

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Evaluation of the NOAA Coastal Management Fellowship Program

**Coastal Services Center
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
Department of Commerce**

OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-xxxx

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary

As one of five NOAA Line Offices, NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS) works to observe, understand, and manage our nation's coastal and marine resources. NOS measures and predicts coastal and ocean phenomena, protects large areas of the oceans, works to ensure safe navigation, and provides tools and information to protect and restore coastal and marine resources and supports states in protecting resources and guiding economic development in coastal areas. NOS also supports training for state coastal managers.

The NOAA Coastal Services Center (Center) is one of eight program offices within NOS. One of the hallmarks of the CSC is the support provided to coastal managers and natural resource agencies to enhance awareness, understanding, and employment of the latest technology, information, and management strategies available in the field of coastal resource management. As one component of its efforts to build capacity within the coastal management community, the Center established the NOAA Coastal Management Fellowship Program in 1996. The program provides professional on-the-job education and training opportunities for post-graduate students in coastal resource management and policy. In addition, state coastal zone management programs receive technical assistance specific to their needs. NOAA Coastal Management Fellows provide states with assistance on projects that address pressing needs within the state, therefore enhancing NOAA's ability to continue to serve as the nation's premiere resource for coastal zone management issues. Through the fellowship program, NOAA is able to provide assistance to states in critical areas of need and also train future professionals who are qualified to work at the state and federal level.

Several features of the fellowship program make it attractive to both potential fellows and states. Fellows, who have recently earned masters or doctoral degrees, are matched with a federally approved state coastal zone management program and spend two years working onsite with state program staff. State coastal zone management programs, selected as fellowship hosts, receive a fellow to assist them in responding to coastal management issues that otherwise might go unaddressed. Fellows are afforded the opportunity to gain experience addressing state level

coastal resource management issues and dealing with federal management policies and regulations. Since its inception in 1996, the NOAA Coastal Management Fellowship Program has provided training to 52 fellows and assisted 19 state coastal zone management programs in addressing high priority state coastal zone issues.

Without input from fellowship stakeholders (current and past fellows and mentors, and Center partners), the Center would not be able to identify aspects of the program that enhance state coastal zone management programs nor determine how the fellowship impacts a fellow's choice to work in the coastal resource management and policy field at the state or federal level. Conducting this assessment will provide the Center with consistent information from stakeholders and enable Center staff to efficiently pursue their objectives, described above. The Center will be better positioned to develop fellowship requirements that meet the needs and requirements of stakeholders.

About the Proposed Data Collection

The Center requests a new, one-year clearance to conduct an assessment of the NOAA Coastal Management Fellowship Program. The proposed assessment will involve the following respondents: current and past fellows, current and past state coastal zone management program mentors, and Center partners affiliated with the program. The objectives of the assessment are to: (1) assess the Coastal Management Fellowship Program's process and structures and (2) determine if the program is successful in meeting its goals and objectives. The results of the assessment will be used by the Center to increase the quality, and possibly the number, of coastal resource management and policy professionals and better meet the high priority coastal zone management needs of states.

This assessment represents the first comprehensive assessment of the NOAA Coastal Management Fellowship Program. This is a new data collection. No other offices within NOAA and the National Ocean Service (NOS) have collected information from the universe of respondents this assessment will include. This assessment will provide the Center with an objective assessment of the implementation and outcomes of the fellowship program, the results of which will identify strengths and weaknesses of the program and recommendations for program enhancement.

This data collection supports the requirements of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972. The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), National Ocean Service, is responsible for implementing the CZMA, which Congress passed to address the growing concerns about the health of the nation's coastal resources. OCRM works to advance national coastal management initiatives, and to maintain and strengthen state coastal management through financial, policy and technical assistance. Additionally, the office works with state and territorial governments to implement their coastal management programs and find local solutions to problems that occur throughout the entire nation. Thirty-four states and territories have active coastal management programs.

