

Electronic Monitoring Workgroup – Seabird Sub-group Teleconference, August 18, 2016

Attendees: Courtney Donovan, Anne Marie Eich, Shannon Fitzgerald, Scott Pearson, Brent Pristas, and Aileen Smith

The subgroup met to discuss two topics regarding the use of electronic monitoring (EM) to monitor seabird bycatch: 1) does the 2017 EM pilot project have in place appropriate protocols for seabird bycatch monitoring and 2) what are the implications of using EM instead of fisheries observers to monitor seabird bycatch.

EM pilot project in 2016

There are currently 2 cameras that provide information related to seabirds: 1) seabird camera (aimed at the stern; records streamer line presence/absence when setting; trigger = vessel speed) and 2) hauler camera (where fishermen can hold up seabirds for identification purposes).

Excerpt of a 2016 Vessel Monitoring Plan - Seabird Protocol

- Video will be collected for monitoring compliance with seabird mitigation device regulations. (These settings are vessel specific.)
- Catch handling of Seabirds: The vessel operator is required to hold incidentally caught seabirds up to the camera for 2-3 seconds and ensure that certain key parts of the animal, such as the beak, are captured by the hauler view camera. When displaying a seabird to the camera:
 - Grasp by the outermost bend in wing, with wings out-stretched and show the bird to the hauler camera showing the ventral and dorsal sides;
 - For albatross, show a profile of the bill by holding the bird by the neck against the side of the boat. Ensure that the view is not obstructed; and
 - If possible, hold the bird beak near a scaled reference item (e.g., measurement board with large grid) to assist with identification.

Donovan said the seabird camera video is reviewed for presence/absence of streamer lines for each trip.

EM pilot project in 2017

The subgroup discussed whether the current camera configuration was sufficient for determining 1) streamer line presence/absence and 2) identification of seabird bycatch to the species or species group.

Fitzgerald and Donovan provided their review of the seabird data collected with EM in 2015/2016. Most of the 2015/2016 birds were identified to species. Fitzgerald and Donovan thought the 2016 protocols for displaying seabirds to the camera and picture quality were sufficient as long as fishermen adhered to the protocols. It appeared that there was at least one instance in 2016 where proper posing of the bird did not occur.

The sub-group discussed whether there should be any further modifications to the 2017 vessel monitoring plans. One suggestion was to add that when the bird was held up for the hauler camera, the person should be within a certain distance from the hauler camera (e.g, *From a distance no greater than 10 ft away from the camera*, the vessel operator is required to hold incidentally caught seabirds up to the camera for 2-3 seconds ...).

At December 2014 meeting, the subgroup discussed that the primary objective would be to monitor for presence/absence of mitigation measures and the secondary objective would be to gather as much seabird information as possible, specifically to see if this would be viable option for catch accounting. The sub-group did ask if it was possible to use the video to determine whether streamer lines are set correctly and asked Donovan to distribute example video showing streamer lines for the group to review. Donovan

said she would request permission from a few vessels and distribute a few example videos to the teleconference participants if she received permission from the vessel owners and signed confidentiality forms from sub-group members. The subgroup discussed that it would be nice to know if vessels were using streamer lines during the sets when seabirds were caught.

Analysis to Integrate Electronic Monitoring into the North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer Program

The sub-group discussed how using EM instead of fisheries observers could change the quality of seabird data.

Regarding streamer line compliance – Observers and EM allow the reporting of streamer line presence/absence. However, the observer can provide context for a particular situation whereas EM cannot. Observers can also work with vessel operators in real-time to correct any potential issues which is not possible with EM.

Regarding catch accounting – Seabird identification similar between the two methods. However, observers collect specimens and bring them onshore for identification and this would/could be a responsibility of the vessel operator with EM.

Next Steps

- Draft write-up of seabird section is due to Diana Evans the morning of Monday, August 22 (Eich)
- Next EMWG conference call on August 25 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Alaska Time).
- If possible, Donovan will send seabird camera (streamer line) video to teleconference participants to determine the practicability of determining streamer line performance standards from video footage. Eich will follow-up on this item.
- Any suggested modifications to the EM pilot project in 2017 should be submitted to Eich as soon as possible. Deadline for these suggestions? (Eich).
 - One suggestion: Potentially add that the bird should be held up some determined distance from the hauler camera.