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FISHERIES**

National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region
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PUBLIC NOTICE

For Information Contact:
Groundfish Permits at (206)526-4353

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NMFS Seeks Pacific Coast Groundfish Vessels for Electronic Monitoring Exempted Fishing Permit Project

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has been working with members of the Pacific Coast Groundfish fishery to test the use of electronic monitoring (EM) equipment to meet requirements for 100-percent observer coverage in the Trawl Rationalization Program. In 2015, 37 vessels from the at-sea and shorebased whiting, bottom trawl, and fixed gear fleets, successfully used EM to monitor compliance and account for discards in the trawl fishery under Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs). NMFS is now seeking additional vessels to participate in the EFP project for the 2016 fishing year. We are particularly interested in recruiting vessels that fish bottom trawl, non-whiting midwater trawl, and longline, for which we need additional data. NMFS and the Council will use the information gathered from the 2016 EFPs to develop regulations for implementation in 2017 (whiting and fixed gear) and 2018 (bottom trawl and non-whiting midwater trawl).

What is EM?

Electronic monitoring (EM) consists of video cameras, an integrated GPS, and associated sensors, which are used to record fishing activity at sea. Video and sensor data is reviewed after the trip to determine fishing locations and quantify discards. This catch data is used along with captain-reported logbooks in place of observer data to debit Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) and Individual Bycatch Quota (IBQ) from vessel accounts.

What You Need to Know

- Participants will be exempt from the requirement for 100-percent observer coverage, provided they procure, install, and maintain, an EM system from a qualified EM service provider (EM systems may cost \$2,000-3,000 per year to lease and \$10,000-12,000 to purchase).
- Vessels may be required to retain all catch, including non-IFQ species, and conduct special catch handling/sorting to ensure that fish can be identified on camera.
- Vessel operators will be required to fill out a discard logbook on each trip with effort and catch information.
- Participants should also be aware that failures of the EM system do occur and the vessel would be required to return to port if the system is not recording video. Such extensive failures are

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extremely rare and most common malfunctions can be addressed by working with the EM system service provider so that they do not disrupt fishing trips.

- To be eligible to participate in the EFP interested applicants must meet the following criteria on an ongoing basis. All vessels, owners, and captains, will be subject to a review of sanction history through the Office of Law Enforcement to determine if they meet the eligibility criteria. Specific eligibility criteria may be waived on a case-by-case basis.
 - The participant owns the vessel proposed to be used or has written permission of the owner;
 - The participant's vessel is registered to a valid trawl Pacific Coast Groundfish limited entry permit and a valid vessel account set up to receive quota pounds under the IFQ program;
 - The participant has prior experience fishing in the IFQ program;
 - The vessel is able to accommodate the EM system, including providing sufficient, uninterrupted electrical power;
 - The vessel has a current and valid U.S. Coast Guard Vessel Safety Check decal;
 - The participant has not had a violation of fishing regulations in the last 3 years in which the participant was fined more than \$1,000 for a criminal penalty or \$5,000 for a civil penalty;
 - The participant has never had a violation for falsification of observer, logbook, or fish ticket data;
 - The vessel has had no unobserved fishing trips or fishing days since the inception of the IFQ program;
 - The participant is willing and able to follow the terms and conditions of the EFP, including the associated individual vessel monitoring plan; and,
 - The participant has procured EM services from a qualified service provider, which is one that has previously provided EM services in a federal fishery or EM project in the West Coast or North Pacific.

To learn more or to apply to participate in the project, contact the Groundfish Permits Office at (206)526-4353 by March 9, 2016.