

National Electronic Monitoring Workshop

The following is a brief summary of the National EM Workshop held in Seattle on January 8th-9th, 2014. Videos of the plenary sessions and a full workshop report will be posted on EMinformation.com as soon as they become available. To be notified when they are posted, please send an email to scott@fieldworkcommunications.com.

The National Electronic Monitoring Workshop was held 8-9 January in Seattle, WA. The workshop was organized by Dorothy Lowman, consultant and Chair of the Pacific Fishery Management Council, who worked with a steering committee of managers, scientists, fishing industry representatives, and conservation interests from around the country.

The workshop was designed to get people from diverse interests, fisheries, and regions to discuss how to move forward with implementing electronic monitoring in federal fisheries from around the country. The tone of the planning and workshop was: ***we know how to do pilot projects; energy now needs to be directed to implementing electronic monitoring as a viable tool in appropriate federal- waters fisheries.***

The goal of the workshop was to provide information and contacts that foster the integration of electronic monitoring into fishery monitoring systems. Objectives included:

- Gain a better understanding of the possible range of electronic monitoring applications
- Identify solutions to current challenges to integration of electronic monitoring
- Share lessons from each of our experiences with pilot studies and early design and implementation efforts
- Identify key program and design elements
- Discuss electronic reporting needs to support effective monitoring implementation plans
- Obtain tools to facilitate development of regional electronic monitoring implementation plans
- Build professional networks to exchange electronic monitoring information

The workshop was attended by about 150 people, most of whom were selected because of their interest in electronic monitoring, electronic reporting, and fishery dependent monitoring issues. The workshop format was for plenary sessions that discussed broad electronic monitoring issues (the 20,000 or 30,000 foot view) with breakout sessions on specific issues or geared to specific types of fishery monitoring needs (multispecies fisheries, high volume fisheries, small boats and recreational fishing, and protected species or rare events).

People left the meeting excited about the potential that electronic monitoring holds for fishery monitoring, a desire to advance discussions and implementation in appropriate fisheries applications, and a commitment and understanding of the need for cooperative, inclusive planning to successfully implement electronic monitoring systems in federally managed fisheries.

Take-away ideas from the workshop include:

1. Key elements to success for electronic monitoring programs
 1. Clear program objectives are needed upfront
 2. Need clear, shared definitions
 3. Scale program to value of fishery
 4. Develop technology, field services, and data services as a package
 5. Include all stakeholders in planning process from beginning
 - i. Include IT
 - ii. Include law enforcement
 - iii. Include service providers
 6. Need performance measures to determine program effectiveness
 7. Beware of over reliance on new technology or technologies beyond what is needed to meet program objectives, i.e. “beware of the shiny bauble”.

8. Consider incentives in program, including regulatory incentives
 - i. Positive incentives
 - ii. Negative incentives, i.e. do this or something draconian will happen
2. Each electronic monitoring application is unique but can use the same foundation; i.e. don't re-invent the wheel when considering new electronic monitoring programs.
3. Consider multiple uses for electronic monitoring data; e.g. bycatch monitoring, catch monitoring (when possible), uses by industry members, and for science purposes.
4. Testing new systems and technologies is likely but these should be viewed as "pre-implementation," (not redundant pilot programs) in the context of an electronic monitoring system that incorporates the elements of success listed above.
5. There is strong interest in developing programs that establish performance standards and then let industry and service providers figure out how to meet the standards.
6. There is value in adopting electronic monitoring in transitional steps; (i.e., adopting electronic monitoring for certain gears, vessel sizes or sectors within a fishery that are ready; phasing in implementation over time.