

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM SCIENCE COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION SURVEY

OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-xxxx

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

The original authority for establishing the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) program is codified in Section 315 of the [Coastal Zone Management Act \(16 U.S.C. 1451\)](#). NOAA is given authority under this statute to issue funds to the NERRS for planning, conservation, research, monitoring, education, resource protection, restoration, and/or construction projects.

One of the activities of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) National Ocean Service's (NOS's) Estuarine Reserves Division (ERD) is investment in research that is focused on transforming and making accessible the best available science and technology for coastal managers to use to detect, prevent, and reverse the impacts of coastal pollution and habitat degradation. To make sure that the research activities we fund are focused on the research and information needs of the NERRS, customer feedback is critical. We receive this input through various means, one being to survey our customers to assess if the research investments we are making are meeting their needs.

In continuing compliance with [Executive Order 12862](#), Setting Customer Service Standards (attached), this survey will be used by the NOAA Estuarine Reserves Division to obtain information from its customers – NERRS managers, scientists, educators, and coastal training and stewardship professionals – regarding their research and information needs based on their coastal resource management responsibilities, technology and information management capabilities and critical resource management issues.

The survey we plan to conduct will help ERD to determine how satisfied the NERRS are, and future actions to take with our 5-year investment in the NERRS Science Collaborative and its focus on collaborative research related to land use issues, habitat restoration and change issues, and estuarine contamination issues. The information collected will be used by ERD to guide future research investments in the NERRS.

Although other offices in NOAA and NOS have collected information from segments of the respondents that this survey addresses, these surveys have not specifically addressed ERD support for the NERRS Science Collaborative. Great effort has been made to tailor the questions, herein, to pertain specifically to the types of functions the NERRS Science Collaborative supports, such as collaborative research, graduate training and information transfer

activities. No other office within NOAA has collected the same specific information from the same group of respondents.

- 2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.**

Purpose, Delivery, and Frequency

The proposed survey is the first survey designed to assess how satisfied the NERRS are with the program activities being implemented by the NERRS Science Collaborative. No other surveys focused on the overall NERRS Science Collaborative programs have ever been done. It is anticipated that this will be the only such survey to be conducted over the next five years.

ERD is committed to supporting innovative, collaborative research in the NERRS through a transparent and competitive process. Currently ERD is supporting a 5-year cooperative agreement that funds the NERRS Science Collaborative which was established in 2009 following a national competition to establish a national estuarine research and technology program that operates in partnership with the NERRS. The focus of this program is to conduct collaborative research utilizing the capabilities of the NERRS to apply the best available science and transform it into practical tools that coastal managers can use to detect, prevent, and reverse the impacts of coastal pollution and habitat degradation in the face of ongoing climate change. The University of New Hampshire (UNH) was the successful applicant in this competition implementing a program that integrates and applies the principles of collaborative research, transfer, education and adaptive management to achieve the goals of the funding request.

The NERRS Science Collaborative has three program components:

1. A collaborative and multidisciplinary competitive research program that funds projects that target priority coastal management problems in the NERRS. This program empowers Reserves to work with their local communities to address the influences of climate change on problems related to the impacts of land use change, habitat change and restoration, management of stormwater, and nonpoint source pollution.
2. A graduate student education program known as TIDES (Training for the Integrations of Decisions and Ecosystems Science) integrates university-based training on collaborative processes with an applied research experience at Reserve sites to provide students with the skills necessary to better link research to application, decision making and policy.
3. An applied science and information transfer component that engages coastal science translation and training specialists in the NERRS to disseminate project-generated tools and information to coastal professionals outside of any particular project's targeted stakeholder audience.

This survey is part of a larger evaluation process of the NERRS Science Collaborative and will be used to help NOAA assess the NERRS satisfaction with the Science Collaborative programs designed to foster targeted, multidisciplinary, collaborative research to address the impacts of

human activities on coasts and estuaries. It is important for NOAA to understand how the targeted beneficiaries of this program view NOAA's investment in this program in order to better target future research investment in the NERRS.

The survey will cover the following topical areas with each section asking between 3-5 questions of the respondents:

1. The first section of the survey asks general information questions about people's professional background and whether they have received funding from the Science Collaborative in order to help NOAA interpret the results from the survey.
2. The second section of the survey asks questions regarding respondent's satisfaction with the Request for Proposals released by the Science Collaborative.
3. The third section of the survey asks respondents questions about their satisfaction with the focus of the competitive research program.
4. The fourth section asks a series of questions about respondent's satisfaction with the graduate program funded by the collaborative.
5. The fifth section asks respondents questions about their satisfaction with how the Science Collaborative has enabled the NERRS to address important coastal management challenges.
6. The sixth section asks questions about accessible the different Science Collaborative program activities were to the Reserve System.

