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FISHERIES**

PUBLIC NOTICE

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Electronic Monitoring Approved for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Trawl Rationalization Program

Today, NOAA Fisheries approved a final rule to implement an Electronic Monitoring (EM) Regulatory Amendment to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This final rule allows catcher vessels in the Pacific whiting fishery and fixed gear vessels in the shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fishery to use EM in place of observers to meet the requirements of the Trawl Rationalization Program for 100-percent at-sea observer coverage. The new measures will take effect in 2021.

The rule is intended to increase operational flexibility and reduce monitoring costs for vessels in the trawl fishery by providing an alternative to observers. Data from the EM program will be used to debit discards of IFQ species from IFQs and mothership cooperative allocations.

The final rule also implements the following measures:

- an application process for interested vessel owners;
- performance standards for EM systems;
- requirements for vessel operators;
- a permitting process and standards for EM service providers; and,
- requirements for processors (first receivers) for receiving and disposing of prohibited and protected species from EM trips.

Read the final rule here:

https://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish_catch_shares/electronic_monitoring.html

NMFS will begin accepting applications from EM service providers and vessel owners for the 2021 fishing year in June 2020. The Fisheries Permits Office will post more information on how to apply on its website in early 2020. Vessel owners interested in using EM before 2021 may apply to the EM Exempted Fishing Permit Program by contacting the Fisheries Permits Office at 206-526-4353.