

**JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE  
SOUTH PACIFIC TUNA ACT  
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0218**

This change request is associated with a final rule (RIN 0648-BD53). The rule amends current regulations for United States (U.S.) purse seine vessels operating in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) in the Convention Area of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and affects the information requirements and associated burden for the catch report form element of the currently approved collection of information under the South Pacific Tuna Act (OMB Control No. 0648-0218).

The rule would modify the existing information required on the catch report form to include specific information in the event that a whale shark is encircled in a purse seine net in the IATTC Convention Area. The additional required information would be detailed in an instruction sheet, provided by the NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Administrator to owners and operators of U.S. purse seine vessels licensed to fish in the IATTC Convention Area, and would consist of the following: (1) the number of whale sharks encircled in a given set; (2) a brief description of any conditions or circumstances that might have led to the encirclement; (3) a brief description of the steps taken to ensure the safe release of the whale shark(s); and (5) whether each of the animals was alive or dead upon release. The existing catch report form would remain unchanged and the instruction sheet would specify the format in which the new information should be recorded on the existing catch report form. In the event that a whale shark encirclement occurs, the rule would require respondents to add the above information to the existing catch report form.

The burden of this additional information would be borne by respondents only in the event that a whale shark becomes encircled in a purse seine net in the Convention Area. In that event, the additional burden is estimated at 10 minutes per encirclement. While it is not possible to project the rate of whale shark encirclements with certainty, the number of respondents is not expected to change as a result of this rulemaking.

It is estimated that about 0.2 responses per year (1 every 5 years) will be required.

**Additional annual burden: 0.2 responses x .17 hours (10 minutes) = 0.034 hour. This change equates to no change, as it is only a fraction of an hour.**

There were no comments on the information collection requirements, and only one comment, in support of the rule.