

GROUND FISH ELECTRONIC MONITORING POLICY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE REPORT ON FINAL ACTION ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS
– FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS FOR
2020

The Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Advisory Committee (GEMPAC) and the Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Technical Advisory Committee discussed the current electronic monitoring (EM) exempted fishing permits (EFPs) and understand some have proposed modifications to improve functionality including; lengthen timing for submission of hard drives in whiting EFP and clarify submission rules, changes to catch handling of rex sole, and consider allowing alternative dispositions for some of the species brought in under maximum retention fisheries that are currently prohibited from entering commercial markets. The GEMPAC supports approving the modifications requested, making them effective as soon as possible, and recommends that the Council approve extending the Midwater Trawl and EM EFPs through 2020. Below is the rationale.

Hard Drive Submission

Currently, participants in the whiting fishery have to submit the hard drives within 24 hours of landing. There has been confusion around the definition of landing versus offloading. Vessels were turning hard drives in a day late or pulling the hard drives before the offload starts in order to avoid being late with the submission. The GEMPAC recommends that National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) adjust the submission requirement to be within 72 hours of the beginning of the offload.

Catch Handling of Rex and Sand Soles

Currently, EFP participants in the bottom trawl EFP are required to retain rex soles as they are difficult to identify on camera and distinguish from other species such as Dover sole. NMFS has received requests that would allow at-sea discarding of rex sole along with other species under the "other flatfish" individual fishing quota (IFQ) category (such as sanddabs, an allowable discard species under EM). Vessels would prefer to only sort discards down to species complexes used for IFQ accounting – for instance, allowing rex sole and sanddabs to be mixed since they are both debited as 'other flatfish' quota. This catch handling change is requested to increase safety by reducing the number of sorting totes that can crowd the deck. EM review may misidentify discarded rex sole as a different IFQ species, mainly Dover sole, which has catch accounting implications.

Alternative Dispositions of Catch

Currently, vessels participating in the maximum retention midwater trawl EFP are prohibited from discarding fish at-sea. In the case of whiting, some vessels brought their catch to the dock and realized that whiting is a prohibited species prior to May 15th and it was surrendered at the plant, as it is not allowed to enter the commercial market. This change would allow the processor to

dispose of the catch (and get paid for it). The EM EFPs would have to be amended to allow this to happen under the midwater trawl EFP.

PFMC
09/17/19