



New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 25, 2017

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Council Selects Industry-Funded Monitoring Alternatives for Omnibus Amendment, Atlantic Herring Category A and B Boats

The New England Fishery Management Council yesterday selected preferred alternatives for the region's Industry-Funded Monitoring (IFM) Omnibus Amendment, which is being developed jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Council, along with considerable administrative help from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The Council also picked preferred alternatives for an IFM program for the Atlantic herring fishery but made clear that the measures – if approved and implemented – would apply *only* to Category A and B herring vessels.

The IFM Omnibus Amendment has two core components.

- The first focuses on proposed alternatives to modify all New England and Mid-Atlantic Council fishery management plans (FMPs) so that both Councils have a standardized, streamlined process in place for developing *future* FMP-specific industry-funded monitoring programs.
- The second part of the amendment contains alternatives that specifically would apply to the Atlantic Herring and Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMPs upon implementation of the IFM Omnibus Amendment.

Monitoring alternatives for other fisheries are *not* part of this amendment, and existing IFM programs for the Atlantic sea scallop and groundfish fisheries are not affected.

The Mid-Atlantic Council voted in mid-December to postpone further action on the Omnibus Amendment and the mackerel alternatives pending completion of an ongoing electronic monitoring (EM) pilot project. NMFS is currently conducting the project with 12 volunteer vessels in the Atlantic herring and mackerel midwater trawl fisheries to evaluate the utility of EM as a monitoring tool. The project will run through most of 2017.

The New England Council, however, opted to move ahead with its portion of the decision-making process here at its Portsmouth, NH meeting.

The Council selected Alternative 2 for the first half of the Omnibus Amendment – the part that establishes



Electronic monitoring camera mounted on a commercial fishing vessel.
– Photo courtesy of NMFS



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the basic foundation of the amendment to standardize cost responsibilities and administrative requirements for industry-funded monitoring service providers.

The Council made clear that any new IFM programs developed under this portion of the Omnibus would need to be crafted through a full amendment, which has an extensive public hearing process, rather than a framework adjustment. Once an IFM program is in place, the Council did agree that a framework could be used to establish a quota set-aside program to help fund IFM measures. The Council further supported using a “Council-led deliberative prioritization process,” which means the Council, possibly in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic Council, would prepare analyses and set priorities for IFM issues rather than having NMFS take the lead. The Council also decided that any federal money used to fund administrative costs associated with IFM programs should be “equally weighted” among all the industry-funded monitoring programs that are in place for various fisheries.

Herring Alternatives: Next, the Council selected IFM alternatives for the Atlantic herring fishery – as allowed under the second half of the Omnibus Amendment – and reiterated that the measures apply *only* to Category A and B vessels using midwater trawl, purse seine, and small-mesh bottom trawl gear. The measures do *not* apply to “wing vessels” that don’t carry fish, and, to be clear, also do *not* apply to Category C and D boats.

Once the Council determines that electronic monitoring and portside sampling are an acceptable alternative to at-sea monitoring, then Category A and B vessels will be able to choose either:

- At-sea monitoring with a “combined coverage” target of 50% between the IFM and Standardized Bycatch Reduction Methodology (SBRM) programs; or
- A combination of EM and portside sampling with a coverage target of 50% in addition to SBRM.

The Council additionally supported: (1) the issuance of waivers if coverage is not available due to funding or logistical problems; (2) an exemption from IFM

Requirements for vessels that land less than 25 metric tons of herring; (3) applying 100% Northeast Fisheries Observer Program-level observer coverage for midwater trawl vessels fishing in groundfish closed areas; and (4) a reevaluation of the IFM herring requirements two years after implementation.

The New England Council will revisit the Omnibus Amendment in April, when it is expected to take final action to submit the document to NMFS. The Council also will discuss “next steps” with the Mid-Atlantic Council since action by both Councils is required before Omnibus alternatives can be implemented.

For more information on the amendment and to obtain related documents, visit:
https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/mediacenter/2016/september/20_ifm_public_hearings_and_comments.html



Atlantic herring being salted. A – NEFMC photo