

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT  
IMPLANTATION AND RECOVERY OF ARCHIVAL TAGS  
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0338**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

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

This request is for extension of a current information collection.

The purpose of the collection of this information is to assist in compliance with the [Atlantic Tunas Convention Act of 1975](#) (ATCA, 16 U.S.C. 971), the [Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act](#) (Magnuson-Stevens Act, 16 U.S.C. 1812), and Federal regulations at [50 CFR § 635](#). ATCA authorizes the promulgation of regulations as necessary to implement recommendations adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and collect information to support these recommendations. Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS), such as tuna, shark, swordfish, and billfish, are also managed under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which gives National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) the authority to conduct and promote fisheries research, and requires that the United States (U.S.) cooperate with those international organizations involved in the conservation of HMS.

As a member of ICCAT, the U.S. aids in the collection of HMS biological statistics for research purposes. The collection of information through the U.S. HMS archival tagging program provides essential stock assessment information for international and domestic fishery management. The tagging program has provided and continues to provide vital information regarding the movement and life history of bluefin tuna and billfish.

Archival tags are miniature data loggers that record the movement, geo-position, and behavior of individually tagged highly migratory species. The tags are returned to the Agency by fishermen after a tagged fish is captured in a commercial or recreational fishery. Data from recovered tags are used to ascertain HMS life history information such as migratory patterns and spawning site fidelity. This information is vital for international and U.S. management of HMS fisheries. For example, data obtained from the archival tagging program is valuable for research related to bluefin tuna stock composition, movement, and identification of western bluefin tuna spawning areas. Bluefin tuna management has been based on a two stock hypothesis (with spawning occurring in two discrete locations in the Mediterranean and Gulf of Mexico); however, additional information collected through tags may help provide a better understanding of migratory patterns and spawning site fidelity for bluefin tuna. Data from the archival tagging program will continue to be useful for scientists and managers concerned with bluefin tuna.

This extension request addresses two reporting requirements associated with the archival tag program. Current regulations (50 CFR 635.33) allow fishermen to retain any HMS with an archival tag implanted or attached without regard to season or size limits, provided the fishermen report the landing along with certain information about the catch, and make the fish available to

NMFS for recovery of the tag. Regulations also require that researchers using archival tags for Atlantic tunas, swordfish, or billfish submit an application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) or Scientific Research Permit (SRP) that provides details concerning the research objectives, the type and number of tags used, the species and approximate size of the tagged fish, and the location and method of capture of the tagged fish. Receipt of an EFP or SRP confers Agency authorization of the research activity and requires scientists to submit interim and annual reports that provide additional information on tagged fish, among other requirements.

**2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used.**

As described above, there are two sets of reporting requirements associated with the archival tag program. The information provided by HMS fishermen will include the archival tag, location of capture, and captured fish. Information provided will be used to analyze fish movements to better understand the life history of the tagged fish. The information provided by researchers will include notification of project initiation, goals of the research, and a summary of project results. Information provided is needed to assist the Agency in assessing the effectiveness of archival tag research, the impact of regulatory allowances for tag recovery, and to ensure that archival tag research does not result in undue mortality.

It is anticipated that the information collected will be disseminated directly to the public or used to supplement publicly disseminated information such as stock assessments or peer-reviewed scientific literature. NMFS will retain control over and safeguard information collected from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with Agency standards for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. See response to Question 10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. Information collection is designed to yield data that meet all applicable information quality guidelines. Prior to dissemination, the information will be subjected to quality control measures and a pre-dissemination review pursuant to [Section 515 of Public Law 106-55](#).

**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.**

Archival tags have been specifically designed for use on fish, sea turtles, and marine mammals. An archival tag stores environmental and behavioral data that can be graphically represented using software. Tags currently on the market weigh 25 grams in air, have up to one megabyte of memory, can retain data for 20 years, and have a lifetime of four to five years.

Archival tag information can be reported to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center by calling a toll-free number (800) 437-3936, or by contacting: National Marine Fisheries Service, Highly Migratory Species, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. More information is available at [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/related\\_topics/tagging/index.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/related_topics/tagging/index.html). Scientists' notification and reporting forms, downloadable and fillable, are available at [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/permits\\_reporting/index.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/permits_reporting/index.html) and may be submitted via email to: [eric.orbesen@noaa.gov](mailto:eric.orbesen@noaa.gov).

