

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT  
NOAA CUSTOMER SURVEYS  
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0342**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

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

This is a request for renewal of a generic clearance for voluntary customer surveys to be conducted by NOAA program offices. In accordance with [Executive Order 12862](#), the [National Performance Review](#), and good management practices, NOAA offices seek to be able to continue to gather customer feedback on services and/or products, which can be used in planning for service/product modification and prioritization.

Under this generic clearance, individual offices would continue use of approved questionnaires and develop new questionnaires, as needed, by selecting subsets of the approved set of collection questions and tailoring those specific questions to be meaningful for their particular programs. These proposed questionnaires would then be submitted through a fast-track request for approval process. A proposed questionnaire would then be submitted to the NOAA Clearance Officer. If the latter finds that the proposal appears to be consistent with the generic clearance, the proposal would be forwarded through the Department of Commerce to NOAA's OMB Desk Officer for fast-track review. *The generic clearance will not be used to survey any bodies NOAA regulates unless precautions are taken to ensure that the respondents believe that they are not under any risk for not responding or for the contents of their responses; e.g. in no survey to such a population will the names and addresses of respondents be required. Currently there are no such surveys being submitted for approval.*

Two sets of survey questions (attached at the end of this document) are used for generation of program-level questionnaires:

1) "Quantitative Questions" seeks to obtain numerical ratings from respondents on their satisfaction with various aspects of the product or service they obtained – satisfaction with the quality of the product, the courtesy of the staff, the format of and documentation for data received, and similar standard types of questions. The offices using such questions are able to determine which aspects of their program need improvement, or have improved. The rating system is intended to aid the respondents in identifying their relative level of satisfaction in particular areas, and is not generally intended to be used to establish numerical performance goals or as part of any complex statistical analyses over time. The potential benefits of the latter are outweighed by the difficulties in ensuring that the data is unbiased and fully representational of customers.

2) "Qualitative Questions" are more focused on who is using the product and service, how it is being used, and the medium or format in which the respondent would like to see data provided. The respondent is also given an opportunity to make specific suggestions on what new products or services should be offered or on how existing products or services could be improved.

**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 responses to the quantitative questionnaires will be used by the sponsoring program office to determine the customers' satisfaction with the level of service and products delivered, identifying perceived weaknesses in those products or services. Information such as this will be used to help direct program improvement efforts.

The uses of the qualitative questions are somewhat different. Rather than seeking information on the degree of customer satisfaction, the objectives are more complex. Questions 1, 5, 6, and 7 seek information on what product/service was received, suggestions about improving the product or its format, and suggestions for other products or services. This information will assist the program office in better identifying the needs of customers by providing more specific data. For instance, responses concerning formats will be used to help determine which products the users are most interested in seeing through the program website. Questions 2, 3, 4, and 9 seek information that will help the program office identify the types of users for specific products and how they use those products.

The NOAA line offices (National Ocean Service (NOS), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS), National Weather Service (NWS) and Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) have been expending significant effort to review, report on, and act on the information gathered from their surveys. Many programs have used the NOAA Website Customer Survey, posted on their individual program area sites, soliciting responses specifically about those sites. Examples of how the response information is utilized include a wide variety of modifications made to the content, scope and navigation of the program websites.

Some surveys solicit comments on how to maintain or improve access to program data. Others provide information about customer usage and their diversity, and allow notification to subsets of user respondents of program or data changes applicable to them, rather than broadcasting emails to the complete user universe. Still others gather feedback on experimental products, to be used in product modification as indicated.

The *currently approved* surveys for which NOAA is requesting renewal are listed in the table below. Following are examples of how information collected by specific surveys has been used. Copies of all surveys have been posted in ROCIS.

<b>Survey Name</b>	<b>Annual/ Annualized Responses</b>	<b>Burden Hours</b>
1. NOAA Website Customer Satisfaction ( <i>administered through National Ocean Service (NOS), all line offices other than National Weather Service (NWS), results sorted by and available to each participating program</i> )	1,839 (5 min)	153
2. NOAA Website Customer Satisfaction (NWS)	7,010 (5 min)	584
3. NWS - Experimental Products/Services	24,050 (5 min)	2,004
4. NWS National Climatic Data Center - North American Drought Monitor	30 (5 min)	2
5. NWS International Flight Folder Documentation Program	67 (20 min)	22
6. Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) - Tropical Atmosphere Ocean Array Web Data Distribution	6,259 (1 min)	104
7. OAR - Ocean Surface Current Analyses – Real Time Data Feedback Request Form	515 (1 min)	9
8. NOS – Chart Users Survey	1,000 (15 min)	250
9. NOS Coastal Services Center - Coastal Decision-Support Tool, Data and Information Resource, and Technical Assistance Customer Survey – <i>approved 10-4-07, change approved 5-7-08, no results to report yet</i>	184 (20 min)	61
10. NOS National Geodetic Survey County Scorecard, Phase 3	400 (15 min)	100
11. National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS) Data Center Customer Satisfaction Survey	17,610 (3 min)	881
12. NESDIS Washington Volcanic Ash Advisory Center Products and Services Customer Survey – <i>recently approved (6-3-08)</i>	38(15 min)	10
13. NESDIS Office of Satellite Data Processing and Distribution - National/Naval Ice Center Customer Feedback Survey – <i>recently approved (3-31-08)</i>	98 (10 min)	16
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>59,100</b>	<b>4,196</b>