As a project within the organizational structure of NOS, the projects assigned to CSC fellows supports the CZMA by enhancing the understanding of critical technical and/or policy-related

coastal management issues within their assigned states. While not legislatively mandated, this data collection supports enacted legislation. The results of this data collection will strengthen the fellowship program, which in turn supports requirements of the CZMA.

2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.

Through working with state coastal zone management programs and other partners, the Center remains abreast of coastal management issues, compiles and disseminates data, and provides partners with current, relevant information pertinent to the management of coastal resources. The purpose of this information collection is to identify strengths and weaknesses of the current fellowship program, including planning and implementation processes, to permit CSC to make program improvements and enhancements. The results of this information collection will permit the Center to help improve the nation's coastal zone management programs by building capacity among future coastal resource management and policy professionals and adding to the body of knowledge concerning coastal zone management. This effort will also provide the Coastal Services Center with valuable baseline data regarding fellowship program for use in future evaluations.

For example, this assessment will help CSC answer the following questions:

1. How effective was the Coastal Management Program in providing training to postgraduate students in coastal resource management and policy?
2. How effective was the assistance to the state coastal programs in improving, enhancing or augmenting coastal resource management and policy for the state?
3. What are the long-term benefits of the fellowship program? For example, did fellows tend to work for state or federal agencies after their fellowship?
4. Did projects performed in one state generalize to other states?

The proposed assessment is a new, one-time only data collection that will be completed within one year. Respondents will be asked to provide information only once. The assessment will begin as soon as OMB clearance is received. The majority of respondents are limited to individuals involved in the implementation of the fellowship program, including current and past fellows, current and past state coastal zone management program mentors, and Center partners—including: NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, the Coastal States Organization, NOAA National Sea Grant, State Sea Grant College Programs, and the Environmental Careers Organization. A separate survey has been developed for each group of respondents: fellows, state coastal zone management program mentors, Center partners affiliated with the fellowship program, and Sea Grant College Program directors. Sea Grant directors serve a unique role by receiving, filtering, and endorsing fellow applications during the application and review process. Respondents will be encouraged to complete surveys electronically, however surveys will be sent via conventional postal mail to respondents who do not have email. The questions asked of respondents in the instruments pertain specifically to the objectives of the assessment. As mentioned above, the assessment objectives are as follows: (1)

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collect similar data is being conducted within the agency. Additionally, no data collection efforts outside the agency have been made to collect this data.

5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

Respondents are neither small businesses nor small entities.

6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.

The NOAA Coastal Management Fellowship Program has been in effect for ten years and this project is the first assessment of the fellowship program. Without input from fellowship stakeholders (current and past fellows and mentors, and Center partners), the Center would neither be able to identify aspects of the program that enhance state coastal zone management programs nor determine how the fellowship impacts a fellow's decision to work in the coastal resource management and policy field at the state or federal level. Conducting this assessment will provide the Center with consistent information from stakeholders and enable Center staff to efficiently pursue their objectives, described above. The Center will be better positioned to develop fellowship requirements that meet the needs and requirements of stakeholders.

Also, during the period that clearance is requested, data collection will only occur once for each respondent. This is the least frequent data collection option. This one-time data collection will allow respondents to provide valuable information that will be used to evaluate and improve the fellowship program.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

The collection will be conducted in a manner consistent with OMB guidelines.

8. Provide a copy of the PRA Federal Register notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

The data collection notice for the Evaluation of the Coastal Fellowship Program was published in the *Federal Register*, volume 71, number 94, page 28307, on May 16, 2006. A copy of the Federal Register notice is included as Appendix A. There were no comments received from the public regarding this data collection.

Additionally, the Center engaged GEARS, an evaluation consulting firm, to assist in the development of survey instruments and methodology for this assessment. GEARS is experienced in managing and conducting assessments and provided expertise on issues including the availability of data, frequency of collection, clarity of instructions, recordkeeping, confidentiality, disclosure of data, reporting format, and necessary data elements.

Surveys to be used in this assessment were developed collaboratively by GEARS and the Center. Both GEARS staff and Center staff reviewed surveys to assess the clarity of instructions, the adequacy of questions, the format of survey questions, and the length of the surveys.

