

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
LARGE PELAGIC FISHING SURVEY
OMB CONTROL NO.: 0648-0380**

A. JUSTIFICATION

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

This action seeks to add a survey component (Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Characterization Survey) to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control No.: 0648-0380 which will characterize the highly migratory species fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean regions.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for monitoring and managing United States (U.S.) marine fisheries resources. Collection of information regarding fishing for large pelagic species (tunas, billfishes, swordfish, and sharks) is necessary to fulfill the following statutory requirements: Atlantic Tunas Convention Act ([16 U.S.C. 971 et seq.](#)), the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act ([16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.](#)), and to meet administrative requirements of the NMFS Marine Recreational Fishery Policy implemented to comply with Executive Order 12962 on Recreational Fisheries.

The Atlantic Tunas Convention Act at 16 U.S.C. 971d(c)(3)(I) provides the Secretary of Commerce the authority to “require any commercial or recreational fisherman to obtain a permit from the Secretary and report the quantity of catch of a regulated species” (attached, relevant sections). Section 303(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act specifies data and analyses to be included in Fishery Management Plans (FMP), as well as pertinent data, which shall be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce under the plan. Recommendation one of the NMFS Marine Recreational Fishery (MRF) Policy focuses on developing “a comprehensive data acquisition and analysis system (participation, catch, effort and socio-economic data) on a regular, continuing basis” in support of the Executive Order 12962 requirement to assess the implementation and evaluate achievements of the “Recreational Fishery Resources Conservation Plan.”

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act, signed into law in January 2007, require that the Secretary of Commerce, “establish a program to improve the quality and accuracy of information generated by the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS).” NMFS has organized a joint federal-state-community initiative to accommodate the requirements and timelines specified by Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and to address recommendations by the National Research Council in their 2006 report titled “Review of Recreational Fisheries Survey Methods.” This new initiative, called Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), established four work groups to address specific shortcoming identified with the current MRFSS program. The Highly Migratory Species Work Group has been specifically charged with improving and expanding existing recreational data collection programs for large pelagic (i.e., highly migratory) species to meet management needs. The MRFSS is currently conducted on the Atlantic coast, Gulf of Mexico, Puerto Rico and Hawaii. Because highly migratory species are only sought on a relatively small proportion of the total marine recreational angler fishing trips made, the fishing effort directed at such species, and the resulting angler catches are generally not estimated very

precisely or accurately by the MRFSS. Therefore, the Large Pelagics Survey (LPS) was designed as a specialized survey that would focus specifically on the recreational fishery directed at large pelagic, also called highly migratory, species. This specialization has allowed higher levels of sampling needed to provide more precise and accurate estimates of pelagic fishing effort and catches of large pelagic species. However, due to funding limitations the LPS has only been conducted from Maine through Virginia in past years. Therefore, despite its significant limitations the MRFSS is still the primary data source for large pelagic recreational catch and effort in the South Atlantic, Gulf and Caribbean sub-regions.

HMS Characterization Survey

This action seeks to add the HMS Characterization Survey as a new component under OMB Control No.: 0648-0380. The proposed additional component will characterize the HMS recreational fisheries in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean. Characterization studies are an important initial step in the development and implementation of full-scale catch and effort data collection programs that can be used for fishery monitoring and management. Information obtained from such studies is often essential in selecting the appropriate methodology and in defining the scope of new data collection programs. The anticipated long-term benefit of this project is improved accuracy, precision and reliability of highly migratory recreational fisheries data collected in the Southeast United States.

The characterization survey will be conducted throughout the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean in an effort to improve HMS data accuracy and precision in these regions. HMS characterization information will be collected primarily for the private boat sector. An attempt will be made to administer the survey to all permit holders in the HMS Angling and Atlantic Tunas General categories. The HMS charter boat fishery in Texas will also be characterized since existing data on HMS charter boat fishing in Texas is lacking.

The HMS characterization questionnaire will include questions related to the following:

- Approximate number of HMS trips vessel made in past 12 months,
- Approximate percent (or number) breakdown of 12-month trips by
 - access site type (public/private, boat ramp/marina, etc.)
 - site name
 - month
 - species targeted
 - departure and return time blocks
 - areas fished, and
 - tournaments participated in,
- Estimated number of fish landed and released in past 12 months (select species only).

Notification letters will be mailed to all representatives of vessels that have been selected for the survey one week prior to the week the vessel will be contacted for an interview. The notification letter will serve the following purposes: 1) inform each vessel representative that he/she has been selected for participation in the HMS characterization survey, 2) provide a brief description of the project and the purpose or objectives of the survey, 3) inform each vessel representative of the date(s) when they will be called for an interview, 4) provide respondents with the toll-free number and instructions for scheduling an interview, and 5) provide respondents with contact information for a NMFS representative to contact with additional questions about the project.

