Candice L Harwood (VFA)

From: [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, 19 October 2025 2:40 PM
To: Candice L Harwood (VFA)
Subject: Submission for VMS for inshore commercial fishing

Hi Candice,

Submission: Importance of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) for Inshore Commercial Fishing Vessels with Ocean Access Licenses

Introduction

The sustainable management of marine resources is a shared responsibility between governments, industry, and the broader community. Inshore commercial fishing plays a vital role in regional economies, food supply, and coastal employment. However, effective oversight is crucial to ensure long-term ecological and economic viability. The implementation of **Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS)** on **inshore commercial fishing vessels** holding an **Ocean Access License** represents a practical and essential step towards improved fisheries management, compliance, and transparency.

1. Enhanced Fisheries Compliance and Enforcement

VMS enables real-time tracking of vessel movements, providing fisheries managers and compliance officers with accurate data on:

- Vessel location and activity patterns,
- Time spent in restricted or sensitive areas (e.g. marine parks, no-take zones),
- Entry and exit times for fishing zones under the Ocean Access License.

This capability strengthens enforcement and acts as a deterrent against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities. With VMS, regulatory bodies can respond more rapidly to suspected breaches, increasing the integrity of the licensing system.

2. Improved Resource Management and Sustainability

Real-time spatial data from VMS supports more informed decision-making by:

- Mapping fishing effort to assess pressure on fish stocks,
- Identifying potential conflicts between fisheries and conservation priorities,
- Assisting in the design and evaluation of spatial closures or seasonal restrictions.

By integrating VMS data with catch reporting and scientific research, agencies can develop adaptive management strategies that better align with ecological realities, ensuring the longevity of fisheries and marine biodiversity.

3. Level Playing Field and Industry Credibility

Mandatory VMS for all vessels under the Ocean Access License creates a **level playing field**, ensuring that all operators are held to the same standards. This reduces the risk of unfair advantages gained by non-compliant or opportunistic operators.
Additionally, public confidence in the seafood industry is increasingly linked to traceability and sustainability. VMS data can be used to demonstrate responsible fishing practices, strengthening market access and supporting industry reputation domestically and internationally.

4. Safety at Sea
While VMS is primarily used for compliance, it also enhances **vessel and crew safety**. In emergencies, VMS location data can be used by search and rescue services to respond quickly and accurately. This is particularly important for inshore fisheries operating in remote or dynamic coastal environments where communication infrastructure may be limited.

5. Cost-Effective and Scalable Technology
Modern VMS solutions are becoming more affordable, compact, and compatible with other electronic reporting tools. Implementation on inshore vessels is increasingly feasible, with minimal disruption to fishing operations. Where appropriate, VMS can be integrated with existing onboard systems such as electronic logbooks (e-logs) or Automatic Identification Systems (AIS).
To support adoption, regulatory bodies could consider staged implementation, subsidies, or co-investment models—particularly for smaller operators—to ensure equity and compliance.

Conclusion

Incorporating Vessel Monitoring Systems into the requirements for inshore commercial fishing vessels with Ocean Access Licenses is a forward-thinking and necessary evolution in fisheries governance. VMS supports compliance, sustainability, safety, and industry accountability—pillars essential to the future of both inshore fisheries and the broader marine environment.
We strongly encourage the relevant authorities to prioritize VMS implementation as part of a modern, transparent, and resilient fisheries management framework.

Thanks Mathew Nash