

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT  
FOR-HIRE SURVEY  
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0709**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

This request is for extension of a currently approved information collection, to implement the For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHTS) in all states along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, with the exception of Texas.

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

Collection of recreational fisheries catch and effort data is necessary to fulfill statutory requirements of Section 303 of the [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#) (16 U.S.C. 1852 *et. seq.*), which requires that conservation and management measures prevent over fishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery, and also to comply with [Executive Order 12962](#) on Recreational Fisheries. Section 303 (a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act specifies data and analysis to be included in Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), as well as pertinent data that shall be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce under the plan.

Recreational fishing catch, effort and participation statistics are fundamental for assessing the influence of fishing on any stock of fish. The quantities taken, the fishing effort, and the seasonal and geographical distribution of the catch and effort are required to assess the health of fish stocks and develop and evaluate national fisheries management policies and plans. Recreational fisheries data are essential for NOAA Fisheries, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, the Interstate Fisheries Commissions, state conservation agencies, recreational fishing industries, and others involved in the management and productivity of marine fisheries. The allocation of fishery resources depends on the results of these surveys.

The For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHTS), which samples from lists of for-hire fishing vessels, was implemented in the Gulf of Mexico in 1998 and the Atlantic coast in 2003 to estimate fishing effort on for-hire vessels. Prior to implementation of the FHTS, for-hire effort data were collected by the Coastal Household Telephone Survey (currently OMB control no. 0648-0052), a landline random digit dial telephone survey. Sampling from lists of for-hire vessels is much more efficient for this purpose than the CHTS and results in higher levels of sampling and more precise estimates of for-hire fishing effort. *This request is to continue the FHTS in all states along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, with the exception of Texas<sup>1</sup>.* The FHTS will be conducted for five, two-month reference waves (March/April – November/December) in the states along the Atlantic Coast, with the exceptions of Maine, New Hampshire, North Carolina and Florida. The survey will be conducted for three waves (May/June – September/October) in Maine and New Hampshire. In North Carolina and the Gulf States (including both coasts of Florida, the FHTS will be conducted for six reference waves (January/February – November/December). These specific reference periods encompass the majority of annual recreational saltwater fishing

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<sup>1</sup> Recreational saltwater fishing activity in TX is monitored independently by the TX Parks and Wildlife Department.

activity within the study area. Prior surveys indicated recreational fishing outside these periods was uncommon, contributed a very small percentage of annual fishing effort and fishery landings, and would be disproportionately expensive to sample.

**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.**

NOAA Fisheries, regional fishery management councils, interstate marine fisheries commissions, and state fishery agencies use the data in developing, implementing and monitoring fishery management programs. Catch and effort statistics are fundamental for assessing the influence of fishing on any stock of fish. The quantities taken, the fishing effort, and both the seasonal and geographic distributions of the catch and effort are required for the development of regional management policies and plans. Accurate and timely catch statistics collected over the range of a species must be used in association with biological studies to perform the stock assessments necessary for monitoring the effectiveness of fishery management planning for optimum yield.

Specific data elements that will be collected in the FHTS include:

1. The numbers of fishing trips, fishing trips with paying passengers, and non-fishing trips taken by the vessel during the reference week to differentiate trip type and estimate the total number of for-hire vessel trips.
2. For each trip:
  - a. The date/day of the week - to be used to validate that the reported trip occurred during the reference week;
  - b. Number of anglers on that trip - to be used to estimate the total number of anglers fishing on for-hire vessels;
  - c. The state, county, and fishing access site to which that trip returned - to assess coverage of the vessel frame;
  - d. The time (to the nearest half-hour) that the boat left the dock for that trip, returned from that trip, and fished on that trip - to be used to validate that the reported trip occurred during those times and estimate hours of fishing effort;
  - e. The fishing method or methods used on that trip - to determine fishing activities;
  - f. Area fished/distance from shore - to be used to determine whether the vessel fished in state tidal waters (e.g. in a river, sound, inlet, or bay), state ocean waters, or Federal ocean waters;
  - g. Species targeted on each trip to estimate fishing directed at particular species.

It is anticipated that the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support publicly disseminated information. NOAA Fisheries 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. 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 FHS utilizes Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology with built-in error and logic checks and skip patterns that both reduce the response burden and improve data quality. In addition, an internet reporting option has been developed in an effort to increase response rates. The FHTS also accepts Vessel Trip Reports and FHTS Log Sheets that are faxed by for-hire vessel operators to a toll-free number.

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

NOAA Fisheries Service has the lead Federal responsibility for collection of data from marine recreational fishermen and coordinates informational needs with other agencies. NOAA Fisheries Service has also worked with the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions and State fishery agencies each year to coordinate data collection efforts and avoid duplication.

The FHTS overlaps with a vessel trip reporting (VTR) program administered by the NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (OMB Control No. 0648-0212). The VTR program mandates logbook reporting for all vessels permitted under the Atlantic mackerel, squid, butterfish, Atlantic sea scallop, Atlantic surf clam, ocean quahog, Northeast (NE) multispecies, monkfish, summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, Atlantic bluefish, spiny dogfish, Atlantic herring, tilefish, red crab and skate fishery management plans. Many for-hire vessels in the Greater Atlantic Region are required to submit VTRs as a consequence of permitting. However VTR data are not used to monitor fishing effort and catch for for-hire vessels. Consequently, these vessels are included in the FHTS. We attempt to minimize burden for these vessels by accepting faxed logbook reports in lieu of participation in the FHTS telephone interview.