The **NOAA Website Customer Satisfaction survey** is administered by the NOS and implemented on 18 separate Websites, for programs under NOS, NMFS, NESDIS and OAR. Data is collected into a single database, separated by the individual Website on which it is implemented. An administrator is able to view survey results for each Website and act upon

these results as appropriate. The following provide examples as to how the survey data has or will be used:

**Survey implemented on:** <http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>

One example of how the customer satisfaction survey results have been used to better the Ocean Explorer Website, came from a text response to Question 12, Do you have suggestions about improving the content and organization of our site? “In the FAQ there was reference to a "Large Images" collection, in which could be found high resolution images. I was unable to find that section.”. The respondent asked for an easier way to find high resolution images. As a result, an addition was made to the captions of all images in the galleries that had high resolution versions available. This addition was: (HR) = “High Resolution” image available.

**Survey implemented on: National Ocean Service** <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov>

The National Ocean Service Website was last redesigned five years ago. Beginning the summer of 2008 we will begin work to completely overhaul the site and will use comments from the survey to begin our work. The following two comments were received from a text response to Question 12, “I would like to find a way to contact you via internet or phone.” and “make contact information a little more easier, with the ability to upgrade or change information”. Both comments received will make us focus on how we provide contact information on our Website and to make sure that it is clearly accessible to our visitors. There are other comments from text responses to question 12 that tell us that we should focus on social media on our site to make it more accessible. We will continue to use the survey results to validate the changes we make and continue to update to meet the demands of our visitors.

## **National Weather Service**

### **Website Customer Satisfaction and Experimental Products/Services Surveys**

The generic website surveys are used by local web content providers, and Regional and National web managers, to improve usability of National Weather Service (NWS) Web pages to better meet user needs and expectations. The surveys have been used to support greater standardization of navigation across multiple office sites, to improve user interfaces to forecast and warning information, and to collect comments from users on accessibility of data and information. Many times, the survey comments have been useful in improving Web applications and page coding to improve performance and reduce server demands. Since July 31, 2005 there have been 7,009 generic website satisfaction survey responses submitted.

NWS also makes extensive use of the survey to collect user feedback on proposed changes, additions, or terminations of Official and Experimental Products/Services. Under NOAA’s Partnership Policy, we are required to collect user feedback on changes to environmental information and services. For proposed new products and services, the survey responses have provided invaluable feedback from private and commercial users, as well as government partners, to local, Regional, and National decision makers. Survey allows for fairness and openness in proposed changes, and assists the decision makers in determining what actions and services are appropriate for NWS to provide. All survey responses are carefully evaluated and considered in determining the appropriate action. For proposed termination of services/products,

the surveys have provided user input, allowing NWS to ensure data requirements were met while still being able to consolidate Web services. Since July 31, 2005 there have been 24,050 Customer Survey responses for Official and Experimental Products/Services.

**The North American Drought Monitor Customer** survey is available at:  
<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/monitoring/drought/nadm/survey.php>.

The North American Drought Monitor (NADM) customer survey form is being used to build a database of user impressions regarding the usefulness and accessibility of the NADM website and associated drought monitoring products. To date it has proven helpful in gaining a clearer understanding of the usefulness of the NADM monthly drought monitoring products to NOAA's customers and for the identification of areas for improvement to better meet user needs. Included among areas targeted for improvement based on user feedback is more timely dissemination of the monthly NADM maps and increased frequency from monthly to bi-weekly products.

### **International Flight Folder Documentation Program**

This survey was first completed during 2006, and will be repeated periodically. The first issuance of this survey was primarily used to gauge which of the program's weather products were important to their customers' international flight operations and if they were aware of the automated product request line. There were also questions that asked what other methods for obtaining weather they use, if any. From the results, the program learned which products were essential to customers' weather packages and it was clear that the service was important to customers' operations. Results also showed that several users do not solely rely on this program for their weather information and most have other sources for supplementary or backup purposes. These sources were paid providers, various internet sites, or their own internal company weather offices. Nearly a quarter of the responders did not know about the automated request line. This prompted the program to submit instructions on its use to all customers and to post them on the program website.

