

To: GOA and BSAI Plan Teams
From: Fixed Gear organizations
Date: September 12, 2014
Subject: Plan Team comment on integrated monitoring plan

Dear NPFMC Plan Team members,

The fixed gear industry is working to develop Electronic Monitoring (EM) systems that can be integrated into Alaska's groundfish and halibut observer program. At a February 2014 EM workshop in Juneau, the Alaska Fisheries Science Center presented a memo on "draft catch reporting standards in the GOA hook and line fisheries" as they relate to EM. This information has been very helpful during the ongoing EM planning process and we thank the AFSC for this assistance. Based on the information needs identified in that memo and past experience with pilot programs, the fixed gear industry developed a monitoring approach that draws on multiple tools to form an integrated at-sea monitoring program. This approach includes some representative observer coverage, electronic monitoring systems, and full retention for some species with dockside sampling to allow verification and biological sampling. Elements of this monitoring approach formed the basis for Track 1 cooperative research field work this past season.

The undersigned organizations recognize that improving at-sea monitoring of the fixed gear fleet will be an iterative process, with evaluation of trade-offs between costs, data quality, and vessel/operational compatibility factors. We consider the proposed integrated monitoring approach outlined below to be a starting point that will evolve with experience and technological advances. Consistent with NPFMC guidance, the focus of this first step is to improve discard estimation for the dominant bycatch species in the GOA hook and line fisheries. Comments from the Plan Team on whether this approach represents a plausible starting point and a meaningful improvement to at-sea monitoring of the fixed gear fleet relative to 2013/2014--or prior--[coverage years](#) will be welcome. Recommendations relative to any additional considerations or methodologies that should be incorporated to ensure this approach will, in time, contribute to the stock assessment process will also be greatly appreciated.

[Our understanding of the timeline is that further work on logistical details and related decision points associated with selecting vessels for EM, ensuring compliance with handling procedures, establishing data review protocols, and developing field support capacity will be developed through the EM workgroup and Council process this fall. Plan Team input prior to that process will inform those discussions.](#)

Because the AFSC February 2014 memo was very helpful in framing the catch reporting standards and species of particular interest for the GOA hook and line fisheries, we also request assistance from the Plan Team with developing an integrated monitoring approach for the groundfish pot fisheries. Ongoing Alaska pilot programs are evaluating the use of EM on groundfish pot vessels. Guidance from the Plan Team that helps identify species of interest and frame catch reporting standards to assist in developing an EM management approach for the groundfish pot fisheries will also be appreciated.

In closing, the fixed gear industry respectfully requests consideration and comment from the Plan Team on: 1) the integrated monitoring approach outlined below as a [plausible](#) starting point for [gathering](#)

improving at-sea monitoring of Alaska's hook and line fisheries; 2) the use of observer and survey data to convert EM piece counts to weights as a plausible starting point; 3) additional factors the EM workgroup and Council should be aware of related to stock assessment needs of specific species; and representative data that contributes to the stock assessment process and achieves meaningful improvement to at-sea monitoring of the fixed gear fleet; and, 324) a discussion on species of concern and catch reporting standards relative to the groundfish pot fisheries.

Thank you for considering our request and for your assistance in advance at-sea monitoring.

Sincerely,

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Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association

Dale Kelley
Alaska Trollers Association

Peggy Parker
Halibut Association of North American

Malcolm Milne
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Brian Lynch
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association

Tom McLaughlin
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Jeff Stephen
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Track 1
Proposed integrated monitoring approach
for the longline, sablefish, halibut, and P cod fisheries

1. Maintain human observer coverage at levels sufficient to collect biological samples and spatially and temporally specific data on species length, weight, and sex composition to support the use of EM data and other purposes.
2. Deploy EM systems on a representative sample of unobserved vessels.
3. Total catch would be estimated as follows:
 - a. Weight of retained catch would be based on landings information
 - b. Piece counts of drop-offs and discards would be derived from video review and converted to weight estimates based on temporally and spatially similar observer or survey data.
4. Onboard handling procedures to improve accuracy for priority species (Priority species based on AFSC Feb, 13, 2014 letter)
 - a. Vessel specific monitoring plan identifying operator and crew duties needed to provide sufficient data quality.
 - b. Full retention of all rockfish with a validation process to ensure compliance; species ID and weight derived dockside
 - c. All discards of Sablefish, Halibut, P cod, Skate, Grenadiers, dogfish, and sharks must occur in full view of the EM system with a validation process to ensure compliance.
 - d. For Halibut, measuring boards or other procedures to allow identification of < 32" halibut discarded. Continue refining handling procedures and review procedures to allow release method and injury condition to be ascertained from EM.
 - e. Logbook data used to provide set specific effort data including hook size, hook spacing, skate length, and number of skates/set.
 - f. For P cod longline fishery, vessel operator maintains logbook piece counts for all halibut released to improve turn-around time for halibut PSC estimates.
5. Data review:
 - a. All discards and drop-off identified to lowest taxonomic level.

- b. Sets/trips manually reviewed following census or estimation protocols as determined appropriate.
 - c. Bathyraja skates and some other cryptic species may be estimated to group level.
- 6. Dockside monitoring
 - a. As needed to support collection of biological samples, species ID verification and quality control.