

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
NORTHEAST FISHERIES OBSERVER PROGRAM FISHERMEN'S
COMMENT CARD
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0536**

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g. establishments, State and local governmental units, households, or persons) in the universe and the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form. The tabulation must also include expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection has been conducted before, provide the actual response rate achieved.

Vessels may carry several observers or the same observer on several trips throughout the year. We expect at least a 65% response rate on the total number of cards distributed. The return rates of survey responses and self-reporting by commercial fishermen has been shown to be low with other programs, such as tag return programs and the Marine Mammal Authorization Program. However, as indicated in response to Question 8 of Part A of this supporting statement, the NMFS staff who conducts the survey have a long history with the observer program, and it has been ascertained that the fishermen have a variety of concerns, and thus a significant stake in program improvements based on their feedback.

There may be up to 960 fishermen offered the opportunity to take a Comment Card, but fishermen are not expected to complete a survey for every trip. Some fishermen may complete one or several forms, though on average they are not expected to complete more than 2 cards per year. Estimating 624 respondents completing 2 surveys per year (totaling 1,248 responses) with a response time of 15 minutes, a total hourly burden is estimated at 312.

2. Describe the procedures for the collection, including: the statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection; the estimation procedure; the degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification; any unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures; and any use of periodic (less frequent than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden.

Every observer will leave a copy of this Comment Card on the vessel at the completion of each trip, unless the captain already has one and does not wish to have another. The card is also available electronically on our FSB website at:

<http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/fsb/>

Hard copies of the Comment Card may also be made available at Fisheries Management Council Meetings and other outreach events. The Comment Cards may also be passed out and collected at the docks by FSB Area Leads.

3. Describe the methods used to maximize response rates and to deal with non-response. The accuracy and reliability of the information collected must be shown to be adequate for the intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided if they will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

The response rates will be maximized by having the comment card available on board and on the NMFS website, with the hard copies return-addressed and pre-paid. Staff will also follow up with the fishermen in person at the docks and at public meetings to encourage participation. Fishermen who have taken observers will be asked if they received a comment card and if they have ever completed one and returned it. If any comment cards were completed and not sent in, we would try to collect them in person. If no comment cards had been completed, we would ask why none had been completed. This information would be relayed to and documented by the FSB outreach coordinator in order to evaluate the efficiency, validity, and representativeness of the comment card survey method.

4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Tests are encouraged as effective means to refine collections, but if ten or more test respondents are involved OMB must give prior approval.

NA.

5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on the statistical aspects of the design, and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

Amy Van Atten, NOAA/NMFS/NEFSC/FSB, (508) 495-2266.