

**JUSTIFICATION
ALASKA ROCKFISH PROGRAM
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0545**

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE: Adjustment to Rockfish Program vessel check-in/check-out report to allow online submittal to NMFS.

In Section 802 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004 (Pub. L. 108–199; Section 802), the United States Congress directed the Secretary of Commerce to establish, in consultation with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), a pilot program for management of the rockfish fisheries in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA). Following this directive, in 2005 the Council adopted a share-based management program. The National Marine Fisheries Service’s (NMFS) Rockfish Pilot Program (Program) under which the total allowable catch is apportioned as exclusive shares to cooperatives based on the catch history of the members of those cooperatives. The Program provides exclusive harvesting and processing privileges for a specific set of rockfish species, associated species, and Pacific halibut harvested incidentally to those CGOA rockfish in an area from 140° W. long. to 168° W. long. The Program was originally established as a two-year program, but was extended to a five-year program. The current termination date for the Program is December 31, 2011.

The Program allocation is divided between the catcher vessel sector and the catcher/processor sector, based on historic catches of the participants in the respective sectors. Participants in each sector can fish as part of a cooperative; in a competitive, limited access fishery; or may opt-out of the fishery.

In order to meet the Rockfish Pilot Program check-in requirements of 679.5(r)(10), NMFS allowed cooperatives to submit Rockfish vessel check-in/check-out forms via email, in addition to fax and U.S. mail. At the request of industry, we have recently developed an online application to allow cooperatives to check in and out in conjunction with their current online account balance websites (initiated in 2008 when intercooperative transfer of cooperative quota was approved by OMB (change request approved 10-24-08)).

The designated representative of a rockfish cooperative must designate any vessel that is fishing under the rockfish cooperative’s Cooperative Quota (CQ) permit before that vessel may fish under that CQ permit. This authorization allows the cooperative to determine how and when vessels will fish under a CQ permit. The designated cooperative representative must “check-in” a vessel when it is fishing under a CQ permit during the rockfish cooperative fishing year, and “check-out” vessels no longer fishing under its CQ permit.

Vessel check-in report.

Rockfish cooperatives must designate at least one vessel to fish the CQ permit for that cooperative effective on May 1. The representative must designate any vessel that is fishing under a CQ permit at least 48 hours prior to the time the vessel begins a fishing trip under a CQ permit. A check-in report is effective at the beginning of the first fishing trip after the

designation has been submitted. This advance notice provides NMFS time to adjust catch accounting procedures and accurately monitor catch.

Vessel check-out report.

If a vessel has completed fishing under a CQ permit for a rockfish cooperative, the designated representative must submit a check-out report for that vessel to notify NMFS of that fact, within 6 hours after the effective date and time of the designation. This ensures that catch is properly debited against a CQ account and reduces the risk that a subsequent trip would be misapplied as occurring under a CQ permit and have to be corrected.

The affected cooperatives and vessels are already counted in this collection. Revision to this collection-of-information does not require additional training of the users and does not impose a significant impact on small entities. Costs and burden are not expected to change as a result of this action. In fact, costs may be decreased by improved efficiency.

The Rockfish vessel check-in/check-out report may be completed online through the NMFS Alaska Region website at <http://elandings.alaska.gov>.