



Policy for the use of Vessel Monitoring Systems in the Western Pacific Region

Introduction

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) has authority over the fisheries in the Pacific Ocean seaward of the State of Hawaii, Territory of American Samoa Archipelago, Territory of Guam, the Commonwealth of Mariana Islands, and possessions of the U.S. in the Pacific Ocean area – nearly 1.5 million square miles of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. The Council has adopted this policy to support the development and use of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS), which is a tool to remotely monitor a vessel's location, sailing direction, and speed through satellite transmissions. In the early 1990's, the Council pioneered the application of VMS for fishing vessels and now VMS is implemented in fisheries worldwide. The Council adopted its first VMS policy in 1992 and appropriate provisions of that policy have been maintained herein.

Under the Council's Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs), spatial management zones exist where fishing is either prohibited or restricted by vessel size or fishing gear. VMS is used by NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) to monitor a fishing vessel's position and compliance with spatial management regulations.

Given the rapid pace of technology, the term VMS, for the purposes of this policy, includes other similar tools used to remotely monitor fishing vessels.

Policy Statement

The Council recognizes that VMS is an effective technology for fisheries enforcement, but that it also includes other applications related to, data collection, communication, research, and safety at sea. The Council further acknowledges that fisheries enforcement and management needs may differ among fisheries and geographical areas under its jurisdiction as well as the requirements and rights of the region's indigenous people. Thus, it is the policy of the Council to:

Enforcement

Consider VMS when establishing annual or seasonal spatial management zones under the Council's FEPs, while cognizant of the various scales of fisheries and sizes of fishing vessels that operate in the region.

VMS Data

Maintain that VMS information be treated as confidential, consistent with applicable law.

Promote that domestic VMS and VMS required under international management measures be compatible.

Catch Reporting

Promote the use of VMS to provide logbook information in near real-time to support monitoring of fisheries subject to annual or seasonal catch limits.

Ownership, Maintenance, Replacement

Maintain that VMS hardware be the property of the federal government and that fishermen shall not be required to purchase, maintain, or replace VMS units.

Communication

Encourage the development of clear procedures for notifying fishermen if their VMS unit is not working.

Encourage the development of cost effective and easy to use systems whereby vessel owners can readily view their vessel's VMS data in near real time.

Safety at Sea

Support the development of technology to further enhance VMS applications for safety at sea while cognizant that VMS should not be solely relied on to indicate a vessel's identity or position for emergency purposes.

Research and Development

Promote the research and development of VMS technology to further the potential VMS applications for fisheries management.

Promote the development of VMS units that are tamper proof.

Consult with fishing community regarding the possibility that VMS information may be used for purposes other than enforcement.

PIAFAs and Foreign Fishing

Require VMS for any allowed foreign fishing in the U.S. EEZ of the Western Pacific Region under PIAFAs and that the costs of VMS be applied to the vessel owner or the vessel's flag state.

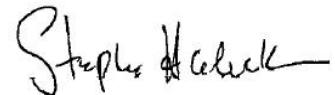
International Coordination

Pursue partnerships with regional fishery management organizations, Pacific Island governments, and other regional organizations and management bodies, to further the development and use of VMS in the region.

Council Review of VMS Issues

The Council, through its Enforcement/VMS standing committee, will encourage and assist in the development of VMS programs for fisheries managed under each FEP, as appropriate. The Council and its staff will consult with fishery participants when implementing or modifying VMS programs. Significant VMS decisions will be taken by the full Council and transmitted to NMFS via procedures established under the MSA.

Adopted by the Council on 13 October, 2010



Stephen Haleck
Chairman