9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

This information collection effort will not make any payments, gifts, or reimbursements to survey respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

The proposed assessment does not collect personal data of a sensitive nature and therefore no assurance of confidentiality is required. Surveys do not ask respondents for nor contain any personal information. Any personal identifiers mistakenly placed on surveys by respondents will be deleted immediately upon receipt of the survey.

A statement is included on the first page of surveys that informs participants that their survey responses will be combined with other surveys and only aggregate information will be reported in findings. In addition, respondents will be informed that all survey data will be secured in a locked file cabinet at GEARS and protected to the extent allowed by the law. This statement will also assure participants that their participation in the assessment is voluntary and they may withdraw participation at any time without negative consequences. The assessment team will maintain data in the strictest confidence.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

The questionnaire contains no questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.

This assessment will be conducted for one year with an estimated 74 burden hours. The assessment will be targeted to approximately 161 respondents: current fellows, past fellows, current state coastal zone management program mentors, past coastal zone management program mentors, Center partners, and Sea Grant directors. Exhibit A.1 presents the hourly burden breakdown.

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Exhibit A-1 Estimated Hourly Burden

Respondent Type	Activity	Number of respondents to receive surveys	Response rate expected	Number expected to respond	Responses per respondent	Time per response	Total Burden
Current fellows	Opinion Survey	10	100%	10	1	35 min	6
Past fellows	Opinion Survey	52	75%	39	1	35 min	23
Current State Coastal Zone Management Program mentors	Opinion Survey	10	100%	10	1	40 min	7
Past State Coastal Zone Management Program mentors	Opinion Survey	52	75%	39	1	40 min	26
Center partners	Opinion Survey	4	100%	4	1	25 min	2
Sea Grant Directors	Opinion Survey	33	75%	25	1	25 min	10
Total		161		127			74

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in #12 above).

Responding to the questionnaire requires no recordkeeping. Return postage will be pre-paid by the Center. There are no additional respondent costs associated with start-up or capital investments. Additionally, there are no operational, maintenance or equipment respondent costs associated with continued participation in the assessment.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

The Center engaged GEARS to design, implement and report results for this assessment for \$73,351.72. This information collection effort is supported through external contract services for data collection and analysis and in-house staff time. The estimated total cost for this information collection is \$73,568. (i.e., contract services @\$73,351.72; 8 hours in-house staff time @\$216.00).

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB 83-I.

This is a new program.

16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

There are no plans to publish the results of this information collection.

Publication

Assessment findings will be summarized in a comprehensive Assessment Report and Executive Summary developed by GEARS for the Center. However, this assessment will not be published.

Analysis Plan

Data analysis will be supervised by Dr. Deborah Brome, Lead Project Evaluator, in consultation with Dr. Marie Mesidor, Evaluator. Data entry, file organization and data access and management will be supervised by Dr. Deborah Brome.

The assessment instruments will consist of both qualitative and quantitative data. An assessment coding manual will be developed by a two person team who will create and validate the coding system for the qualitative data. Qualitative data will be coded according to themes and reported using descriptive statistics and narratives. All data (qualitative coding and quantitative) entered into the database will be checked for its accuracy. This database will be used to both organize the data and provide statistical analyses (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequencies, etc.) where appropriate. The analytical software that will most likely be used is SPSS. For all quantitative data, means, standard deviations and frequencies will be computed. In addition, for those quantitative items measuring similar constructs, correlation matrices will be computed in the event that subscales are developed. Reliability coefficients will be computed for all subscales developed. For categorical or nonparametric variables, chi-square analyses will be conducted in comparing information obtained between groups. With appropriate sample sizes ($n \geq 10$), a comparison of mean scores will be conducted across respondent categories using analysis of variance or t-tests. GEARS final analysis will be reviewed by a senior statistician for statistical rigor and appropriateness.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.

The expiration date and OMB Control Number will be displayed on surveys.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19 of the OMB 83-I.

There are no exceptions to the certification statement identified in Item 19.