



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Trawl Electronic Monitoring REPORT

May 31, 2022: 8am-5pm AKDT

Hybrid meeting, Anchorage, AK

The Trawl EM Committee met to review the Trawl EM EA/RIR Initial Review analysis and provide comments and recommendations for the Council.

Appointed Committee members in attendance¹:

Bill Tweit (NPFMC, Chair)	Tom Evich (fisherman)	Heather Mann (MTC)
Julie Bonney (AGDB)	Jared Fuller	Mike Orcutt (AMR)
Ruth Christiansen (UCB)	Charlotte Levy (AEB)	Caitlin Yeager (Unalaska/ Dogboat)

Agency Committee members in attendance²:

Anna Henry (NPFMC)	Maggie Chan (NMFS AKR)	Dave Colpo (PSMFC)
Josh Keaton (NMFS AKR)	Jennifer Ferdinand (NMFS FMA)	Courtney Paiva (PSMFC)
Jennifer Mondragon (NMFS AKR)	Lisa Thompson (NMFS FMA)	Brent Pristas (NMFS OLE)

Others in attendance included (note list is not exhaustive):

Melanie Ricket (NMFS AKR), Darrell Brannan (Brannan and Associates), Sara Cleaver (NPFMC), Stefanie Dukes (AMR), Stacey Hansen (SWI), Chelsea Radell (AGDB), Megan Mackey (NMFS AKR), Nancy Munro (SWI), Jo Ann Alvarez (SWI), Rachel Baker (ADFG), Karla Bush (ADFG), Dan Falvey (ALFA), Nicole Kimball (PSPA), Brent Paine (UCB), Mike Vechter (NMFS FMA), Ernie Weiss (AEB), Chris Rose (FNR), Luke Szymanski (AIS), Alicia Cozza (SWI), Jennifer Cahalan (PSMFC), Dennis Jaszka (NMFS contractor), Alex Perry (NMFS OLE), Wynn Carney (NMFS OLE), Anne Vanderhoeven (Arctic Storm), Chris Oliver (American Seafoods), Sam Cunningham (NPFMC)

The Chair opened the meeting with introductions and approval of the agenda.

Trawl EM analysis—EA/RIR Initial Review

The Committee received a presentation of the EA/RIR draft for Initial Review of Integrating Electronic Monitoring on Pollock Catcher Vessels using Pelagic Trawl Gear and Tender Vessels in the North Pacific Observer Program, from Maggie Chan (NMFS AKR), Melanie Ricket (NMFS AKR), Anna Henry (NPFMC) and Darrell Brannan (Brannan and Associates). The presentation and Committee discussion focused on the following aspects of the analysis:

¹ AGDB = Alaska Groundfish Data Bank, UCB = United Catcher Boats, SWI = Saltwater, Inc., AEB = Aleutians East Borough, MTC = Midwater Trawlers Cooperative, AMR = Archipelago Marine Resources, Inc.

² NPFMC = Council staff, NMFS AKR = NMFS Alaska Regional office staff, NMFS FMA = staff of the Fishery Monitoring and Analysis Division at the NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center, PSMFC = Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, NMFS OLE = NMFS Alaska Office of Law Enforcement

Opt-in timing for EM for GOA pollock participants

The Committee spent significant time discussing provisions for opt-in requirements, noting that **this is a challenging issue and supports the ongoing work to identify acceptable strategies.**

The Committee noted that the specific requirement for opt-in timing is a policy call with tradeoffs in terms of flexibility, efficiency and costs: The most flexible provision for participants is a trip-by-trip opt-in, which would allow vessels to determine if they are participating in EM monitoring on each individual trip. This option presents challenges for the observer program to predict the amount of shoreside monitors required for EM trips and the amount of at sea observers required for non EM trips. This would increase costs of the program as the deployment plan would have to include staffing for both high percentages of EM trips and high percentages of non-EM trips, thus reducing available coverage and data collection in other sectors of the partial coverage fleet. The least flexible provision would be to require vessels to opt-in to the EM program on an annual basis. This would be more predictable and less costly for the observer program, however it would reduce operational flexibility for vessels and may result in low participation in the EM program from vessels in the CGOA.

