



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Alaska Fisheries Science Center
Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division
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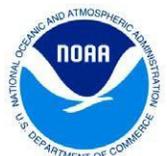
May 24, 2016

Dear Vessel Owner,

The North Pacific Observer Program is seeking vessels to participate in the 2017 electronic monitoring (EM) Cooperative Research Program to collect data on board commercial fishing vessels. The goal of the research is to determine whether data collected using EM technologies can be used to estimate catch and whether this can be achieved in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. We request that you let us know of your interest to “opt-in” to the 2017 EM selection pool by **September 20, 2016**. Any vessel that does not opt-in by September 20 will likely not be eligible for the EM pool in 2017 and will be required to participate in the partial coverage human observer pool per Federal regulations. Temporary exemptions from observer coverage due to life raft limitations or bunk space will not be issued in 2017.

At the February 2016 North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting, the Council approved continued development of EM pre-implementation deployment on hook and line and pot vessels. For hook and line vessels, the Council endorsed the expansion of the pre-implementation pool in 2017 to 90 vessels of any length. First priority in this pool would continue to be given to small longline vessels (40 to 57.5 ft. LOA) and vessels that have liferaft or bunk space limitations with carrying a human observer. The Council also endorsed developing EM pre-implementation deployment on 30 pot vessels of any length for 2017. NMFS and the industry continue to seek additional funds to support the EM cooperative research program and the actual number of vessels that will be selected to participate will depend on the amount of funding received.

NMFS will select vessels that meet the 2017 EM pre-implementation pool criteria and have contacted the Observer Program by September 20, 2016 to opt-in. All vessels that are participating in the 2017 EM selection pool will **not** be required to carry a human observer for the entire 2017 fishing year, however these participants will be required to log their fishing trips into ODDS. Vessels may also be required to use either an electronic or a paper logbook to record basic information such as fishing location, fishing effort (i.e. hook count) and fishing duration.



An EM Pre-Implementation Plan created in 2016 can be found at <http://www.npfmc.org/observer-program/>. The plan includes specific criteria for vessel participation and other operational details to ensure effective deployment of EM systems, and will be updated in 2017 to reflect a revised deployment periods depending on funding and support capacity. Once the criteria for participating in the 2017 EM cooperative research program are approved by the Council, NMFS will notify vessel owners that are selected for the EM pool with more details about the 2017 EM cooperative research in November 2016 via their email address using an email subscription service (Constant Contact). Vessels will be given an opportunity to opt-out of the EM cooperative research prior to the start of the fishing year, but any vessels that opt-out will be subject to human observer coverage.

All EM equipment in 2017 will be provided through the EM cooperative research program. Pre-installation of EM equipment will begin in late fall of 2016 and continue as necessary. EM system installations can be routinely scheduled in a limited number of primary ports - likely Homer, Kodiak, and Sitka, AK. Secondary ports such as Juneau, Petersburg, Sand Point, King Cove, and Dutch Harbor may have periodic EM installation services on scheduled trips by primary port technicians. Vessels not available for EM pre-installation during scheduled trips to a Secondary port will be required to travel to a Primary port for EM installation services. Once installed, the EM sensors and cameras will remain on the vessel indefinitely to facilitate future participation. Primary and Secondary ports services apply to EM installation and servicing only, there are no restrictions on where a vessel may make landings associated with this program.

If you would like to opt-in to this EM cooperative research in Alaska, please contact Elizabeth Chilton at 206-526-4197 or via e-mail at elizabeth.chilton@noaa.gov by **September 20, 2016**. We look forward to working with you in this EM cooperative research effort.



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