher priority and would inform any subsequent EM optimization.**
- d. **Expanding the Fixed Gear EM Pool:** The staff presentation emphasized that the fixed gear EM pool could expand based solely on any vessel that volunteered in the EM pool. Cost efficiencies could be achieved with an expanded fixed gear EM pool under the assumption that a mature EM

program proved to be more cost efficient than the current cost per observer day. However, the PCFMAC's discussion highlighted that, while the industry continues to be interested in participating in the fixed gear EM program, the current size of the EM pool is limited by available funding. The Committee agreed that optimizing the fixed gear EM fleet could provide greater efficiencies more quickly without the constraint of available funding.

- e. **Changing the Definition of Zero Selection:** The PCFMAC discussed how changes to the zero selection pool could be a first step to inform other work on partial coverage cost efficiencies, such as EM optimization. Changing the definition of zero selection means evaluating different criteria for zero selection, instead of the current vessel length threshold. **The PCFMAC recommends the Council initiate an evaluation of changes to the zero selection pool to meet both data needs and improve cost efficiency for the draft 2021 ADP.** This evaluation could include updating a data set containing vessel demographics and fishing patterns, requesting analysis on the feasibility and logistics of using current year fishing effort to establish the zero selection pool for the following year, and evaluating potential data quality and management impacts. Changing the definition of zero selection would not require a change in the regulations, as the criteria for who is in zero selection are contained in the ADP.

- f. **Cost implications of Partial Coverage Flexibilities:** The workplan also included some cost efficiency ideas that would limit current flexibilities (i.e., three-day notice for deploying at-sea observers) built into the partial coverage program. The presentation noted that re-evaluating these flexibilities could provide an opportunity to analyze the potential cost savings of any particular option. Committee discussion noted that extending the notice for at-sea observer deployment could negatively impact the GOA trawl fleet, and that more advance notice would not likely lead to significant cost savings. The Committee agreed that staging observer equipment at primary ports for the partial coverage program (and requiring vessels to pick up their observer in certain ports) could impose significant costs to vessels and distributional impacts to shoreside processors and fishing communities, and that the costs for storing, maintaining, or resupplying observer equipment would be significant. The Committee discussed the value of re-evaluating trip selection compared to vessel selection (requiring a selected vessel to carry an observer for every trip in specified period) for assigning observers and EM, as was done in the past. Using vessel selection reduces the need for observer travel, and when combined with full monitoring, generates representative data. The PCFMAC noted that having an observer deploy for two to three trips in a row on the same vessel could generate cost savings (i.e., minimizing observer down time and travel), but agreed that other options, such as changing the definition of zero selection, could potentially provide a faster solution with greater cost savings. The PCFMAC would like to revisit this in the future.

3. Other Potential Projects for Partial Coverage Cost Efficiencies

Throughout its discussion, the PCFMAC identified other potential projects for cost efficiency. One potential option would be to evaluate the cost savings for optimizing the EM trawl fleet by leveraging installed trawl EM equipment on vessels that also fish fixed gear. Agency staff noted this is an option, however, the camera placements and views may be different for trawl and pot gear. This would require consideration of the installation costs, the cost of utilizing an EM technician to move equipment, and whether two vessel monitoring plans would be required.

The PCFMAC identified EM data review costs as an opportunity for providing cost efficiencies for the partial coverage program. Federal dollars granted to PSMFC currently pay for video review, but this cost could be supported by the industry's observer fee in the future depending on whether outside funding is secured.

Finally, one member questioned whether potential changes to the service delivery model should be considered as a means of improving cost efficiency. Some discussion ensued about whether the concept provided was similar to the voucher program previously evaluated by staff in an October 2017 discussion paper and not pursued further. The committee agreed that the member could bring this up at the May 2020 FMAC meeting.

4. Updates to the Observer Analytical Tasklist

Jennifer Mondragon led a presentation on the Observer Analytical Tasklist, and the PCFMAC made several recommended changes for Council consideration, in addition to general updates:

- a. Partial coverage cost efficiencies subgroup (#7): Change the project to reflect PCFMAC recommendation for prioritized work on integrating fixed gear EM.
- b. Add zero selection to the Tasklist as separate project (new #8): Added to reflect the Committee's prioritization of evaluating changes to the zero selection pool to meet both data needs and improve cost efficiency for the draft 2021 ADP.
- c. Explore alternative approaches to evaluate the observer effect (#9): This project should precede the project on the Agency ODDS Subgroup since there is work being done on monitoring effects, but staff have not been to complete the ODDS since that group has been reprogramming ODDS to accommodate the trawl EM EFP.
- d. Trawl EM EFP (#13): Combine with Trawl CV EM Development (#6).
- e. Sablefish discards (#16): Project should be updated to reflect the Council's December 2019 motion.

The expectation is that the observer analytical task list would be updated and posted for the April 2020 Council meeting.