

**JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE
SOUTHEAST REGION GEAR IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0359**

A change is requested for 50 CFR part 622.6, Vessel and Gear identification, in conjunction with Final Rule 0648-BA04, Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic; Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico; Red Grouper Management Measures.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service are proposing to require that buoys be marked with the official vessel number if buoy gear is used or possessed in the Gulf EEZ. Buoy gear is listed as an authorized gear in the hook-and-line component of the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) reef fishery under the Allowable Gear Rule (600.725, 64 FR 67511).

Many Gulf reef fish bottom longline vessels began using buoy gear to continue fishing in areas where bottom longlines were prohibited through emergency regulations initiated May, 2009, and revised October, 2009, to protect sea turtles. Subsequently, reef fish vessels that did not qualify for a bottom longline endorsement through the regulations implementing Amendment 31 to the Gulf Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan (75 FR 21512, April 26, 2010) are converting to buoy gear to continue fishing for reef fish in the eastern Gulf.

The requirement to mark each buoy with the vessel identification number (Coast Guard certificate of documentation or state registration number) will require a burden of approximately 20 minutes per buoy for preparation and marking. Most vessels operate with 15 to 20 buoy lines. Thus, the individual burden for this marking requirement, using the maximum number of buoys per vessel, is: 20 buoys x 20 minutes per buoy or 6 hours, 40 minutes. With a total of 951 vessels operating in the Gulf reef fish fishery, the maximum total public burden to add to OMB Control No. 0648-0359 is an additional 6,340 hours for permit holders with active, renewable and transferable vessel permits. This information is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Estimated burden hours to mark buoy gear for Gulf of Mexico reef fish permit holders with active, renewable and transferrable permits.

| | # of Vessels | # Buoys per Vessel | Total # of Buoys | Burden Minutes per Buoy | # of Hours | Total Reporting Cost @ \$1 per buoy |
|--|--------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| Gulf of Mexico | 951 | 20 | 19,020 | 20 | 6,340 | \$19,020 |
| | | | | | | |
| # Vessels = Vessels with active, renewable, and transferable permits | | | | | | |