

**JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE**  
**COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL COST AND EARNINGS DATA COLLECTION**  
**SURVEY IN THE GREATER ATLANTIC REGION**  
**OMB CONTROL NUMBER: 0648-0643**

The Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Commercial Vessel Cost Data Collection for costs incurred in 2015 was poised to end in the middle of December 2016. However, the response rate at the scheduled close of the data collection, after adjusting for undeliverable surveys and deceased vessel owners, was just over 6%. A response rate this low leaves staff at the Social Sciences Branch (SSB) unable to perform much statistically meaningful analyses. Several vessel owners contacted the SSB cost survey team during the data collection period. Some vessel owners explained that they were aging (the population of commercial fishermen in the Northeast is aging overall), or in one case, injured. While these vessel owners did not object to the cost survey overall, they did not feel able to fill out the survey without assistance either in hard copy or online using the web-based version. The SSB cost survey team also received several calls from vessel owners with questions about the survey effort and whether or not it applied to them. In some cases, vessel owners commented that not all sections of the survey applied to their unique situation, and therefore they wished to confirm whether they should still participate in the survey effort.

To address the low response rate and some of the issues expressed by vessel owners during the original data collection period, SSB proposes an extended data collection process where SSB cost survey team staff travel to ports throughout the Northeast and provides fishermen with another chance to take the survey with an SSB cost survey staff member alongside them. SSB staff will personally be calling every vessel owner in the sample who failed to respond to the survey and scheduling visits in ports up and down the Northeast until May 2017. The sample and survey instrument will remain the same. No fishermen out of the sample will be surveyed and no new questions will be asked of those in the sample. Vessel owners in the sample will be given the opportunity to take the existing cost survey either in hard copy or online as in the original data collection period, but with the benefit of a SSB cost survey staff team member to assist them with any questions vessel owners may have. This outreach and continued data collection effort also gives fishermen an opportunity to provide comments on the survey in face-to-face contact with a member of the SSB cost survey team, and if desired, provide insight into the types of

products or tools they would like to see come out of the cost data collection. SSB will ensure that surveys taken in this setting will be flagged in the data set. Non-response bias is a likely issue for the original data collection and will continue to persist in the proposed extended data collection period, but it is not likely to be more severe than it otherwise would be. Methods to test for and address non-response bias were discussed in our original supporting statement, and these will not be altered by the proposed extended data collection period.