

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
NATIONAL ESTUARIES RESTORATION INVENTORY
OMB CONTROL NO.: 0648-0479**

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.

Although this collection will not employ statistical methods, responses are being provided in this section in the event that issues are raised during the review process. The potential respondent universe of this collection consists of mandatory responses by entities receiving funding through the Estuary Restoration Act (ERA), as well as optional responses for all other parties with projects eligible to be submitted to NERI. Although the number of mandatory responses can be estimated on an annual basis, optional responses are extremely difficult to quantify. The NERI does not aim to be a complete inventory of all estuary habitat restoration projects occurring throughout the country. Instead, it aims to track project information and make it available to restoration practitioners in order to improve restoration methods, as well as to track acreage restored toward the million-acre goal of the Estuary Restoration Act.

Respondents receiving ERA-funding may include not-for-profit organizations, state, local, and tribal governments, and other Federal agencies. As of March 2006, nine projects have been approved by the ERA Council, three of which have received funding. As part of the Estuary Restoration Act, each of these projects are to be tracked through the National Estuaries Restoration Inventory (NERI) once project implementation begins. The amount of funding allocated to projects each Fiscal Year will depend upon the funding available through the ERA, which will vary each year. Assuming continued level project funding under the ERA, NOAA expects no more than 10 new awards to be made annually.

The other universe of respondents consists of optional responses by restoration practitioners who are implementing projects eligible to be submitted to NERI. This set of respondents is difficult to quantify as habitat restoration projects occur at a wide scale, with efforts occurring at Federal, regional, state, and local levels. In addition, these efforts often overlap each other with projects being implemented through multiple combinations of entities. The amount of work that gets completed may also be driven by the amount of funding available, which also varies at the Federal, regional, state, and local levels. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to quantify the amount of restoration projects that would be voluntarily submitted to the NERI.

Table 1: Summary of the Universe of Respondents and Response Rate for Mandatory and Optional Responses to the National Estuaries Restoration Inventory (Annual)

Category of Responses	Universe of Respondents	Expected Response Rates	Actual Response Rates
Optional	Unable to quantify beyond number of projects currently in the database (approx. 2,700)	Unable to quantify the expected new project entries, but expect an project record update rate of 70%	5 requests for submission received but denied due to issues with data overlap.
Mandatory	1-10 projects	100%	10 projects have been selected for ERA funding. Data for 5 projects that have initiated implementation have been submitted to NERI.

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.

Procedures for collecting information:

For mandatory projects, only ten projects have been selected for funding through the Estuary Restoration Act (ERA), two of which have been completed. Assuming funding levels will remain consistent, it is estimated that up to ten projects will be funded on an annual basis, and required, as a condition of funding to submit ongoing project information after the initial data entry by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Very few voluntary submissions have been provided, in part, because NOAA is currently focused on data for existing projects funded by Federal agencies. Currently, all of the data in the inventory (except the ERA-funded project records) is imported from existing tracking systems from NOAA and the USFWS. The time required to input this data does not fit under our burden hours since Federal staff are doing the primary data collection and data entry. This process of populating NERI with NOAA’s information will be automated in Fiscal Year 2009-2010. In addition, data from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Ecosystem Restoration Business Portal system that is currently under development will also be dynamically incorporated into NERI.

Unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures:

NERI is not a comprehensive set of all restoration projects occurring in the nation. Although a few non-federal groups have inquired about submitting data, many projects were found to exist in NERI. In addition, to address issues with double counting of projects that may already be in the inventory, NOAA is focusing efforts on the collection of project information from existing Federal resources, described above.

Degree of accuracy:

The majority of information collected is summary information so the degree of accuracy is not critical to achieve the goals of the information collection. In addition, the information obtained from NERI is used for informational purposes to identify successful techniques and provide

information to practitioners who are looking for other activities that have occurred in their region. The primary information being tracked is the acres of estuarine habitat restored toward the million-acre goal of the Estuary Restoration Act. Although this is a measure of quantity, a statistical analysis of this information is not relevant because the amount of habitat restored is influenced by many parameters, which are not consistent for all projects. These parameters may include project cost, site conditions, techniques used, and materials/resources available. Other information tracked by NERI is summary information that is used to describe project activities, results, and lessons learned.

The quality of project information from the existing NOAA or USFWS databases is ensured by the source data administrator, who applies quality assurance procedures, such as compliance to naming conventions and completion of minimum fields applicable to the status of the project, to project information submitted to NERI. In addition, NERI administrators regularly provide additional review of data as needed. Data from these sources will be imported at a minimum of an annual basis after undergoing quality assurance/quality control procedures specific to each agency. This process will be repeated whenever a project is updated. Any projects that are voluntarily submitted will be inspected by NERI admin prior to dissemination.

3. Describe the methods used to maximize response rates and to deal with nonresponse. 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.

To increase response rates, NOAA is actively working to promote the use of the inventory via outreach to the habitat restoration community. This will consist of: (1) presentations at various conferences, meetings, etc., (2) approaching restoration practitioners via professional Listservs, phone calls, etc., (3) announcing and promoting use of published spatial data through various data catalogs and mapping services (Geospatial One-Stop, state and local mapping applications, etc.).

In addition, the database is being populated using data from existing restoration project databases from NOAA and the USFWS. Having current project information in the NERI improves the relevancy of information for restoration practitioners, and possibly encourages them to voluntarily respond to the information collection.

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.

No tests of procedures or methods are to be undertaken at this time. NOAA will instead invite feedback on the utility of the NERI to track information from respondents and make adjustments as needed to refine the collection of information.

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.

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