

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
BILLFISH TAGGING REPORT
OMB CONTROL NO.: 0648-0009**

A. JUSTIFICATION

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

The Billfish Tagging Program began in 1963 and is an integral part of the Billfish Research Program (Program) at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC). This Program is authorized under **16 U.S.C. 760(e)**, Study of migratory game fish; waters; research; purpose.

The SWFSC provides tagging supplies to individuals electing to tag and release the billfish they catch. The Billfish Tagging Report is issued with individual billfish tags and is imprinted with the number matching the accompanying tag. The Billfish Tagging Report is the primary mechanism by which these cooperating anglers and commercial fishers return the tagging and release information concerning the billfish they have tagged. Interested individuals participate in the Program strictly on a voluntary basis.

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.

The Program is conducted throughout the year to determine billfish habitat, mortality rates, migration patterns, feeding habits and growth rates. Fishery biologists investigating the health of billfish resources throughout the Pacific utilize data from this Program. Results aid in ongoing research concerning billfish resources and are published annually in the Billfish Newsletter.

Outreach efforts include contacting fishing clubs and asking that they provide tags to their members, distribution of the Billfish Newsletter, as well as an occasional local seminar demonstrating results of the tagging program and how they are being used to determine stock structure and other parameters important for assessing the status of the billfish resources.

As explained in the preceding paragraphs, the information gathered has utility. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. See response #10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. The information collection is designed to yield data that meet all applicable information quality guidelines. Prior to dissemination, the information will be subjected to quality control measures and a pre-dissemination review pursuant to Section 515 of Public Law 106-554.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.

Data is collected from observations taken at sea on small fishing boats. The data summarizes the actual fishing event that just occurred. Automated and/or electronic reporting at the time of tagging is not possible due to the variety in vessel capability. However, starting later in 2008 we will be implementing an online form through which the data can be submitted. Anglers are requested to complete the Billfish Tagging Report immediately; once they return to land they can either mail it to the SWFSC or send the data through the online form as soon as possible. It is estimated that up to 10% of the tag reports may be submitted electronically through the online form.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

This program is unique to the billfish angling community in that it provides free tagging supplies throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans and publishes its results annually. Billfish conservation became very popular during the early 1980s and several foreign and private conservation organizations began tagging programs. This program cooperates completely with these organizations so that research efforts are expanded and not duplicated.

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

The Program deals with individual anglers and commercial fishers cooperating in the Program and does not impact any business entity.

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

Fishery biologists at the SWFSC and elsewhere use Program results for the purpose of providing management advice. A break in the Program time line would jeopardize the usefulness of nearly 45 years of billfish tag and recapture data.

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

Response to the Billfish Tagging Report is consistent with OMB guidelines and completely voluntary.

8. Provide information on 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.

A Federal Register Notice published on November 8, 2007 (72 FR 63165) solicited comments on this renewal.

One comment was received that did not specifically address the estimated cost and burden of the Tagging Report. The individual suggested that the program be turned over to fishing clubs; however, that would not guarantee that the scientists would receive the information, and there are currently no fishing clubs volunteering to conduct such a program. Angler comments concerning the Program are also requested annually in the Billfish Newsletter, and other fishery laboratories and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide comments. Individual anglers occasionally provide positive comments while requesting tagging supplies and/or general information.

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

No payments are given to those returning the Billfish Tagging Report. Anglers who have tagged a billfish and submitted the Billfish Tagging Report are awarded a baseball cap if and when that particular billfish is recaptured.

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

Program data results are not confidential; they are public information. Anglers who tag more than a few fish each year are acknowledged by name in the Billfish Newsletter; however, the contact information of participating anglers is not made available to the public.

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.

No sensitive questions are asked.

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

Time to complete the Billfish Tagging Report card is about five minutes per response. Our active mailing list of taggers varies between 2,000 to 3,000 volunteers. The recent (2003-2006) annual average number of Billfish Tagging Report cards received was 1,210. The projected annual average is 1,250 responses. The estimated time burden is 104 hours (1,250 x 5 minutes/60 minutes = 104).

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).

There is no cost burden to the respondents. Postage is paid by the SWFSC if mailed from within the U.S. For those mailing from foreign countries the only cost is that of postage. While we do not have an estimate for this, it is expected to be less than \$100.00.

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

Annual cost to print the Billfish Tagging Report, provide baseball caps to anglers upon recapture of a tagged billfish, and postage is under \$1,000. This figure is based on actual expenses averaged over the last few years. Staff (2 GS11/12 level employees) spend about 30% of their time on the entire Program: $2 \times \$70,000.00 \times 30\% = \$42,000.00$. Included is staff time to analyze data, report results in-house, respond to data requests, prepare various manuscripts, prepare the Billfish Newsletter and respond to the Paperwork Reduction Act requirements. Total cost is \$43,000.00.

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

The recent (2003-2006) annual average number of Billfish Tagging Report cards received was 1,210. The projected annual average is 1,250 responses. The estimated total annual average is increased from the previous estimate of 750 responses due to increased interest in the program and greater outreach.

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

The Program is conducted on a calendar year with the Billfish Newsletter published in May of each year. The Billfish Newsletter is the method by which the SWFSC provides feedback to the fishing community and is written for cooperating anglers participating in the Program. Results of the International Angler Survey (OMB Control No.: 0648-0020) are also reported in the Billfish Newsletter. Content of the Billfish Newsletter varies annually but always includes angling effort by area and species captured, reported catches, results from the Billfish Tagging Program as well as general interest articles directed to the billfish angler.

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 will be displayed.

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

No exceptions are requested.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

This collection does not employ statistical methods.