A minimum of 6 call attempts will be made to contact each vessel representative selected for the survey. Telephone calls will be made during the time of day that maximizes the potential to contact vessel operators. Dialing effort will include both daytime and nighttime attempts with no calls attempted after 9:00 PM (local time).

Current Surveys under this information collection, with no requested changes to questions or burden:

Large Pelagics Telephone Survey

The telephone survey collects data to determine on a weekly basis the average number of large pelagic fishing trips per active boat in the recreational large pelagics fishing fleet. The survey is conducted weekly by interviewing a random sample of charter boat captains and private boat owners (bi-weekly for private boats) who have obtained permits that allow them to fish for large pelagic fishes.

Large Pelagics Dockside Intercept Survey

The dockside intercept survey collects data needed to determine the average weekly catches per charter and private boat trips of bluefin tuna (BFT) by market category and of other large pelagic fishes by species or species group. The survey is conducted continuously over the course of the fishing season by intercepting and interviewing charter boat captains and private boat owners who have just finished a fishing trip for large pelagic fishes. Individuals interviewed would be selected at random during 2 to 8 hour field assignments distributed randomly across fishing access sites and days, where expected numbers of active fishing vessels would weight selection of fishing sites. Response is mandatory for persons holding fishing permits and for persons landing regulated species. The questionnaire is designed to obtain information on the fishing methods, locations and catches of all large pelagic species.

Biological Sampling

Supplemental sampling may be conducted for collecting supplemental length and weight information on certain key management species (e.g., bluefin tuna). Data collection for this survey will be unique not only for data obtained but also in the number of species encountered on an assignment. Biosampling consists of intercepting captains/mates/owners at weighing or cleaning stations who have just finished fishing trips for large pelagic fishes and recording various lengths and weights by species. Most of the information collected during a biological sampling assignment is obtained directly from the fish rather than the angler/captain, thus the reporting burden for the respondents is extremely small.

Headboat Survey

Headboats (also known as party boats) are vessels that take anglers fishing for a relatively modest fee paid on an individual basis and tend to be licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard to carry more than six passengers. There is a small component of the Atlantic headboat fleet that, among other more usual trips, seasonally schedules trips targeted at large pelagics (e.g., bluefin, yellowfin, and bigeye tunas). The Headboat Survey is conducted for collecting data

needed to determine, on a weekly basis, the total catch by headboats of bluefin tuna by size category and of other large pelagic fishes by species. This component includes both telephone interviews with headboat captains and at-sea sampling aboard headboats during large pelagic trips.

North Carolina Winter BFT Tuna Dockside Survey

The primary purpose of the NC Winter BFT Dockside Survey is to collect catch data needed to generate estimates of the recreational fishing effort directed at large pelagic species and the actual recreational catch of BFT and other large pelagics. Boat captains returning from large pelagic fishing trips are interviewed to obtain catch per unit effort.

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 applicable Information Quality Guidelines.

NMFS, regional fishery management councils, interstate marine fisheries commissions, and state fishery agencies use the data in developing, implementing and monitoring fishery management programs. Failure to conduct these data collections would prevent the Secretary from meeting statutory requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. In addition, NMFS would be unable to implement Recommendation One of its Marine Recreational Fisheries (MRF) Policy with a resulting loss in service and credibility to the MRF constituency. Catch and effort statistics are fundamental for assessing the influence of fishing on any stock of fish. The quantities taken, the fishing effort, and both the seasonal and geographic distributions of the catch and effort are required for the development of regional management policies and plans. Accurate and timely catch statistics collected over the range of a species must be used in association with biological studies to perform the stock assessments necessary for monitoring the effectiveness of fishery management planning for optimum yield. Several large pelagic species are now being managed under FMP quota or landings limit systems, which include recreational fishery components. For example, this collection has been the key source of data used to monitor recreational quotas for the harvest of BFT in the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England regions.

This collection, if funding allows full implementation, would provide coastwide information on quantity, species composition, and size distribution of catch. Such information is not available from any other source. For example, catch distributions and harvested size distributions obtained in this data collection have formed the basis of the FMP developed for tunas, swordfish and sharks of the Atlantic Ocean.

It is anticipated that the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support publicly disseminated information. As explained in the preceding paragraphs, the information gathered has utility. NMFS 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 of other forms of information technology.

A computer assisted telephone interview system is used to minimize interview time and ensure accurate recording of responses. LPS Dockside interview forms are scanned using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology for maximum efficiency and data accuracy. The methodological approach for the LPS has been developed and refined over numerous years, employing the experience of NMFS statisticians and contractors in statistical sampling and survey methods. State-of-the-art interviewing methods have been used to minimize response times: computer assisted telephone interviewing programs have such time-saving capabilities as pre-filling responses that are then confirmed with the respondent, allowing interviewers to select standard responses from drop-down lists (reduces key entry time on the phone), and improving the flow of the interview when there are complicated ship patterns. These are just a few examples.