The specific requirements for opt-in timing are most applicable to participants in the CGOA. AFA participants in the BS operate in EM on an annual basis and vessels in the WGOA may only be impacted at the end of the season when the ability to opt out of EM may create cost savings associated with not requiring shoreside observers standing by for sporadic trips. Chelsea Radell and Julie Bonney (AGDB) presented data on trends of vessel participation in EM in the CGOA noting that changing dynamics in the fishery have led to decreased participation in EM and the potential that annual opt-in requirements will lead to reduced participation from vessels in the CGOA. The Committee discussed the differences in participation of EM among the various sectors and **recommended more discussion be added to the analysis regarding the different incentives for vessels to participate in EM** based on operational specifics and regulatory structures in the BS, CGOA, WGOA.

A potential opt-in requirement for a threshold of trips was proposed that represents a compromise between an annual opt-in and a trip-by-trip opt-in. This would allow vessels to opt-in to EM on less than an annual basis, but require a commitment that a percentage of trips above a specified threshold (i.e. 50%) must be EM trips. **The Committee recommended that industry specify in writing potential options for opt-in requirements that present a middle ground on flexibility such as a range of thresholds (% of trips that must be EM) and that these are analyzed in the next draft of the analysis including potential impacts on which vessels choose to participate in program.**

Tender EM vessel provisions

The Committee discussed specific provisions of the EM program that apply to tender vessels, focusing specifically on provisions for tenders that are offloading split trips. Split trip offloads include incomplete transfers from a CV, therefore multiple tender offloads must be observed to obtain complete samples from a single CV trip. The Committee discussed a provision that plants taking split tender trips would require 100% observer coverage and would therefore need to “opt-in” or somehow indicate the intention to receive split trips as part of their Catch Monitoring Control Plan (CMCP) in October of the prior year. **The Committee recommended adding to the analysis a discussion of the cost implications of the 100% observer requirement for offloads at plants receiving split tender trips including the impacts on other partial coverage sectors.** This analysis should include specific information regarding coverage requirements for AFA plants in the GOA (partial coverage vs. full coverage) and should clarify that CVs and tenders will be sampled under the same strata, as is the current structure of the EFP.

The Committee stressed that the EM program should not impact patterns of deliveries, recognizing that there should be minimal disruption to processor dependent communities.

Vessel performance standards for GOA pollock trip limits and MRAs

Two options for vessel performance standards for GOA pollock trip limits and maximum retainable amounts (MRAs) were proposed for the regulatory trawl EM program. **The Committee does not recommend option one that would exempt participating trawl EM vessels from MRAs and trip limit regulations with the Council conducting a reevaluation of these exemptions every three years.** The Committee discussion focused on option two which would exempt participating trawl EM vessels from MRAs and trip limit regulations and require participation in flexible, industry run plans that would function similar to the vessel performance standards that have been utilized in the EFP. Under this model, the Council could set up goals for the incentive plan, receive an annual report, and reevaluate every three years. **The Committee recommended that the document clarify that in the Bering Sea this would be a separate incentive plan and would not be an added element to the existing salmon Incentive Plan Agreements to avoid any potential disruption of salmon performance standards. Any vessel performance standard should be implemented in the intercoop agreement so that all vessels are managed consistently and should give the coops the flexibility to design the most effective plans.**

The Committee discussed that in the GOA, there is support for the way performance standards are functioning under the EFP and **recommended that the next version of the analysis describe the structure more specifically, with the goal that the regulations require the development of a singular incentive plan to avoid exceeding trip limits and that vessels would be required to agree to the incentive plans in order to participate in EM.**

