

## **ADVISORY PANEL Motions and Rationale October 1-3, 2024 - Anchorage, AK**

### **C4 Observer ADP**

The AP acknowledges the receipt of the 2025 Draft Annual Deployment Plan (ADP), the PCFMAC Report, and the FMAC Report and appreciates the time and work that went into the Draft ADP, particularly the challenge to include the Regulated Trawl EM Program into the budget for the first time.

The AP supports the following PCFMAC recommendations in regards to the draft 2025 ADP:

1. NMFS should support trawl EM participation in the WGOA in 2025 as intended in the newly regulated program, by funding being set aside for dockside monitoring in those ports.
2. Funding for EM service/maintenance on tender vessels should also be allocated in the Final ADP.
3. NMFS should pursue changes to the zero-selection pool, including adding vessels with consistently very little quota/fishing or very few trips. Specifically, the committee recommended the agency pursue efforts to remove EM systems on vessels that have not used them for 3-5 years.

Specifically in regards to the ODDS Trip Cancellations and Inherits Discussion paper, the AP recommends that the Council support Option 2: Apply inheritance to the next pending trip in the observer strata for implementation in the 2025 ADP. Additionally, NMFS should:

- Conduct outreach to better explain how ODDS functions
- Encourage vessel operators/ODDS users to modify trips rather than cancel them, and
- Find solutions to improve the ODDS user experience, this could include changing a trip start date and trip details at any point before a trip begins rather than the log start date.

Lastly, the AP would like to reiterate the FMAC's support for the following NFWF Proposals:

- NPFA & Under Sixty Cod Harvester's proposal with Saltwater to evaluate pot cod catch handling protocols.
- FLC's pilot project with FlyWire to reduce work burden on observers
- AGDB's CGOA Rockfish EM Project
- ALFA and Archipelago proposal to implement AI in fixed gear EM review

***Motion passed unanimously: 20/0***

## **Rationale in Favor of Motion:**

- *The AP noted their appreciation for the work the Agency put into the 2025 ADP, which includes the partial coverage portion of the Trawl EM program in the budget for the first time.*
- *The AP recognized that this was the draft ADP, and appreciated FMA noting that there will be more information available by the Final ADP in December, but wanted to note written public comment, oral public testimony, the PCFMAC recommendations and discussion around the table in regards to the inclusion of the WGOA fleet into the Final ADP.*
- *Specific to Trawl EM and the WGOA:*
  - *Processing capacity in the WGOA is currently extremely unstable and fluid from season to season. Should funding for WGOA dockside monitoring be excluded from the 2025 ADP, it would force WGOA vessels and processors to operate in the non-EM stratum. Since this fleet relies on tender deliveries, it would put the fishery back to the status quo they operated under, prior to the development of the EM program they championed, with associated risks involved with extrapolation of at-sea samples.*
  - *Public comment indicated that there is a processor who is providing a market for displaced King Cove fishermen, and that they have been diligently working to ensure compliance for the 2025 trawl EM implementation. They would need the partial coverage dockside monitoring funds to operate, and providing for two observers for B season so they can operate is essential. Although this may decrease coverage rates in other areas, the WGOA cannot be left with further instability; a closure due to exceeding the chinook cap from non-EM tender vessel extrapolations in the WGOA would adversely affect WGOA fishermen and communities.*
  - *An AP member reiterated public testimony in suggesting funding should be included to allow for EM service and maintenance for tender vessels, considering WGOA trawl EM participation during the EFP period. Although the numbers of tenders needed at any given point fluctuates, it may be possible to allocate funding to accommodate historical patterns of tender needs. If industry exceeded that funding but needed additional tender capacity, they could self-pay, but since tenders are an essential part of the partial coverage fishery their costs must be budgeted as described in the trawl EM Final Rule. The AP chose not to specify specific numbers since they can change year to year but suggested that the Agency could continue dialogue with the processing partners in the region.*
- *Specific to the PCFMAC recommendations to pursue changes to the zero selection pool and removing systems from fixed gear vessels that haven't fished in 3-5 years, there has been significant discussion on these topics over the years. The AP noted that the current method of retaining fixed gear EM participants indefinitely (other than removal for not following their VMP) has created challenges for the agency which include budget projections that cover maintenance, data collection, and review. In the trawl EM program, it is required to annually opt in to the EM program, which eliminates the issue of inactive vessels, and reducing the uncertainty for projecting an annual budget. In light of ongoing market and fishery issues that decrease revenue to the partial coverage budget, the AP encourages NMFS to maximize cost efficiencies without decreasing monitoring implications to the extent possible.*
- *Specific to the ODDS Trip Cancellation and Inherits discussion paper:*

- *There was extensive discussion at the table about all options but the AP agreed that since this change needs to be implemented for the 2025 fishing year, Option 2 is currently the best choice. By moving inheritance to the next pending trip rather than the next logged trip, it reduces the time between when the observed trip should have occurred and when it will occur. It also minimizes the likelihood that an observed trip will carry over into the following fishing year.*
- *Several AP members noted support from the trawl fleet for Option 2 for logistical and operational reasons, and see Option 2 as a reasonable step to improve temporal bias in PC observer coverage with no clear negative impacts on the GOA trawl fleet. The inability to modify or cancel trips once a start date has passed means that a boat could be locked into taking a non-EM trip and be forced to deploy non-pelagic gear even if their plant doesn't want the target species, the weather isn't safe to do so, and at risk of extrapolations of chinook accounting. Additionally, it could also prevent a vessel from being able to switch from EM to do a non-EM trip and take advantage of a market opportunity.*
- *If Option 3 were chosen, an AP member noted that outreach must be done and work needs to be put into improving the ODDS user experience to allow greater efficiencies in changing trip details.*
- *One AP member noted that Option 3 appears to fully resolve the bias issue and was identified as the best solution long term.*