

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT  
BILLFISH TAGGING REPORT  
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0009**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

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

This request is for extension of this information collection.

The Billfish Tagging Program (Program) began in 1963 and is an integral part of the Billfish Research Program at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC). This Program is authorized under [16 U.S.C. 760\(e\)](#), Study of migratory game fish; waters; research; purpose.

The SWFSC provides tagging supplies to individuals electing to tag and release the billfish they catch (the Program is advertised by a newsletter and fishermen hear in this way and also by word of mouth from others catching billfish). Each Billfish Tagging Report Card is issued with an individual billfish tag and is imprinted with the number matching the accompanying tag. The Billfish Tagging Report Card is the primary mechanism by which these cooperating anglers and commercial fishers return the tag and release information concerning the billfish they have tagged. Individuals cooperating in the Program do so on a strictly voluntary basis.

**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.**

The Program is conducted throughout the year to determine billfish habitat, mortality rates, migration patterns, feeding habits, and growth rates. Fishery biologists investigating the health of billfish resources throughout the Pacific utilize data from this Program. Results aid in ongoing research concerning billfish resources and are published annually in the Billfish Newsletter (most recent issue is 2016).

The information collection is designed to yield data that meet applicable information quality guidelines. Prior to dissemination, the information will meet 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.**

Data is collected from observations taken at sea on small fishing boats. The data summarizes the actual fishing event that just occurred. Anglers are requested to complete the Billfish Tagging Report immediately and once they return to land, they mail it to the SWFSC. Automated and/or

electronic reporting at the time of tagging is currently unavailable. However, the SWFSC is currently working to develop an online submission that will allow anglers to send the data through an online form. It is estimated that up to 10% of the tag reports may be submitted electronically through the online form.

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

This Program is unique to the billfish angling community because it provides free tagging supplies throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans and results from tagging efforts are published annually. Billfish conservation became very popular during the early 1980s and several foreign and private conservation organizations began tagging programs. This Program cooperates completely with these organizations so that research efforts are expanded and not duplicated.

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

The Program deals with individual anglers cooperating in the Program and does not impact any business entity.

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

Fishery biologists at the SWFSC, and elsewhere, for the purpose of providing management advice, use the Billfish Tagging Program results. A break in the Program time line would jeopardize the usefulness of more than 50 years of continuous billfish tag and recapture data.

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

None. Response to the Billfish Tagging Report is consistent with OMB guidelines and completely voluntary.

**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 14, 2017 (82 FR 32535) solicited public comment. No comments were received in the time period ending on September 12, 2017. No comments were received.

The Billfish Tagging Program contacted various recreational fishermen participating in the program and inquired about their experience with the program. Comments were as follows:

“I have participated in the program for 10 years now and I still love tagging billfish and seeing the results from NOAA every year. I like the tag cards, which are easy and I don’t have to worry about anything else than just dropping it off in the mail.”- Recreational angler, chose to be anonymous.

“The data collected is critical if the billfish tagging program hopes to achieve its scientific goals. And if anything, I would say 5 minutes is an underestimate with respect to the time each tagged fish requires.” – O. Snodgrass, recreational angler

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

No payments are given to those returning the Billfish Tagging Report. Those who tag billfish and submit the Billfish Tagging Report are awarded a tee shirt.

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

Program data results are not confidential; they are public information. Anglers who tag more than a few fish each year are acknowledged by name in the Billfish Newsletter; however, the contact information of participating anglers is not available to the public.

**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 sensitive questions are asked.

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

Burden to complete the Billfish Tagging Report card is about five minutes per response. Our active mailing list of taggers varies between 2,000 and 3,000 volunteers. Recent annual average (2016) number of Billfish Tagging Report cards received was 986. The projected annual average is 1,000 responses. The estimated time burden is 83 hours (1,000 x 5 minutes/60 minutes = 83).

**13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in Question 12 above).**

There is no cost burden to the respondents. Postage is paid by the SWFSC if mailed from within the U.S. For those mailing from foreign countries the only cost is that of postage for a postcard. This would amount to less than \$100 annually.

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

The annual cost to print the Billfish Tagging Report, provide tee shirts to anglers upon recapture of a tagged billfish, and postage is under \$1,000. This figure is based on actual expenses averaged over the last few years. Other costs are part of regular staff time.

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

No changes or adjustments.

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

The Program is conducted on a calendar year with the Billfish Newsletter published in the first half of each year. The Billfish Newsletter is the method by which the SWFSC provides feedback to the fishing community and is written for cooperating anglers participating in the Program. Content of the Billfish Newsletter varies annually but always includes angling effort by area and species captured, reported catches, results from the Billfish Tagging Program as well as general interest articles directed to the billfish angler.

**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 METHOD**

This collection does not employ statistical methods.