### **Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR)**

**The Tropical Atmosphere Ocean (TAO) Project** survey is at  
[http://www.pmel.noaa.gov/tao/data\\_deliv/reg.html](http://www.pmel.noaa.gov/tao/data_deliv/reg.html).

The TAO Array Web Data Distribution feedback request form is used as a metric of customer usage and diversity of users of TAO/TRITON/PIRATA/RAMA data. Feedback helps us improve the product and the website delivery mechanisms to better meet users specific research needs. In one recent instance, survey data allowed us to communicate with a small number of impacted users over an error identified in a small subset of older data, resulting in a corrected dataset being made available to them.

**The Ocean Surface Current Analyses – Real Time (OSCAR)** survey is at  
<http://www.oscar.noaa.gov/datadisplay/datadownload.htm>.

The OSCAR Data feedback request form is used as a metric of customer usage and of users diversity. The information has allowed the OSCAR project to assess the uses to which the data

is being put in order to evaluate the current usefulness of the data and the ways in which the website can be improved to provide better customer service and satisfaction. User suggestions have resulted in our expanding the geographic coverage of the dataset, the resolution of the data provided, and improved the website functionality.

## **National Ocean Service (NOS)**

### **Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) Training Assessment**

This survey is has been completed and is not included in this renewal request; however, the following summary demonstrates the planning value of the survey.

#### **1. Need for Training**

The results from this survey showed that 88% percent of participants think their organizations, or organizations with whom they work, are in need of EBM professional development training. Almost 92% of respondents indicated that they or someone in their organization would attend a two-to-four day EBM course.

#### **2. Training Format**

The preferred course format indicated in this survey was for participants from a particular place to learn how to formulate a strategic plan for implementing EBM. It would seem that the most benefit might derive from structured interactive workshops. These could be structured as part of training for community members, science experts, and relevant agency staff members from a defined area, followed by an interactive problem-solving workshop to actually identify and address locally relevant issues. Another format suggestion in our survey results was a preference for specific, real-world examples as the primary technique for the training: "...the inclusion of practical applications and real-world examples of EBM. These include examples of success and failure, and how EBM worked, caused the problem, or may have thwarted a problem if implemented."

#### **3. Training Content**

This survey indicated a wide array of training needs. Similarly, a study conducted by the EBM Tools (EBMT) Network (a Non-Government Organization) found a strong interest in developing capacity in almost all EBM sectors and processes. Thus, the Coastal Services Center audience possesses needs similar to those in broader coastal and terrestrial settings.

The following content areas were prevalent and may serve as the beginning focus of content development areas:

##### **a. Collaborative Process**

Seventy-seven percent of respondents said that they would like to apply improved skills from EBM training to resolving complex issues through the collaborative process. The EBMT survey reported a strong interest in developing capacity in engaging community and stakeholders in group decision making. Collaborative process may also be a useful tool to help with a key reported obstacle to implementation of EBM. In this survey, 72% of respondents said that getting different local, state, and federal agencies with different institutional climates and

mandates to work together was the biggest obstacle to implementing EBM. The focus on a common vision and goal established through collaborative process can foster positive governance and institutional relationships. This call for collaborative process capacity building fits well with 31 existing NOAA Coastal Service Center strengths and reinforces a section of course development the Center began before gathering the survey information.

#### b. Ecosystem Function and Sustainability

The highest training need in this survey was how to incorporate dynamic ecosystem processes or ecological sustainability into EBM decision making. One approach that training could take to address this issue is to include instruction that would facilitate the development of conceptual ecological models: models that would help identify desired ecosystem attributes and services, the primary drivers and stressors on the system, and the connections of stressors to attributes and services through causal linkages. These models would help practitioners identify what they know and don't know about the system, become the basis for adaptive management actions, and provide a way to move forward without complete ecosystem function knowledge.

#### c. EBM Process

Also very high on the list of training needs of survey respondents were how to plan and develop an EBM approach to management, and how to implement such an approach. The EBMT survey results reported the lack of established methods for implementing EBM as one of the most severe implementation obstacles. A conceptual EBM procedural framework is currently under development and should soon be available for use (Kimberly Heiman, Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea, personal communication). Draft versions of the framework indicate that it will work well as a training aid and as the center of a module on a practical EBM process.

This survey clearance has provided the Coastal Services Center with extremely useful information as we move forward with EBM course development.

**Chart Users Survey:** NOAA is responsible for producing and distributing the nautical charting products covering the coastal waterways of the United States and its territories. The users of these navigational products can be broadly described as commercial mariners and recreational boaters.

