

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT  
APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE NOAA COMMISSIONED  
OFFICER CORPS  
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0047**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

This request is for extension of this information collection.

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

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Commissioned Officer Corps (NOAA Corps) is the uniformed service of NOAA, a bureau of the Department of Commerce. The NOAA Corps provides a cadre of professionals trained in engineering, earth sciences, oceanography, meteorology, fisheries science, and other related disciplines who serve their country by supporting NOAA's mission of surveying the Earth's oceans, coasts, and atmosphere to ensure the economic and physical well-being of the Nation.

The statutory authorities for this information collection are [33 USC Chapter 43](#), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps and [PL 112-166 Section 2. \(gg\)\(1\)](#), Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011. NOAA Corps officers serve under Presidentially-confirmed appointments. The current authorized end strength of the NOAA Corps is 321 commissioned officers on the active duty list. Officers may resign their commissions, or may request voluntary retirement when eligible. Each resignation or retirement creates a vacancy on the list of active duty officers.

The collection of appropriate personal, educational, and professional qualifications information is critical in order to identify those applicants with the educational background, intelligence, high moral standards, and strong leadership potential required to serve the Nation as a member of this uniformed service. Persons wishing to be considered for a NOAA Corps Commission must submit a complete application package, including NOAA Form 56-42, at least three letters of recommendation, and official transcripts. A personal interview must also be conducted. Eligibility requirements include a bachelor's degree with at least 48 credit hours of science, engineering, or other disciplines related to NOAA's missions (including either calculus or physics), excellent health, normal color vision with uncorrected visual acuity no worse than 20/400 in each eye (correctable to 20/20), and ability to complete 20 years of active duty commissioned service prior to their 62nd birthday.

**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.**

Application information may be submitted on a year-round basis, but the primary periods of collection are immediately preceding summer and winter college graduations. This information is used by the NOAA Commissioned Personnel Center to assess whether an applicant meets or

exceeds the statutory minimum appointment qualifications and other legal obligations of citizenship. Completed applications are examined by the NOAA Officer Personnel Board in order to rate and/or assess the level of qualification, suitability, and availability of candidates for appointment.

The two forms (application, 56-42 and reference, 56-42A) are now fully electronic, the result of efforts to reduce paperwork, clarify the collection process and improve the quality of applicant responses.

The NOAA Corps Commissioned Personnel Center 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 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 informational publications. Should the Director, NOAA Corps 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 primary means of information gathering is through an electronic application process, with the applicant entering data online (<http://www.noaa Corps.noaa.gov/recruiting/application.html>). Paper forms are available upon request. Currently, although the data may be entered online, the final version of the application must be printed, signed, and submitted in hard copy due to a lack of infrastructure to support secure digital submissions.

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

This is a unique application and there is no duplication with other efforts.

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

N/A.

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

The information collected is used for identifying both minimum eligibility and level of qualification of applicants for the NOAA Corps. Reducing or eliminating this collection would severely hinder the ability of the NOAA Corps to recruit officer candidates with the educational background, intelligence, high moral standards, and strong leadership potential required to serve the Nation as a member of this uniformed service.

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

None.

**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 November 18, 2015 (80 FR 72049) solicited public comment on this collection. No comments were received.

Those individuals who are selected for a commission provide NOAA Corps recruiting with a customer satisfaction survey once they have completed the recruiting process. Some examples of the information gathered are given below as submitted by the most recent group of candidates in 2012:

Q: Overall, how would you rate your experience during the application process?

A: Of the 10 selectees, 4 rated Excellent, 5 Good, 1 Average.

Q: What improvements can you suggest to make these processes better?

Summarized answers:

- 1) Clearer guidance on document submission.
- 2) Having more information on what to pack for BOTC.
- 3) Improved communication during the application process.

Please rate the following specific items:

Communication throughout the selection process:	Excellent – 6, Good – 1, Average – 3
Questions were answered quickly and completely:	Excellent – 6, Good – 2, Average – 2
Length of the selection and appointment process:	Excellent – 3, Good – 6, Average – 1
Follow through from administrative staff:	Excellent – 6, Good – 2, Average – 2

Recruiting Office plan to address the feedback above:

New website launched in 2016 will have one page of instructions, bulleted with links to forms. Contact information for questions is on that page as well.

The Pre-reporting guide will be posted on the website and selectees can access that information at any time. Previously, we sent it via email after they were cleared for appointment ~2 months before starting training. The document is currently under modification at the training center.

Improved communication throughout the process continues to be the biggest challenge. We have created specific email accounts to field different questions and submissions. While there are

only two recruiters, these separate accounts help screen and prioritize the influx of questions and documents. The new website has a “Frequently asked questions” section and we are hopeful that this will lessen the amount of emails and calls needing timely responses.

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

None.

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

This information collection is a Privacy Act Systems of Records, [COMMERCE/NOAA-1, Applicants for the NOAA Corps. The Privacy Act of 1974](#), 5 U.S.C. § 552a, is the statutory authority for confidentiality of this information collection, and assurance of confidentiality citing this authority is provided on the information collection forms.

**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.**

None.

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

**Estimated Total Respondents and Responses: 900 (application and interview are counted as one response) Annual Burden Hours: 1,163**

150 applications x 5 hours/applicant for paperwork = 750 hours  
150 applications x 1.5 hours/applicant for interviewing = 225 hours  
150 applications x 5 references (750) x 15 minutes/reference = 188 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).**

**Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$10,875**

150 applicants x \$10/applicant postage or delivery charge = \$1,500  
150 applicants x \$10/applicant college transcripts = \$1,500  
150 applicants x \$50/applicant transportation to interview = \$7,500  
750 references x \$0.50/letter postage or delivery charge = \$375.

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

Excluding salaries for NOAA personnel, which have been accounted for elsewhere, additional costs pertaining specifically to this application process include travel for Officer Personnel Board members to attend board meetings.

**Total annualized cost for recruiting/selection effort: \$6,000.00**

Salaries for NOAA personnel (accounted for elsewhere) = \$0.00.

Officer Personnel Board member travel (2 meetings/year) = \$6,000.00.

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

Adjustments were made due to revised numbers of applications, increased time estimate for the application, and corrected and decreased estimate for interview time.

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

N/A.

**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.**

N/A.

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

N/A.

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

N/A.