

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE
ALASKA COOPERATIVES IN THE BERING SEA AND ALEUTIAN ISLANDS
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0401

We are requesting minor adjustments associated with a pending final rule (RIN 0648-AY28) to remove reporting requirements for an Annual Preliminary American Fisheries Act (AFA) Cooperative Report and revise reporting requirements for an AFA Cooperative Annual Report.

Under regulations implementing the AFA (67 FR 79692; December 30, 2002), the AFA cooperatives are required to submit to the Council each year a preliminary and a final report describing their pollock fishing (see § 679.61(f)). The AFA cooperative annual reports are required to provide information about how each cooperative allocated pollock, other groundfish species, and prohibited species among the vessels in the cooperative; the catch of these species by area by each vessel in the cooperative; information about how the cooperative monitored fishing by its members; and a description of any actions taken by the cooperative to penalize vessels that exceeded the catch and prohibitive species catch (PSC) allocations made to the vessel by the cooperative. The purpose of the cooperative reports is to provide the Council information upon which decisions are made on cooperative allocations and on sideboard protection measures.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) originally recommended that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) require a preliminary report to provide as much information as was available by December 1 and a final report to update or add any information that became available by February 1 of the following year.

Since implementation of these requirements, the Council determined that the information in the preliminary report is not necessary to develop its recommendations on final groundfish specifications. Therefore, NMFS removes the requirement for an annual preliminary AFA cooperative report and augments the requirements for an AFA final report. A single AFA cooperative final report, renamed an annual AFA cooperative report, would provide sufficient information to the Council and the industry about the fishing activities of the AFA cooperatives.

This action results in a reduction of burden of 308 hours. Some decrease in miscellaneous costs might occur due to postage cost differences. However, at this time we are not revising our cost estimate based on this change.