Monitoring requirements for processors

The Committee discussed monitoring requirements for processing plants that take deliveries from vessels participating in EM and **agreed that Catch Monitoring and Control Plans (CMCP) are necessary to ensure shoreside sampling goals are met. The Committee recommended that NMFS staff do outreach in plants without existing CMCPs to discuss expectations including requirements for observer sampling areas** to ensure that observers have adequate platform and tools to perform sampling duties. **The Committee suggested more discussion be added to the analysis of the potential costs associated with CMCPs, particularly the costs of slowing down the sorting line, in the context of a race for fish, recognizing that each individual plant is unique and some may incur higher costs than others.**

The Committee requested the Council indicate a policy position regarding the responsibility for the costs of food and lodging for shoreside observers, noting that processing plants have borne these costs under the EFP but that under a regulated program these may be covered by the observer fee to maintain consistency with existing regulations.

The Committee also requested clarification in the analysis on the expectations for the timing of the final fish ticket as well as sorting landings to species and whether subsamples will be adequate.

Biological sampling

The Committee emphasized that the trawl EM program is not expected to impact the stock assessments or harvest policy and management advice coming out of the stock assessments.

The Committee discussed the necessity of composition sampling, recognizing that it will still be required even under maximized retention as observers record specific information that is not included in a fish

ticket and that given observer operations, this requirement does not impact efficiency. The Committee also discussed the specifics of the agency's authority to deploy observers on vessels that are using EM systems and clarified that if this was a regular deployment the Council would approve it in the Annual Deployment Plan. If it were a special project outside of the ADP the agency would cover the cost because it would be collecting information other than catch and bycatch.

Salmon accounting improvements

The Committee emphasized that salmon retention remains the priority for observers at the plant and the EM reviewers and highlighted that **the EM program improves salmon accounting in two important ways: First, including tenders in the program allows for full enumeration of salmon at the plants rather than relying on extrapolation of at-sea samples. Second: EM systems and EM video review on 100% of the trips combined with post trip selection for shoreside monitoring in the GOA removes the potential for observer effects.**

Collecting data on species EM doesn't capture (seabirds, mammals)

The Committee discussed some of the limitations of data collection by EM systems, including that EM can only review what is inside the camera frame and physical specimens cannot be collected. **The Committee recommended continued collaboration with USFWS and NMFS protected resources program regarding what data crew may be able to collect, recognizing there will be different requirements for seabirds and marine mammals and to ensure that crew has clear instructions, expectations and proper training.**

Stock assessment data stream updates

Under the EM program, data that was previously collected at the individual tow level by at-sea observers is now collected at the trip level by shoreside observers. The Committee emphasized that the analysis shows this will not negatively impact stock assessments. NMFS is in the process of building an automated program to compare discard estimates between logbooks and EM review. **The Committee supports this to encourage efficient data comparisons to allow for timely accounting of discards,** recognizing that the EM program allows for each discard event to be accounted to the specific trip and coop, creating a new level of urgency to the timeliness of data reporting.

Funding for EM video review

Under the regulated trawl EM program, a new EM review fee would be implemented in the BS. There was some discussion regarding the specific timing of this fee, recognizing that collecting the fee at any point later than the first quarter of the following year would be difficult for vessels, given the need to calculate crew shares and other accounting. The Committee explored options of calculating the fee based on either a percentage of the vessel's initial AFA pollock allocation or the actual catch in the year prior. More discussions with stakeholders are necessary to determine which approach is supported, understanding that while actual catch may be preferred, this may delay the process, making it more difficult meet a deadline of the first quarter of the following year.