NOAA's Estuarine Reserves Division will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. See response #10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. The information collection is designed to yield data that meet all applicable information quality guidelines. Although the information collected is not expected to be disseminated directly to the public, results may be used in scientific, management, technical or general information publications. Should NOAA's National Ocean Service decide to disseminate the information, it will be subject to the quality control measures and pre-dissemination review pursuant to [Section 515 of Public Law 106-554](#).

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.

The survey will be administered via a Web-based survey instrument. We will work with NOAA's Coastal Services Center (CSC) to develop and administer the web-survey. CSC is approved by the National Ocean Service Chief Information Officer to use Survey Monkey to develop and administer the survey. A mail survey would entail added expense and can require more time to complete. Invitations with a link to the survey will be sent to members of the NERRS and related communities. Upon request, respondents will be mailed a paper version of the survey to complete and return in a postage paid envelope. If requested, accommodations will also be made to facilitate completion of the survey via telephone.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

No other existing similar information collections were found.

5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

No small businesses or other small entities are involved. Regardless, the burden is only 20 minutes.

6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.

Without input from the NERRS coastal resource management community, ERD would risk investing limited research money in projects that have little relevance to the coastal resource management community's needs. Conducting this survey will provide ERD with consistent information from its customer base. Survey results will enable ERD to be more efficient in the development of specific research programs that meet the needs and capabilities of our customers. This is the first collection of survey information focused on the NERRS Science Collaborative and it is not anticipated that additional surveys will need to be done by NOAA for at least five years.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

The collection will be conducted consistently with OMB guidelines.

8. Provide information on the PRA Federal Register Notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

A Federal Register Notice published on October 29, 2012 (77 FR 65533) solicited public comments. No substantive comments pertinent to the collection were received.

ERD personnel consulted with people trained in survey research and design at NOAA's Coastal Services Center who have created numerous survey instruments in the past. Technical literature consulted in the planning and development of the instrument and survey administration included *Questionnaire Design: Asking questions with a purpose* (Taylor-Powell, 1998) and *How to Conduct our Own Survey* (Salant and Dillman, 1994) as well as numerous other survey instruments and technical references. Salant and Dillman have conducted extensive research on all aspects of survey design and implementation for over a decade and their methods of distribution and follow-up have consistently achieved positive results.

Pilot testing of the instrument was completed in December, 2012. Pilot participants included representative members from across the different NERRS sectors. Pilot testing of the survey included timing of respondents, identification and discussion of unclear instructions and question content, asking respondents about the length of the instrument, and discussing suggestions for improvements. Fewer than 10 external, non-federal employees participated in the pilot testing and subsequent discussions.

9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

No plans exist for payment or gifts to survey respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

Responses will not be reported individually, only in aggregate. On the survey instrument, respondents are assured that their names will not be placed on their completed surveys or subsequent reports. A summary of results will be used by ERD and individuals involved in the review of the NERRS Science Collaborative program activities. A summary of the results will also be made available to the NERRS community and the investigators implementing the NERRS Science Collaborative program at the University of New Hampshire.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

NA.

12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.

The maximum estimated annualized burden estimate for the survey is 47 hours although we expect a response rate of around 70% (33 hours). The maximum estimate reflects 140 respondents with an average completion time of 20 minutes, including the time for reviewing instructions and gathering the requested information.

Respondents are likely to be reserve managers, research coordinators, coastal training program professionals, stewardship coordinators and education coordinators from the NERR system equivalent to a Government Service Pay Grade 12 Step 1. Using this grade to estimate the hourly rate of the respondent (\$28.62), the maximum estimated annualized cost to the respondent for the hour burden of each collection (i.e., 20 minutes) is \$9.44 per respondent; the maximum cost for the information collection for a 100 percent response rate (i.e., 140 respondents) is \$1,322.

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in Question 12 above).

Responding to the survey requires no record keeping or reporting expenses.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

This information collection effort is supported through in-house staff time. The estimated annualized cost for this information collection is \$6,309 (i.e., in-house staff time, supplies). Estimates presented below represent the costs per annum for the term of the approval.

<u>Annualized Cost to Federal Government</u>	<u>Labor</u>	<u>\$Cost</u>
Supplies		\$100.
Printing		\$100.
Data management and database development		\$100.
Project staff (ZA4)	100 hrs @ \$46.73/hr	4,673.
Project supervisor (ZA4)	20 hrs @ 46.73/hr	\$936.
Administrative staff support	20 hrs @ 20.00/hr	\$400.
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>\$6,309.</u>

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments.

This is the first time this survey will be administered.

16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

The results will be summarized in a tabular form for use in the review process but otherwise there are no plans to publish the survey results.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collections, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.

NA.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.

NA.