None of the surveys included in this submission can be submitted via the Worldwide Web. Most of the proposed data collections require interviewer-mediated reporting of data by respondents in order to minimize non-response and maximize accuracy of the statistics estimated from the data.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

NMFS has the lead Federal responsibility for collection of data from marine recreational fishermen and coordinates informational needs with other agencies. NMFS has also worked with State fishery agencies each year to coordinate data collection efforts and avoid duplication. In some cases, NMFS employs State personnel under contract to conduct field interviewing. A specialized data collection such as the LPS overlaps to a minor extent with NMFS' more comprehensive MRFSS and its related data collections. Such overlap is minimal because the MRFSS is designed to cover marine recreational fishing for all finfish species, including many sites on inland bays and estuaries. Because large pelagic species typically occur further offshore, requiring larger vessels and specialized gear, the participants tend to use specific ports located at points of ocean access. Contacts with anglers who fished for large pelagic species are relatively rare in the MRFSS samples and both the LPS and the MRFSS would contact very few respondents. However, anglers who fish for large pelagic species, but also fish for other species, are not excluded from the MRFSS sampling because representative sampling of their fishing trips in relation to other marine recreational angler fishing trips is necessary to avoid biasing catch estimates for any given species.

NMFS also requires anglers to report their landings of Atlantic BFT directly via toll-free number, via the Internet, or via landings cards in the states of North Carolina and Maryland for real-time quota monitoring. Although these other data collections overlap to a minor extent with the LPS (i.e., only trips landing BFT are affected), none of them collect information on all the other finfish species caught on large pelagic fishing trips. The LPS is the only survey designed to obtain accurate and precise marine recreational fishery catch information for all large pelagic species. In addition, to the extent overlap occurs (i.e., a person directly reporting BFT also is selected for a dockside or telephone interview), the information is useful to assess compliance

with the direct reporting requirement. Therefore, data from these other programs have been used in a complementary manner along with LPS data.

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

Charter and headboat businesses are frequent respondents due to the high level of fishing effort relative to private recreational vessels. The survey instrument has been restricted in length to minimize response time per interview, and randomized sampling will distribute dockside reporting burdens among individual charter or headboat operators.

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

An annual survey of recreational anglers is required to monitor changing conditions in the fishery and support modifications in fishery regulations for each fishing year. A continuous time series of data is scientifically essential. Start up costs in hiring and training of interviewers and in overhauling the site selection frame for biannual surveys would greatly exceed the budgeted amount for the LPS and reduce funds available to collect sufficient interviews to meet statistical objectives.

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

The collection is 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.

A Federal Register Notice published on February 4, 2008 (73 FR 6483) solicited public comment on this collection. One comment was received. The commenter suggests that the agency estimates fish landings and sizes based entirely on what the fishermen tell them they caught. This is not the case. The Large Pelagics Intercept Survey interviewers inspect catches, identify fish to the species level, and take length measurements of landed fish as part of the routine dockside interviews.

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

Neither payments nor gifts will be provided to respondents.

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

Responses are kept confidential as required by section 402(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens and NOAA Administrative Order 216-100, Confidentiality of Fisheries Statistics, and will not be released for public use except in aggregate statistical form without identification as to its source. Section 402(b) stipulates that data required to be submitted under an FMP shall be confidential and shall not be released except to Federal employees and Council staff responsible for FMP monitoring and development or when required under court order. Data such as personal addresses and phone numbers will remain confidential.

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 questions of a sensitive nature are requested in this collection of information.

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

The total annual burden for the LPS is estimated at 4,869 hours: the HMS Characterization Survey adds 2,500 to the current total but one hour of the current total is being removed due to a rounding up error in the last request. There will be a total estimated 34,457 responses (10,000 added to current total) by 18,000 unduplicated respondents (1,000 added to current total).

An estimated 10,000 permit holders will be asked to participate in the characterization survey. Of these approximately 1,000 will be new respondents who will not participate in any of the other survey components. The response burden is estimated to average 15 minute per interview for a total of 2,500 burden hours.

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).

These data collections will incur no cost burden on respondents beyond the costs of response time.

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

At a fully funded level, the average annual cost to the Federal government is approximately \$1,485,000, divided as follows: \$1,285,000 in contract award money and \$200,000 in professional staff, overhead and computing costs.

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

The increase of 2,500 hours is due to the addition of the HMS Characterization Survey component. One hour was subtracted from the current burden, to correct a mistakenly rounded up figure.

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

All data collected and analyzed will be included in annual catch reports to International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and several documents frequently produced in support of NMFS rulemakings (e.g., Environmental Assessments, Regulatory Impact Reviews, Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Reports). It is also planned that catch summaries will be reprinted in a format available on the web page of the Division of Fisheries Statistics, Office of Science and Technology, National Marine Fisheries Service (<http://www.st.nmfs.gov/stl>). Additional summaries of data may be included in the annual NMFS publication "Fisheries of the United States".

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.

Not seeking approval to not display expiration date.

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 of OMB 83-I.