

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**ALASKA COOPERATIVE PROGRESS REPORT ON THE INCIDENTAL CATCH OF**  
**PACIFIC HALIBUT**  
**OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0697**

This is a request for revision of an existing information collection due to modifications requested by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

**BACKGROUND**

The [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#), 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq. (Magnuson-Stevens Act) authorizes the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to prepare and amend fishery management plans for any fishery in waters under its jurisdiction. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) manages the United States (U.S.) groundfish fisheries of the exclusive economic zone off Alaska under the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska and the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Management Area. The fishery management plans were approved by the Secretary of Commerce under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act as amended in 2006. The fishery management plans are implemented by regulations at [50 CFR part 679](#).

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

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

Representatives of the six BSAI groundfish sectors (American Fisheries Act (AFA) Catcher/Processor, AFA Catcher Vessel, AFA mothership, Amendment 80, Freezer Longline Cooperative, and Western Alaska Community Development Quota (CDQ)) indicated their willingness to voluntarily provide additional information to the Council as requested, because the information is seen as an important component of reducing Pacific halibut incidental catch. The new, voluntary information is expected to provide the fleet with more flexibility to adapt fishing operations to changing environmental and market conditions than would result from placing the information as a regulatory requirement.

At its June 2015 meeting, the Council requested that Amendment 80 cooperatives voluntarily provide their 2016 halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) management plans at the December 2015 Council meeting. They and the other five cooperatives will continue to submit the voluntary BSAI Halibut Bycatch Avoidance Progress Report.

**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.**

**a. BSAI Halibut Bycatch Avoidance Progress report**

The BSAI Halibut Bycatch Avoidance Progress Report allows each sector in the BSAI groundfish fisheries to inform the Council of their progress on voluntary, non-regulatory methods used within their fishery cooperatives to avoid halibut bycatch in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. The Council took final action to reduce halibut PSC mortality limits in the BSAI groundfish fisheries overall from 4,426 mt to 3,515 mt, a 21% reduction. PSC limits in the BSAI groundfish fisheries are apportioned among sectors and gear types (currently to all trawl fisheries and longline fisheries for all targets except IFQ sablefish), and a different reduction was applied to each. The Council requested that participants measure their fleets or cooperatives are currently developing or have already undertaken for implementing measures in their cooperative and inter-cooperative agreements to minimize the incidental catch of halibut.

The report will be provided to the Council by electronic or paper submittal, perhaps with an additional oral presentation.

**BSAI Halibut Bycatch Avoidance Progress report**

- Development of effective and verifiable measures for halibut avoidance
- Individual accountability
- Use of incentives to reduce incidental catch of halibut in the groundfish fisheries

Corrected number of respondents, from 5 to 6; the AFA mothership cooperative was inadvertently not listed.

<b>BSAI Halibut PSC Progress Report, Respondent</b>	
<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Total annual responses</b>	<b>6</b>
Frequency of response = 1	
<b>Total burden hours</b>	<b>240 hr</b>
Time per response = 40 hr	
<b>Total personnel cost</b> (\$37/hr x 240)	<b>\$8,880</b>
<b>Total miscellaneous cost</b> (2.70)	<b>\$3</b>
Postage cost (.45 x 2 = .90)	
Email (0 x 5 = \$0)	
Photocopy cost (6 x 6 pp x 0.05 = 1.80)	

<b>BSAI Halibut PSC Progress Report, Federal Government</b>	
<b>Total annual responses</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total burden hours</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total personnel cost</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total miscellaneous cost</b>	<b>0</b>

**b. Amendment 80 Halibut PSC Management Plan**

At the June 2015 meeting, the Council requested that, in addition to providing the BSAI Halibut PSC Progress Report, Amendment 80 cooperatives provide a 2016 Halibut (PSC) management plan at the December 2015 Council meeting. Since 2011, all vessels and companies participating in the Amendment 80 sector have been affiliated with one of two Amendment 80 cooperatives, the Alaska Seafood Cooperative or the Alaska Groundfish Cooperative. The plans should be designed not just to accommodate the revised hard caps, but to bring savings to levels below the hard cap. The Council has asked that the cooperatives' Plans include the following information.