Approaches for EM contract with service provider for video review

NMFS provided an informational discussion of potential vehicles for contracts for EM video review as outlined in the analysis. The trawl EM program in Alaska does not require an audit of video review because the agency is the client of the video reviewer. There was some discussion that participants would like to maintain flexibility to select providers and reviewers competitively, while also acknowledging that

there may be a tradeoff between flexibility and cost efficiency. **The Committee approves how this process has functioned under the EFP and encourages continuing that approach.** The Committee also discussed differences in cost models between the fixed gear and trawl EM programs specifically as they relate to cost categories 1. Service Provider Fees and Overhead and 2. EM Equipment Maintenance and Upkeep. **The Committee recommended more discussion in the analysis of how cost burdens between fixed gear and trawl EM are related.**

Cost elements and comparisons

The Committee reviewed the cost estimates as reported in the RIR and had the following recommendations for the next version of the analysis:

- Review the turnaround time between trips for observers in the BS to determine whether the cost estimates for at sea observers using fishing days+1 may be underestimating costs.
- Provide more discussion of the incentives for each sector to participate in the trawl EM program.
- Include additional specifics regarding new shoreside costs and the potential redistribution of costs.
- Discuss discrepancies between cost burdens and incentives in fixed gear and trawl EM and specify what annual costs are borne by vessels that participate in both programs.

Other comments

The Committee also provided the following comments and recommendations:

- Clarify in the analysis that any vessel can use a NMFS approved electronic logbook, including those already approved or any that are approved in the future.
- Additional discussion in the analysis of how vessels may be able to re-enter the program after being removed.
- The Committee emphasized the importance of communication in successful implementation of the program, including feedback with vessels and providers on what they need to communicate as well as with processors.
- The Committee recommended the creation of a subgroup to discuss improvements in feedback mechanisms in the EM service provider portal.
- The Committee really appreciates the quality of the initial review draft, reflecting all the work the Trawl EM Committee has done and the extensive collaboration and involvement of the PIs (Julie Bonney, Ruth Christiansen and Charlotte Levy).
- The Committee appreciates the extent to which the initial review relies on non-regulatory tools to achieve Council objectives.

Public comment

Dan Falvey (ALFA) provided public testimony on the initial review analysis. As a member of the FMAC Dan will also have an opportunity to review the analysis and provide recommendations at the June 1, 2022 FMAC meeting.

Update for NFWF grant applications for final year of the project

UCB and AGDB will be submitting a proposal to cover the final year of the EFP in the BS and CGOA. This request will include funding for only half of the shoreside observer costs in the BS as AFA will be covering the other half. There is no plan to expand the footprint of vessels beyond that of 2022 participation.

AEB will be submitting a proposal for the final year of funding for the EFP vessels and tenders in the WGOA. This will include a subproject to test EM in plants, to potentially replace the need for a human observer to stand and watch the sorting line.

AGDB will be submitting a proposal to develop a proof of concept and a pilot program for EM for pelagic and non-pelagic trawl CVs in the Gulf rockfish program.

The Committee recommends supporting all three of these proposals, to sustain the final year of the EFP as it moves towards a regulated program and to advance new EM work that is the logical next step in the development of trawl EM in Alaska. The Committee noted that the timeline of the NFWF RFP process is earlier than usual this year and proposals are due June 7, 2022 (prior to the beginning of the Council meeting).

Scheduling and other issues

The Committee discussed the potential need to meet again to review the trawl EM analysis prior to final action, tentatively scheduled for the October Council meeting. **The Committee emphasized the importance of maintaining a timeline of final review at the October 2022 meeting to meet the goal of implementation of a regulated program in January 2024.** Implementation in 2024 requires consistent work after final action including additional steps that must be met by October 2023 (such as vessel opt-in and CMCP approval). Given the timeline the Committee recognized that it would not be possible to meet with sufficient time to incorporate Committee comments into a draft analysis prior to the October meeting. If during the completion of the analysis, additional issues arise that require a Committee meeting, the Committee has tentatively identified September 20, 2022 as a potential meeting date to review the analytical draft and provide comments prior to the Council's final review. If this meeting is not needed, the next Committee meeting would occur after the October Council meeting to discuss future work and the role of the Committee moving forward.

The Committee had preliminary discussions regarding future EM work and tools that allow for improved monitoring and accountability that would benefit from the input of the Committee and considered that a future version of the Committee may cover EM issues more broadly than "trawl" EM. There was consistent recognition that the collaborative approach has been key to the effectiveness of this Committee and that that model should be maintained.