

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
COOPERATIVE GAME FISH TAGGING REPORT
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0247**

A. JUSTIFICATION

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

The Cooperative Game Fish Tagging Program was initiated in 1971 as part of a comprehensive research program resulting from passage of [P.L. 86-359](#), Study of Migratory Game Fish, and other legislative acts under which the National Marine Fisheries Service operates. The Cooperative Tagging Center (formerly the Cooperative Game Fish Tagging Program) attempts to determine the migratory patterns and other biological information of billfish, tunas, red drum, tarpon, amberjack, cobia, king mackerel, and swordfish by having anglers tag and release their catch.

The Fish Tagging Report card is a necessary part of the tagging program. Fishermen volunteer to tag and release their catch. When requested, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provides the volunteers with fish tags for their use when they release their fish. Usually a group of five tags is sent at one time, each attached to a Report card, which is pre-printed with the numbers of the first and last tags which are attached, and has spaces for the respondent's name, address, date, and club affiliation (if applicable).

When the angler releases a fish, he takes the Fish Tagging Report card with a tag attached, removes the numbered tag, applies the tag to the fish, and then mails the completed card (whose list of numbers includes one matching the tag number) to NMFS.

When a tagged fish is recaptured, the tag has the address of NMFS and a tag number. The person with the tagged fish can mail the tag to NMFS, where information on the fish is recorded and matched with the release data. This activity is covered by OMB Control No. 0648-0259, Tag Recapture Card.

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.

Information on each species is used by NMFS to determine migratory patterns, distance traveled, stock boundaries, age, and growth. These data are necessary input for developing management criteria by regional fishery management councils, states, and NMFS. The tag report cards are necessary to provide tags to the volunteer angler, record when and where the fish was tagged, the species, its estimated length and weight, tag number, and information on the tagger for follow-ups if the tagged fish is recovered.

Failure to obtain these data would make management decisions very difficult and would be contrary to the NMFS Marine Recreational Fishing policy objectives.

Anglers are made aware of our tagging program through several forms of media: newspaper and magazine articles, through both The Billfish Foundation and the Southeast Fisheries Science

Centers websites, peer review papers, and by word of mouth. Anglers who wish to obtain tag kits or report recaptured tags can contact the Cooperative Tagging Center via phone at 800-437-3936, or via written request sent to:

Cooperative Tagging Center
75 Virginia Beach Drive
Miami, FL 33149.

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 or other forms of information technology.

No other satisfactory method of obtaining movement information on oceanic pelagic fish has been identified. Although more sophisticated electronic tags exist, their expense prohibits their use in this program. Automated data entry by persons tagging fish isn't practical; the information is best entered at the time of tagging on fishing vessels.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

No duplication was evident during consultations with other conservation agencies. No similar information is available except what has been developed by this program.

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

Small entities are not involved.

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

The usefulness of this program would be compromised if the collection of data did not take place on a continual basis. It would be impossible to track trends in fish movement, stock definitions, and growth rates. In addition, a less than annual frequency would have an adverse effect on the voluntary participation rate.

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

This collection is consistent with OMB guidelines, except that reports may be submitted more often than quarterly - whenever tagging takes place.

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 January 22, 2008 (73 FR 3696) solicited public comment on this renewal.

One comment was received. The commenter suggested that there is no reason to continue this project, because in the past 50 years we should have learned fish migration patterns and fish do not change their migration patterns.

The fact is that the Cooperative Tagging Program is an essential tool used by NOAA and International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to determine stocks and quotas. Sometimes there are shifts in migration patterns and fishing effort. Over time, more fishing hot spots are being discovered, and tagging in these areas sheds new light on how the fish are interacting with these areas. We also continue to learn more about the longevity of these fish. The tagging program has discovered that sailfish live more than twice as long as previously thought. Lastly, the cooperative tagging continues to be a great outreach program, where scientists can continue to work with the public to further our knowledge of these vulnerable species.

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

Tag release participants receive acknowledgment letters after submitting release data and a tag history letter upon the tag's recapture. Tag recapture participants receive a tag history letter and a Cooperative Tagging Center baseball cap as a reward.

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

Data on names and addresses are included in the Commerce/NOAA-6, Fishermen's Statistical Data Privacy Act system of records and are protected as Privacy Act records. Handling procedures are described in various NOAA Directives. Assurance of confidentiality is included in the information provided with the tagging report.

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.

Estimated responses per year: 12,000
Mean time/response: 0.03 hours or 2 minutes
Total hours: 400 (12,000 x 2 minutes/60 minutes).

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).

None.

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

Annualized cost to the Federal Government. Annual cost of operation of the Cooperative Tagging Center:
Equipment = \$40,000
Labor = \$97,800

GS 14 (0.3yr) = \$31,400
GS 11 (0.5yr) = \$30,000
GS 9 (0.5yr) = \$26,000
Contractor = \$10,400

Total cost = \$137,800.

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

There is an adjustment from 360 hours to 400 hours, as the time per response is more accurately shown as 2 minutes (formerly 1.8 minutes).

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

A summary of tagging effort is produced annually. Data is used in scientific studies and journal articles.

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 applicable.

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

There are no exceptions.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

This collection does not employ statistical methods.