

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. FISHERMEN FISHING IN RUSSIAN WATERS
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0228**

A. JUSTIFICATION

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

This request is for extension of this information collection.

Regulations at [50 CFR Part 300, Subpart J](#), govern United States (U.S.) fishing vessels and nationals operating in the Russian Federation Economic Zone (EZ) and implement provisions of the "Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation on Mutual Fisheries Relations" (Agreement).

The Agreement provides that U.S. fishermen may apply for access to allocations of surplus fish stocks in the Russian Federation EZ, a zone extending up to 200 nautical miles off the coast of the Russian Federation. As part of the Agreement, the U.S. agreed to take appropriate measures to ensure that its nationals and vessels conduct fishing operations within the Russian EZ consistent with Russian national law and regulations.

National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) regulations require U.S. fishermen to complete a permit application, to be submitted through NMFS to the Russian Federation, and to obtain the permit before fishing in the Russian EZ or for Russian fishery resources. Application forms and copies of applicable laws and regulations of the Russian Federation may be obtained from NMFS Headquarters. The regulations also require U.S. vessel owners to submit to NMFS a vessel permit abstract report within 5 days of receipt of the Russian permit. Activity reports, which includes depart reports and return reports, must also be submitted to NMFS containing information on fish product carried aboard when departing the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off Alaska and the west coast and the product aboard when reentering that portion of the EEZ. This information is needed to identify the vessels entering the EEZ that operated in the Russian EZ, and the amount of fish the vessels transport from the Russian EZ. Reported catches when reentering the EEZ are compared with landings data to determine if fishing occurred after the vessel reentered the EEZ.

NMFS can use collected information to confirm U.S. reports with counterpart offices in Russia. NMFS enforcement agents can use the required information to ascertain whether some or all of the product landed by U.S. vessels claiming to have fished in the Russian EZ under Russian permits was caught in the U.S. EEZ and/or during closed seasons or otherwise taken in compliance with Russian law, the [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#) (Magnuson-Stevens Act), and related U.S. regulations.

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.

Russian authorities who approve and issue permits use information included in a permit application. Application forms and copies of applicable laws and regulations of the Russian Federation may be obtained from the NMFS Office of International Affairs. The application must be submitted to NMFS for review and transmittal to the U.S. Department of State, who will then forward it to the appropriate authorities of the Russian Federation.

A Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) statement is provided to U.S. applicants under separate cover. It would not be appropriate for the United States to alter the form used by the Russian Federation by adding a PRA statement directly on the form.

The application requires information on the intended fishing activity, area, species, gear, and season. Russian authorities will evaluate these applications to make decisions on their approval and whether special conditions or restrictions should apply. Certain other vessel information is also required, such as the vessel's identification number, measurements, engine power, radio communications equipment, and other characteristics.

Data reported to NMFS in depart/return reports include quantities of fish and fish products aboard the vessel. Thus, submission of these reports enables NMFS to identify and track U.S. vessels that will be returning to the U.S. EEZ with product from the Russian EZ. Fishing activity data is also to be reported to the Russian Federation in daily and other reports. The information collection is required pursuant to the Agreement. Failure to collect the basic information could result in denial of fishing privileges for U.S. vessels in the Russian EZ or failure in detection of serious violations of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

The collection of application data and submission of a copy of the permit is expected to occur only once annually, at the time an application is filed and within seven days of a permit being issued. Depart/return reports are submitted based on actual vessel activity and must be made on a real time basis to allow appropriate enforcement action. NMFS estimates that each vessel would fax two such reports per trip and one abstract of the permit information per operating year as required by 50 CFR § 300.154(b). Owners of U.S. vessels must also maintain records of reports for a period of three years.

It is anticipated that information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support publicly disseminated information. NMFS 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 to Question 10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. The information collection is designed to yield data that meet 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 106-554](#).

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.

Russian authorities require that applications be submitted as original documents. Activity reports to Russia must be faxed. U.S. vessel owners submit copies of permits and vessel abstract reports by fax. Depart and return reports are submitted by fax. Forms for the vessel permit abstract report and the depart/return report can be downloaded and printed from the following NMFS website: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/gpea_forms/.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

Data collected is unique to this information collection and is not collected by other U.S. federal agencies.

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

This collection will not have a significant impact on small businesses, organizations, or governmental entities.

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

Failure to be prepared to collect the information would make it impossible for NMFS to carry out its responsibilities under the Agreement.

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

This information collection is consistent 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 February 17, 2015 (80 FR 8289) solicited public comments on this renewal. No comments were received. *

*An email received from Stuart Levenbach on 6-12-15 stated no solicitation of comments is required for this collection, beyond those of the two Federal Register Notices.

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

No payments or gifts are given.

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

As stated on the U.S. forms and the PRA statement for the Russian permit application, data submitted based on this information collection will be accorded confidentiality pursuant to [50 CFR Part 600, Subpart E](#).

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 questions of a sensitive nature are included in this information collection.

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

A response time of 30 minutes is estimated for the application and 30 minutes total for permit abstracts, depart/return reports, and activity reports. However, due to political and fishery management issues in the Russian Federation, no Russian fishery resources have been available to U.S. vessels for many years. Therefore, while the regulations at 50 CFR Part 300, Subpart J, must remain in place in case circumstances change and Russian fishery resources become available to U.S. vessels, the estimated burden for this collection at this time is zero. Accordingly, we request that a placeholder burden of one hour (as well as one respondent and one response) be assigned for this collection.

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).

Assuming a single fax transmission to the Russian Federation is \$10 and to the United States (U.S.) is \$2.50 and assuming a single fishing trip of 5 days which requires 5 daily report faxes to Russia, 1 permit abstract report fax, 1 depart report fax, and 1 return report fax to the U.S., the estimated cost to the public is \$57.50.

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

The estimated cost to the Federal government is less than \$500.

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

No changes or adjustments are requested.

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

There are no plans to formally publish the information collected, but if requested, aggregated information will be released to interested parties.

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.

The expiration date will not be displayed on the Russian license application form, as the U.S. cannot alter the form.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.

Not Applicable.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

Statistical methods are not used.