**Amendment 80 Halibut PSC Management Plan**

- Halibut avoidance practices on the grounds
- Increased communication between participating harvesters
- Sharing data for performance tracking
- Use and development of excluders
- Deck sorting
- Performance measurement and assessment at the boat and company level
- Incentives for continuous efforts to minimize bycatch
- Consequences for substandard performance

<b>Amend80 Halibut PSC Management Plan, Respondent</b>	
<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total annual responses</b>	<b>2</b>
Frequency of response = 1	
<b>Total burden hours</b>	<b>24 hr</b>
Time per response = 12 hr	
<b>Total personnel cost (\$37/hr x 24)</b>	<b>\$888</b>
<b>Total miscellaneous cost (0.60)</b>	<b>\$1</b>
Email (0 x 5 = \$0)	
Photocopy cost (2 x 6 pp x 0.05 = 0.60)	

<b>Amend80 Halibut PSC Management Plan, Federal Government</b>	
<b>Total annual responses</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total burden hours</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total personnel cost</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total miscellaneous cost</b>	<b>0</b>

It is anticipated that the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support publicly disseminated information. The Council will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (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 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 106-554.

**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 Cooperative Progress Report and Amendment 80 Halibut Management Plan may be submitted to the Council electronically as an attachment to an email and also by courier, mail, or fax.

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

This information collection is part of a specialized and technical program that is not like any other.

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

Cooperatives are not small businesses or small entities; thus this information collection does not impose a significant impact on small entities.

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

If the collection were not conducted or conducted less frequently, the information needed by the Council regarding progress on minimizing incidental catch of halibut would not be available, and the solutions for problems of incidental halibut catch would not occur.

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

No special circumstances exist.

**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 action 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 (80 FR 35630) was published June 22, 2015 to solicit public comments. No comments were received.

At the June 2015 meeting, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council requested that, in addition to providing the BSAI Halibut PSC Progress Report, Amendment 80 cooperatives provide a 2016 Halibut (PSC) management plan at the December 2015 Council meeting. Since 2011, all vessels and companies participating in the Amendment 80 sector have been affiliated with one of two Amendment 80 cooperatives, the Alaska Seafood Cooperative or the Alaska

Groundfish Cooperative. The plans should be designed not just to accommodate the revised hard caps, but to bring savings to levels below the hard cap.

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

No payment or gift is provided under this program.

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

This information is voluntary and is required to manage commercial fishing efforts under 50 CFR part 680, under section 402(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1801, et seq.) and under 16 U.S.C. 1862(j). The Council is not requesting that any confidential information be included in the report. The reports are posted on the Council's web site under the heading "Cooperative Reports" at <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/amds/80/default.htm>.

**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.**

This information collection does not involve information of a sensitive nature.

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

Estimated total respondents: 6, increased from 5. Estimated total responses: 8, increased from 5. Estimated total burden: 264 hr, increased from 200 hr. Estimated total personnel costs: \$9,768, increased from \$7,400.

**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).**

Estimated total miscellaneous costs: \$4, decreased from \$8.

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

The Federal government will not incur any costs or burden.

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

This revision includes a program change. The Council requested the addition of 2016 halibut PSC management plans from Amendment 80 cooperatives.

Amendment 80 Halibut PSC Management Plan

an increase of 2 respondent and response, 2 instead of 0  
an increase of 24 hr burden, 24 instead of 0 hr

an increase of \$888 personnel costs, \$888 instead of \$0  
an increase of \$1 miscellaneous costs, \$1 instead of \$0

This revision includes an adjustment, a correction to number of cooperatives.

Cooperative Halibut PSC Progress Report

an increase of 1 respondent and response, 6 instead of 5  
an increase of 40 hr burden, 240 instead of 200 hr  
an increase of \$1,480 personnel costs, \$8,880 instead of \$7,400  
a decrease of \$5 miscellaneous costs, \$3 instead of \$8

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

NMFS will not publish any results from this program.

**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.**

Not Applicable.

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

This collection does not employ statistical methods.