


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC, and AP Members
FROM: Chris Oliver 
Executive Director
DATE: November 25, 2002
SUBJECT: Vessel Monitoring Systems

ESTIMATED TIME
6 HOURS
all A/B items

In October, the Council received a report from its Vessel Monitoring System Committee. The Council adopted the committee recommendations and forwarded them to the National VMS Steering Committee for review at its October meeting (see *Item B-7* for those recommendations). Mr. Guy Holt, NMFS Enforcement, will present the national committee response to the Council's recommendations.

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

David Benton, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

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October 15, 2002

Jonathan Pinkerton
NOAA Fisheries Office for Enforcement
8484 Georgia Avenue, Suite 415
Silver Spring MD 20910

Dear Mr. Pinkerton:

At its October 2002 meeting, the North Pacific Council adopted a recommendation offered to it by its Vessel Monitoring System Committee, which reviewed the current and potential new VMS systems and explored current and potential uses of technology for monitoring fisheries and enhancing vessel safety in a cost-effective manner. The Committee reviewed the national standards for VMS in the context of Alaska fisheries issues and the following National Standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Act:

Conservation and management shall, where practicable, minimize costs and avoid unnecessary duplication.

Conservation and management measures, shall to the extent practicable, promote the safety of human life at sea.

The Council recommended that the National VMS Steering Committee consider changes to the VMS performance standards, two additional systems for certification, the attached evaluation matrix, and proposed changes to 50 CFR 679. Vessel monitoring systems that provide two-way communication could aid compliance with fisheries regulations and maritime safety, and comport with the MSA. The Council used the performance factors (listed at right) to evaluate the various transponder systems that are requesting NMFS-certification for use in Alaska fisheries. A copy of the evaluation matrix is attached.

Performance Factors

- (1) The meeting of NMFS Requirements and Performance Standards
- (2) The operation and cost of the systems
- (3) Safety of Life and Property Factors
- (4) Efficiency of Maritime Operations

The Council adopted the following recommendations for your consideration:

- Modification of the position reporting period, presently every 30 minutes, to allow for variable reporting relative to vessel proximity to areas of concern which reduces operating costs;
- Using "comprehensive coverage" as the performance standard for VMS as opposed to "seamless" that is the present requirement;
- Requiring future VMS to provide for 2-way communications capability to help reduce negative impact on protected resources and enhance maritime safety;
- Reliability of VMS hardware;

- Backup systems, hardware or software based, as an alternative to a secondary VMS .

The Council also adopted a recommendation that Inmarsat C and Iridium satellite technology provide comprehensive VMS coverage for the Alaska Region. In the event of a VMS failure, cost effective hardware or software technology back-up systems would allow a fishing vessel to complete its current voyage and still meet NMFS' basic security and reporting criteria (geographic coverage, tamper resistant, encrypted data exports for tracking analysis, 30 minute poll rate, and vessel specific).

Guy Holt, NOAA Enforcement Alaska Region, is a member of the Council's VMS Committee and the National VMS Steering Committee. The Council has requested that Mr. Holt present the Council recommendations to the Steering Committee and report to the Council on the conclusions of your committee. Please let me know if we can provide any additional information or clarification. Jane DiCosimo is our staff contact on this issue. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Chris Oliver
Executive Director

Enc.

cc: Early Krygier
Guy Holt