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

All charter boat and head boats vessel operators who respond the For-Hire Telephone Survey are considered small businesses. The survey instruments have been restricted in length to minimize response time per interview. In addition, multiple response options, including CATI, internet and fax reporting options are provided to ease reporting and minimize reporting burden.

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

A continuous time series of data is scientifically essential. If the survey were conducted less frequently, NOAA Fisheries and state natural resource agencies would experience difficulty in effectively carrying out their responsibilities to meet statutory, administrative, and other obligations to end overfishing of marine fishery resources. An ongoing survey of recreational anglers is required to monitor changing conditions in the fishery and support modifications in fishery regulations both within fishing seasons and among fishing years. In addition, a continuous time series of data is scientifically essential to assess the impact of recreational

fishing on fish stocks. Failure to conduct these data collections would prevent the Secretary from meeting statutory requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. In addition, NOAA Fisheries would be unable to implement Recommendation One of its Marine Recreational Fisheries (MRF) Policy with a resulting loss in service and credibility to the MRF constituency.

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

NA.

**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 July 12, 2017 (82 FR 32177) solicited public comments. No comments were received.

The FHTS is an ongoing survey - OMB Control No. 0648-0709.

The FHTS is a data collection project that is part of NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). MRIP is a collaborative effort among government agencies, independent scientists, recreational fishing groups and conservation organizations to ensure scientifically rigorous collection of appropriate information that meets manager and stakeholder needs. Subsequently, MRIP staff members maintain regular communication with customers, through workshops, workgroup meetings and one-on-one consultations. For example, The MRIP Executive Steering Committee (ESC), which includes senior managers from NOAA Fisheries, the Executive Directors of the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, and a representative from the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, provides general oversight of MRIP and ensures that the program satisfies Federal, state and stakeholder needs for recreational fishing statistics. The ESC meets annually to review program activities, strategically allocate funds to addresses data needs and approve research priorities. Similarly, the MRIP Operations Team (OT), which is responsible for developing and testing improved data collection designs, includes representatives from NOAA Fisheries headquarters, regional offices and science centers, the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions and state natural resource agencies. The OT meets 1-2 times each year to identify regional and state needs for recreational fishing statistics and develop research priorities. MRIP staff also participate in numerous meetings sponsored by regional fishery management councils and state natural resource agencies to update fishery managers, scientists and stakeholders on program accomplishments and collect feedback about data needs and concerns about the program. Finally, recent comments submitted online by FHTS respondents include the following:

- Comment: The online survey drop-down species list should include "Snapper Grouper" and other species targeted by recreational spear fishermen, such as hogfish. Also, there is no field to indicate spearfishing gear was used on a trip.

- Response: The drop-down species list includes an entry for “Snapper Family (Snapper)” and another entry for “Unidentified Grouper”. It is therefore possible to indicate both were targeted because there are 2 entry fields for target species. Ideally, species level data is preferred over family level identification. The species list also includes an “Other Species, Specify” option, where respondents may enter a species that is not included in the current list. Absent any contractual or other impediments, the species list may be reviewed and updated periodically to facilitate response. For example, Hogfish might be added to the drop-down species list. At this time, the FHTS is only meant to collect information for trips targeting finfish with rod and reel. As defined on the “Add a Trip” page “Fishing Method” means “The method of rod and reel fishing used on this trip.” NOAA will consider the implications of modifying the FHTS questionnaire to include other gear types.
- Comment: Use VTRs submitted to GARFO instead of conducting the FHTS to estimate fishing effort in the Northeast.  
Response: Many but not all for-hire vessels are required to submit VTRs to GARFO as a consequence of permitting (as described in Section 4). We attempt to minimize burden for these vessels by accepting faxed logbook reports in lieu of participation in the FHTS telephone interview. NOAA Fisheries is also exploring the use of VTR data in fishing effort estimation.

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

Neither payments nor gifts will be provided to respondents.

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

Responses will only be associated with a unique identification code. Any public release of survey data will be without identification as to its source or in aggregate statistical form. All survey data will be stored on secured, password protected servers, and all transfer of survey data will utilize secure file transfer protocols.

**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 requested in this collection of information.

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

The total annual burden for the For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHTS) in the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts is estimated to be 1,283 hours. The FHTS will target 33,923 potential respondents, and approximately 22,000 responses are expected, averaging 3.5 minutes per interview.

**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).**

These data collections will incur no cost burden on respondents beyond the costs of response time.

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

The average annual cost of the For-Hire Telephone Survey to the Federal government will be approximately \$644,537 in contract/grant award money and \$210,000 for labor staff.

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

There are no program changes.

Adjustment: When the program was new, the total of hours requested was 1,121. The current total hours requested of 1,283 hours reflects an increase of 162 hours. The increase is due to a revision of the estimated time per interview from 3 minutes to 3.5 minutes. The interview time was evaluated based on actual mean interview time reported by the FHTS contractor and estimates of state agency personnel conducting the calls.

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

The For-Hire Telephone Survey data and estimates are accessed online at:  
[www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/recreational-fisheries/access-data/run-a-data-query/queries/index](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/recreational-fisheries/access-data/run-a-data-query/queries/index).

**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 seeking approval to not display expiration date.

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

NA.