

**Council Coordination Committee
Electronic Monitoring Subcommittee**

**Conference Call Meeting
April 18, 2013**

Meeting Report

I. Introduction

This was the first meeting of the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) Electronic Monitoring Subcommittee (EMSC). On behalf of the CCC, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC) is coordinating the EMSC. The following table indicates membership of the EMSC as well as those that participated in the first meeting.

<u>Pacific Council</u>	<u>N. Pac. Council</u>	<u>Gulf Council</u>	<u>Mid-Atl. Council</u>	<u>West. Pac Council</u>
Dorothy Lowman*	Dan Hull*	Charlene Ponce ⁺	Rich Seagraves* ⁺	Mike Goto*
Jim Seger ⁺				Eric Kingma ⁺
Chuck Tracy ⁺				Josh DeMello ⁺

* EMSC member

+ FMC staff

Mike Goto, WPFMC Council Member, served as chair of the meeting. Eric Kingma, WPFMC staff, is the WPFMC staff lead for the subcommittee.

Meeting participants described their interests in participating in the EMSC.

II. Review of NMFS White Papers

In February 2013, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) released five white papers covering topics associated with electronic monitoring (EM), which include electronic catch and dealer logbook reporting, video monitoring, and vessel monitoring systems (VMS). The titles of the white papers are as follows: *Existing Technologies; Enforcement; Research and Development; Alignment of Objectives; and Funding Options*. A sixth paper focusing on *Confidentiality* has yet to be released.

It is the EMSC's understanding that the information in these white papers will form the foundation for a synthesis guidance document that is in the process of being developed. The EMCS made the following comments on the papers, many of which are also relevant to any synthesis document:

- The papers are informative and are helpful in terms of identifying general issues and “pros” and “cons” associated with EM; however, when read collectively, the papers are redundant on a number of topics, and on others they are too general and not detailed or specific enough.

- The papers lack description of regional case studies and the identification of why some regions may have more needs or are further along than others with regards to EM development.
- It would be helpful if the papers including a cost template that would help Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMCs) identify and evaluate the cost differences between EM and conventional monitoring tools.
- The papers would benefit from a more comprehensive discussion on the costs associated with monitoring programs depending on the objective (e.g. compliance, science).
- NMFS should synthesize the papers into a single brief summary paper that would facilitate RFMC and public review.
- The papers could be improved by describing how EM/Electronic Reporting (ER) and other monitoring tools, such as dockside monitoring and VMS, could be combined or integrated to meet multiple objectives.
- The papers are unclear on the current use of some EM tools for multiple purposes; e.g. is VMS being used in some regions by observer programs in addition to compliance or regulatory enforcement uses? And are there any limitations on the ability of one branch of the agency that collects EM/ER data to share that data with another branch?
- The papers should identify how EM may promote integrated management systems that serve industry needs in addition to compliance and monitoring, e.g. catch documentation schemes.
- The papers lack a description on the role industry plays in the development of EM programs and how 3rd parties are involved in the development of EM standards or in developing systems that meet clear defined monitoring standards.
- The papers lack information on initiatives conducted in the Pacific Islands Region including a longline video monitoring project and development of Electronic Reporting Certification Standards developed in 2007 that correspond to regulations allowing the optional use of electronic reporting under all of the WPFMC's Fishery Management Plans (FMPs).
- The white paper on "Alignment of Objectives" suggests that a possible approach to improve consistency and better coordinate monitoring programs would be through the establishment of a National ER/EM Steering Committee. While a National Committee could be one way to help identify national monitoring issues and objectives, the EMSC was concerned that such an approach could lead to more emphasis on top down directives as well as national control over project funding.
- The white papers tend to emphasize EM as primarily a compliance monitoring tool rather than as a tool to meet science objectives. Even in the compliance capacity however there are several statements made that EM data is not as accurate or reliable as observer data. The relative accuracy and reliability depends considerably on the monitoring objective, regulatory regime, fishery characteristics and other factors and such blanket statements should be avoided.

III. Review of NMFS Timeline to Develop National Policy Guidance and Regional Implementation Plans

For the February 2013 CCC meeting, NMFS outlined a proposed timeline to develop policy guidance and regional implementation plans in collaboration with the RFMCs, fishing industries, and other stakeholders.

We understand that NMFS is developing a policy directive that would instruct NMFS regions to work with the RFMCs and other regional stakeholders on the development of regional plans; however, to date, the timing of the directive is unknown. We ask that this directive be made available to the CCC at the May meeting if possible.

The EMSC acknowledged that the NMFS initiative to develop policy guidance on EM is a positive undertaking; however, the EMSC further agreed that the process to develop the policy guidance and any outcome be iterative, flexible, and adaptive to take into account regional needs and perspectives.

It was noted that the timeline has already slipped, but that it was unrealistic in the first place. As such, the EMSC requests NMFS produce a new timeline for consideration at the CCC meeting in May.

There was also concern expressed that some RFMCs are not looking at EM as an immediate need nor is developing a regional implementation plan a priority. NMFS will have to be cognizant of this reality in developing its policy guidance and understand that different regions will be on different tracks.

Overall, NMFS needs improve its communication with the RFMCs on the proposed timeline and process involved to develop regional implementation plans and the national policy guidance.

IV. Terms of Reference for the Subcommittee

The EMSC agreed that the CCC should further identify the terms of reference for the subcommittee to focus the group's work.

To this end, the EMSC made the following suggestions:

- EMSC will be a forum where information between FMCs is shared regarding regional initiatives.
- EMSC will help the CCC identify where each of the regions/FMCs are at in their EM development so as to avoid unwarranted burdens imposed by national initiatives.
- EMSC will provide input to the CCC on NMFS' development of a regional collaboration process to ensure that the process is timely and effective.
- EMSC will help the CCC ensure that regional perspectives are incorporated into the draft Policy Guidance so as to avoid a top down approach.

V. Recommendations

Recommendations are underlined in the text above.

VI. Next Meeting Date

The EMSC agreed to work over email between now and the CCC meeting in May 2013.