This survey was conducted in 2006 and will be conducted again in 2008. Answers to survey questions by users of NOAA's nautical products have been used to revise/modify these products and services to better meet user needs. One specific example is that the program has made the decision to move forward with a modernization effort for the US Coast Pilot publication, moving it to an online format.

#### **National Climatic Data Center's National Geodetic Survey (NGS) County Scorecard**

Using the information gathered from this survey in the past two years, NGS has:

1. Reviewed and strengthened the NGS Workshop Program based on feedback.

2. Scheduled a State Plane Coordinates and Datum Transformations Workshop on May 20, 2008 in Upper Michigan in direct response to the analysis of feedback from local geospatial representatives.
3. Responded to the specific questions from survey respondents.
4. Given survey results to State Advisors to use for local analysis.

### **National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS)**

**NESDIS Data Center Customer Survey:** The survey served as an initial step to initiate open communication and receive feedback from our users. The results were very valuable in enabling NOAA's National Data Centers to evaluate the quality of our services, products and accessibility to users in all categories. The survey was followed up by a NESDIS Data Users' Workshop during which users made 500 recommendations which were consolidated into approximately 180 common recommendations. An action plan was developed which addressed each of the recommendations.

The survey question regarding the ease with which data were retrieved from our website indicated that many customers thought access was easy while others did not. Based on the fact that some of our customers responded that the access was not as easy as it could have been and additional comments about ease of use, NOAA's National Climatic Data Center formed a team that worked on and revised our homepage. While we still get customers who have difficulty navigating the website, it is far better than before the improvements were made. We are continuing to work on the user friendliness of the website and have implemented the use of some map tools.

Other comments indicated that customers wanted to be able to view the data before ordering it, online. We have implemented this on some of our systems and customers are able to view products available before they actually order the certified copies. Many more products are also available for downloading at no charge.

As explained in the preceding paragraphs, the information gathered has utility. 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.**

Currently, most surveys are conducted via email. Some surveys are mailed to their customer lists. Website customer satisfaction and some product satisfaction surveys are posted on the applicable websites, with monitoring to eliminate most, if not all, frivolous responses.



**4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.**

A team with representatives from all of NOAA's major organizations helped to develop the questions and identify any current efforts. While there may be other customer surveys planned that will be the subject of separate clearance requests, NOAA is confident that the procedures in place ensure that no current or future survey will duplicate any other similar survey within the program area involved.

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

While small businesses will be respondents to some of the surveys, the burden on any respondent is expected to be minimal. Response to all surveys will continue to be voluntary.

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

If these surveys were not conducted, the program offices have significantly less information for determining which areas of their programs should be modified, and how they might be modified, to provide better service to the public. The frequency of surveys will vary. Some will be conducted once a year, while others will be ongoing (such as Data Center questions sent out with deliveries of data and some Website questionnaires). The ongoing approach is deemed especially useful when asking questions about specific products and formats, rather than about general satisfaction with a program. This more frequent feedback may allow the program office to get helpful information from respondents at the time a product is received or a Home Page is used, rather than later as part of an annual survey.

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

Respondents who choose to complete surveys on the Web will obviously be responding in less than thirty calendar days from when they receive the request. In those surveys where a questionnaire is attached to each product delivery, a person who frequently orders products will receive more than one request quarterly, but all responses are 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 soliciting public comments was published on April 15, 2008 (73 FR 20256). No comments were received.

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

No payment or gift will be given to any respondent.

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

There will be no assurance of confidentiality; however, provision of contact information is optional.

**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 will be asked.

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

A total of 59,100 individual responses is expected annually, with an average response time of five minutes, resulting in 4,196 burden hours.

It is possible that there may be more than one response per respondent per year; this information is not tracked, but each entry on web-based surveys has a time stamp. More than one entry per respondent can be reasonably expected as new information and products appear. However, entries in close succession, which generally could be construed as frivolous, are eliminated.

**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 will be no cost to respondents. For mailed surveys, envelopes with pre-paid postage will be supplied.

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

All surveys will be conducted and analyzed in-house as part of program planning and thus there is no additional cost.

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

Several of the surveys included in the previous collection are not to be renewed and others have been approved since the last renewal. This generic clearance is used for a wider variety of surveys than was the case three years ago, as program staff contacting the NOAA PRA Clearance Officer regarding proposed surveys are routinely referred to this clearance if it appears it may be applicable. Thus, the estimated burden hours have increased from 1,337 to 4,196, an increase of 2,859 hours.

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

Aggregated results will be posted on the applicable websites as needed, to share with users as part of information to be imparted about planned program or product changes.

**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.**

All surveys will display the OMB expiration date.

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

No exceptions are requested.