



# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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## Trawl Electronic Monitoring Committee

### REPORT

Mar. 4-5, 2019

Alaska Fisheries Science Center, 7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Seattle, Washington 98115

[www.npfmc.org/observer-program/](http://www.npfmc.org/observer-program/)

**Committee:** Bill Tweit (chair)

Appointed members: Julie Bonney (AGDB), Ruth Christiansen (UCB), Tom Evich (Commercial Fisherman), Jared Fuller (SWI), Chris Wilson (DOS), Caitlin Yeager (UFC/DC-phone), Mike Orcutt (AMR), Heather Mann (MTC-phone)

Agency: Council – Elizabeth Figus

NMFS FMA Observer Program – Jennifer Ferdinand, Andy Kingham, Adriana Meyers, Nicholas Thom, Farron Wallace

NMFS Alaska Region – Jennifer Watson, Alicia Miller, Bridget Mansfield (phone)

NMFS AFSC Marine Mammal Lab – Robyn Angilss, Brian Brost, LTJG Blair Delean

National Observer Program – Bill Duffy

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement – Brent Pristas (phone)

NOAA General Counsel – Tom Meyer, Caitlin Imaki

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission – Courtney Paiva, Dave Colpo, Jennifer Cahalan

IPHC – Claude Dykstra

NMFS West Coast Region – Melissa Hooper, Justin Kavanaugh, Matt Dunlap

Others attending included: Katie Dekis (AIS), Charlotte Levy (AEB), Molly Zaleski (Oceana-phone), Phillip M (AMR), Jarrod Yelton (AMR), Craig Rose (FNR)

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The trawl EM Committee was pleased to kick off this meeting with a presentation from West Coast Region Staff about the whiting EM program. Having West Coast Region Staff in-person at the meeting was much appreciated and discussions with the West Coast Region informed the conversations that followed, especially regarding marine mammal interactions, encounters with rare species, large discards at-sea, and troubleshooting repair of EM systems on the water.

Committee members then presented to one another about project updates in the CGOA, WGOA, and BS. All research projects reported progress, and details of each project are expected to be updated regularly in the [Trawl EM 2019 Cooperative Research Plan](#). The Committee especially appreciated photo and video examples from ongoing research in the North Pacific. Video examples included a codend discard, a jellyfish haul, and discard events with sharks, and a marine mammal interaction.

The Committee also received staff presentations from the Alaska Region about the exempted fishing permit (EFP) process and about marine mammal data collection and EM. The Committee learned that their multiple research projects could cooperate under a single EFP or choose to apply for multiple EFPs. It was also clarified that an EFP can be structured to take place over a single year or multiple years. The Committee had a lot of questions about the EFP process, and appreciated presence of NMFS staff, who answered questions and helped to lay out expected timelines for completion of a successful EFP application.

Note: Council staff contact for the trawl EM Committee is Elizabeth Figus ([elizabeth.figus@noaa.gov](mailto:elizabeth.figus@noaa.gov)). Committee materials are available on the Council website: <http://www.npfmc.org/observer-program/>

A key challenge continues to be determining how shoreside deliveries could be monitored in 2020 and who would pay for additional shoreside observers in the BSAI and GOA as part of a potential EFP that would test deployment of EM with maximized retention of catch in the pollock trawl fisheries. Additional challenges may include how an EFP in the GOA pollock fisheries might interact with the partial coverage Annual Deployment Plan process and how maximized retention could be achieved with existing prohibited species catch and maximum retainable amount discard requirements (PSC; MRA). The Committee briefly discussed whether PSC and MRA requirements should be shifted into some sort of a maximum commerce allowance (MCA) instead but did not reach a decision. **Committee members will begin planning an EFP application in April and aim to have a completed application for the Council to review by October.**