**4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.**

Reports submitted to NMFS from researchers planning an archival tagging program for HMS will provide for coordination of tagging programs in order to minimize duplication of tagging programs. Given the expense of tagging research, relatively few parties will be involved and a high level of coordination with the researchers will be maintained, which will provide a means to avoid duplication of reporting requirements within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Other reporting within NOAA that could be required of researchers includes grant reports (if a NOAA grant is issued) or interim and final exempted fishing permit reports. If these other reports contain the necessary information, and are available in the timeframe required under 50 CFR 635.33, they may be submitted to satisfy the reporting requirements approved under this collection.

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

There will be no significant impact on small businesses or entities.

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

Data collected from returned tags and reporting forms is integral to the tagging program. Without the reporting requirements, the scientific contributions and value of the archival tagging program would be compromised. If the tagging program were not conducted, domestic and international management of HMS would be compromised and could be rendered ineffective due to a lack of necessary life history information.

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

The collection is consistent with the 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 Friday, May 9, 2014 (79 FR 26723) solicited public comment on this renewal. No comments were received.

Comments were also solicited from 3 non-NOAA researchers, who frequently use these tags. In general, there were no major complaints on information collection for the archival tagging program. Reporting requirements were considered routine by the respondents and were not

believed to create any unreasonable burden. The frequency of the data collection was also considered reasonable, though there was one comment about potentially implementing 6 month interim reports and an annual summary. While NMFS is always considering ways to reduce burden to the public, NMFS uses interim reports to account for mortalities on quota managed species. Since real-time management of the quota is necessary, NMFS would not be willing to implement interim reports that cover a 6 month timeframe. Instructions for recordkeeping and reporting were considered clear, and one respondent commented that researchers could easily provide more information than what is currently required on the interim and annual reports.

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

Rewards in conventional tagging programs are common and have been found to enhance recovery numbers. Given the high cost of each tag and tag deployment, a reward is warranted to encourage recovery of the tags. A \$500 reward is offered by NOAA for recovery of one of their archival tags. Tags may be recovered by fishermen outside the waters of the United States in the eastern Atlantic or the Mediterranean Sea, and a reward increases the likelihood that they will report. The high value of an individual giant tuna on the export market (thousands of dollars) also calls for a reward as an incentive for reporting and providing the fish for sampling. Rewards will not be provided for non-NOAA archival tags that are retrieved.

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

As stated on the forms, information submitted will be treated as confidential under the provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act and [NOAA Administrative Order 216-100](#).

**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.**

No sensitive questions are asked.

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

Approximately 25 tags are recovered and reported per year. The estimated time for reporting on the fish is 30 minutes, which includes the time for making a toll-free call, making arrangements for the fish to be examined by a fishery biologist or to remove the tag, and processing fish samples as instructed. The burden for tag recovery is therefore:

$$25 \text{ respondents} \times 1 \text{ response} \times 30 \text{ minutes} = 12.5 \text{ (13) hours}$$

The total number of persons implanting archival tags is estimated at 10 researchers, each providing a written notification (EFP application) and three written reports (two interim reports and one annual report).

10 respondents x 1 notification x 40 minutes per notification = 6.7 (7) hours  
10 respondents x 2 interim reports x 1 hour per report = 20 hours  
10 respondents x 1 annual report x 40 minutes per report = 6.7 (7) hours

Collection totals are 35 respondents, 65 responses, and 47 hours.

**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.**

There are no costs for those recovering tags because the phone call is toll-free, NMFS pays for postage for returning the tag, and a reward is given. Researchers implanting archival tags are not required to pay for paper and postage costs associated with submitting notifications and reports because these can be submitted electronically.

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

The cost of the NOAA Archival Tagging Program is approximately \$1 million in research grants over a 3-year period. About 75 tags (25 per year) will be returned over the 3 years, with a reward of \$500 a tag, for a cost of \$37,500.

25 tags per year x 3 years x \$500 per tag = \$37,500

The total Federal cost for 3 years is therefore approximately \$1,037,500 (including research grants and tag rewards), or \$345,833 a year. The Federal government is not responsible for costs associated with research involving deployment of archival tags being conducted by universities or other entities.

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

There are no changes or adjustments.

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

The data itself will not be published in a stand-alone form. It may be used in reports and articles that may be published; for instance, a report to supplement a stock assessment.

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

Not Applicable.

**18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.**

No exceptions are requested.

**B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS**

This collection will not employ statistical methods.