

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE
ATLANTIC HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES RECREATIONAL LANDINGS
REPORTS
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0328

Billfish comprise one of the most important target species groups for recreational and sport fishermen in Puerto Rico. Therefore, it is imperative to fully understand the fishery and to manage it responsibly in order to conserve these fish stocks. Non-tournament catch and landings estimates for billfish (and other highly migratory species (HMS)) in Puerto Rico based on Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) data lack precision due to the rare event nature of these fisheries. The lack of precision on catch estimates for these species complicates the use of these data for assessment and monitoring purposes. These estimates may also be inaccurate due to potential biases associated with the MRFSS design as identified in the recent National Research Council report. HMS permit holders must currently report all non-tournament blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, and swordfish landings to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service Fisheries Service (NMFS) via phone or internet within 24 hours of landing at the dock. However, compliance with this mandatory requirement is thought to be extremely low, particularly in Puerto Rico.

A final report from Phase One of the Marine Recreational Information Program included recommendations to develop and implement a new HMS recreational catch card data collection pilot program in Puerto Rico. The new Puerto Rico catch card data collection pilot program would be run similarly to the successful catch card programs currently operating in Maryland and North Carolina. The catch cards created for Puerto Rico would collect the same information collected on the North Carolina and Maryland catch cards but would be available in both English and Spanish. *Examples of the Puerto Rico catch cards will be submitted to the Office of the Chief Information Officer when they become available, but the current Maryland catch card is included in this request, as an example.* This pilot program would collect catch card data from catches of billfish and swordfish landed in Puerto Rico for 19 months, from June 2010 through December 2011. During this period, NMFS estimates that approximately 190 respondents will submit 190 responses at 10 minutes per response, resulting in an additional 31 hours, 40 minutes, rounded to 32 hours.