The IPHC expressed some concerns regarding halibut retention under a maximized or optimized retention scheme for trawl vessels, and Committee members discussed potential challenges with IPHC staff present at the meeting. **The Committee requested that Council staff coordinate with IPHC staff to investigate if permission to retain halibut PSC must be granted by the IPHC, and if so, would such as request for permission need to originate from NMFS or the Council.** Similar concerns were raised by Committee members regarding species of concern to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and **the Committee requested Council staff follow up with ADFG staff to clarify potential issues.**

During their presentation, AFSC Marine Mammal Lab staff noted that the Observer Program has been an important source of data (including mortality and serious injury and biological data) used for marine mammal stock assessments. MML staff raised potential data concerns that may arise with a transition from observer coverage to EM on trawl vessels. **Marine Mammal Lab staff requested an EM briefing during their annual stock assessment scientific review board meeting in February 2020** and will continue to engage with the EMC at future Committee meetings.

The Committee developed a coordination plan for all projects and set goals for collaborative EFP application development over the coming months. The Committee discussed potential timing for recommending the Council initiate an analysis for a potential regulatory change starting in the Fall of 2019 so that an analysis would begin during the EFP testing phase. Committee members discussed the need to develop clear incentives structures or incentive plans for trawl EM. These incentives are expected to differ across areas and fleets (BSAI, CGOA, WGOA), including differing PSC and MRA species encountered in these areas. The Committee also discussed ideas for consistently tracking cost metrics in all projects over time, and included this in forthcoming edits to the [Trawl EM 2019 Cooperative Research Plan](#) document. The Committee discussed the types of costs that are being tracked for the projects right now. Committee members recognized some of the difficulties that have arisen in the past when trying to compare sea-day costs for observers versus EM. The fixed gear EM analysis provides an example and NMFS provides some costs in each Observer Program Annual Report. Shoreside monitoring may be an additional cost that was not incurred in the fixed gear program.

Key edits the Committee requested staff add to the Cooperative Research Plan document included (from the Chair) an emphasis on a goal to maintain or increase coverage rates over time (which has been an issue of concern to the Council) and (from Committee members) an emphasis on promoting safety. The Committee also requested the Council staff document the Committee discussion clarifying that: *understanding that a true version of full retention is not possible or feasible, the Trawl EM Committee has determined to start with maximized retention*

*plan and shift to an optimized plan based on recommendations from the Council, NMFS, and other agencies (IPHC, ADFG, etc.). A maximized or optimized retention plan would include getting rid of trip limit discards, required discards of bycatch species at sea, including onerous sorting requirements. Since full retention will likely not be feasible or promote safety, the Committee will identify species and instances where discarding must occur or would be operationally difficult to retain (maximized retention). After testing under an EFP and based on recommendations from the Council, NMFS, and other agencies (IPHC, ADFG, etc.), additional species and instances maybe considered for discard (optimized retention).*

**The Trawl EM Committee requested that Council staff update the Council in June about actions from the Trawl EM Committee related to an EFP application, as well as potentially to request letters of support for upcoming grant applications, the ability to retain halibut, and other issues as they may arise.** The Committee is tentatively planning to hold a half-day teleconference in late June to discuss EFP application progress. The next in-person meeting of the Trawl EM Committee is tentatively scheduled for August 21-22, 2019, in either Portland or Anchorage. The Committee discussed wanting to host the August meeting in whichever location was most accessible to members, since all meetings to date have been held in Seattle.

At the August 2019 meeting, the Trawl EM Committee welcomes engagement by AFSC Marine Mammal Lab staff about marine mammals if staff are available. The Trawl EM Committee will also receive presentations from Committee members regarding: research project updates; EFP application(s); and, updates on the conversations with the IPHC and ADFG regarding maximized retention concerns. The Committee will continue to update the Cooperative Research Plan as appropriate (including edits to the plan for funding development, annual flow(s) of information, and timeline(s) for trawl EM EFP development) and will make additional recommendations to the Council as requested relative to potential regulatory amendments for analysis related to trawl EM.