

**JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE
HIGH SEAS FISHING PERMIT, VESSEL IDENTIFICATION, AND REPORTING
REQUIREMENT
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0304**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issues permits, under the High Seas Fishing Compliance Act (HSFCA), to United States (U.S.) fishing vessels fishing on the high seas. HSFCA also requires vessels be marked for identification purposes and for permittees to report their fishing effort and catch. These requirements apply to all vessels fishing on the high seas. NMFS proposes to modify OMB Control No. 0648-0304 in the following ways:

- Revise the application fee in the application form and instructions;
- Add additional options for vessel types in the permit application form and
- Merge multiple, related information collections under a single OMB Control Number.

Application Fee

NMFS would change the application fee from \$67 to \$129. The fees are recalculated every two years using guidance provided in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Finance Handbook.

The HSFCA requires the Secretary to establish by regulation the level of fees to be charged for high seas fishing permits. HSFCA published such regulation at 50 CFR 300.13(d), which states that NMFS will charge a fee to recover the administrative expenses of permit issuance, with the amount determined in accordance with the procedures of the NOAA Finance Handbook. The fee is specified on the application form and in the application instructions.

The change in fee alters the cost burden for this collection. Recent information indicates that about 120 persons apply for this permit annually, as opposed to the currently approved number of 200. Assuming 120 persons apply each year, the new number of responses is 120, the new burdens are 60 hours (currently approved, 100) and the cost is \$15,533 (\$15,480 in fees plus \$53 in postage) (currently approved, \$13,484).

Vessel Types

A change would be made to the permit application instructions to alert applicants of the requirement to obtain a NMFS-issued fishing authorization called a “Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Area Endorsement”. This authorization is issued by the Regional Administrator of NMFS Pacific Islands Region as an endorsement on the permit issued under the High Seas Fishing Compliance Act. Any vessels receiving fish from another fishing vessel or bunkering or otherwise supplying or supporting a vessel that is harvesting highly migratory species (HMS), as well as those vessels harvesting HMS, are subject to this requirement.

NMFS would also add new vessel types to the application form under the section for vessel

types. The new types include “fish carrier,” “bunker,” and “other support.” This addition will allow NMFS to know about such vessels operating on the high seas, particularly the high seas areas of the WCPFC Convention Area.

At this time, there are no U.S. vessels of these types that would apply for an HSFCA permit or a WCPFC Area Endorsement. The change is requested in the event such vessels apply.

All changes on the form are highlighted.

The burden estimates are not affected by these changes in the application and application instructions.

Merging Information Collections

NMFS would be adding No. 0648-0348 (High Seas Vessel Identification) and No. 0648-0349 (High Seas Vessel Reporting) to No. 0648-0304. These two collections will be discontinued once this change request is approved. These three collections pertain to vessels that conduct fishing activities on the high seas. A person who operates a vessel on the high seas submits information for a permit and is required to mark their vessel and submit information on their fishing activities.

The merging of the collections will result in the summation of burden estimates into OMB Control No. 0648-0304.

The response and burden estimates for OMB Control No. 0648-0348 is 50 responses, 38 hours, and \$1,250.

The response and burden estimates for OMB Control No. 0648-0349 is 15,000 responses, 850 hours, and \$3,012.

The latest response and burden estimates for OMB Control No. 0648-0304, based on adjusting the numbers of permit applications and raising the application fee and postage costs, is 120 responses, 60 hours, and \$15,533.

Thus, the burden estimate for OMB Control No. 0648-0304 will become 15,170 responses, 948 hours, and \$19,795.