

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO 90-2 and 90-4 FORMS.

1. 90-2. Removing unused fields. The form contains seventeen information fields that NOAA does not require the respondent to fill out. These fields are left over from an older version of the 90-2 form. When we sought to renew OMB approval on this form in 2014, we received some comments that some of these fields that were no longer used by NOAA were still being used by some respondents for their own purposes, and they requested that they not be removed yet.

During this public comment period we asked commenters specifically about removing these fields. This time, all commenters who responded to this question said that they had no objection to removing the fields not required by NOAA from the form. Several suggested this would improve the clarity of the form. So we are proposing that these fields be removed to make the form less cluttered and confusing.

We propose to keep one general comment field on the form for any information that an respondent may feel is important to include for his or her own organization's benefit, even though we don't require a response and do not plan to track any responses in this field.

Because these fields were not required to be filled out in the past, removing them will only slightly reduce the reporting burden, by slightly reducing the time it takes an respondent to scan the form and locate the proper fields to fill out.

2. 90-2. Adding a "Readiness Levels" field. NOAA and other federal agencies are working to standardize the way they characterize research projects, by using 'Readiness Levels'. A readiness level is a number from 1 to 9, where 1 = basic research, 2 = applied research, 3 through 8 indicate various levels of prototype design and testing, and 9 indicates that the tool, concept or methodology is in full operational use.

We are proposing that a question be added to the form about which readiness levels describe the proposed research project (a project may span more than one readiness level).

Based on our own experience assigning readiness levels to projects, and comments received, we estimate that the reporting burden for assigning readiness levels to one research project is between 30 seconds and three minutes. Because the National Sea Grant Program grant applicants might propose 600 research projects a year, we estimate the total burden for this information collection to be 1200 minutes for all respondents.

3. 90-2. Request semiquantitative information on a few selected projects. The current form asks that respondents describe the topical content of their projects by selecting items that apply to their project from a standard list of key words or phrases, describing such things as "water quality", "seafood technology", "severe storms".

For a very small fraction of projects (less than 3%, or about 8-15 projects a year), we propose to also ask the respondent to provide semiquantitative information about the relative effort to be applied to each of the key words they selected. We are asking for the best estimate of the project manager, and are not requiring any calculations, derivations or justifications of the response provided.

We need this information because these particular projects are so large and broad in scope that a mere list of all the topics that they cover would not provide useful information about what the project was accomplishing.

We estimate this exercise will take no more about 7 minutes per project, for a total estimated burden of 100 minutes for all respondents.

4. 90-4. Automated fill-in of calculated values. Our request for comments on this information collection resulted in several commenters requesting that we make the 90-4 form available in an Excel spreadsheet format that can take advantage of Excel's automatic calculation abilities. We are proposing to do that. This will save respondents the burden of having to calculate their own twelve budget subtotals and totals for a simple one-year project, and significantly more subtotals and totals for multi-year projects.

We estimate that providing an automated Excel version of the 90-4 form will reduce the reporting burden for a project by about one minute. Because we receive 600 or more project proposals a year, we estimate the total burden for 90-4 information collections will be reduced by 600 minutes for all respondents.

SUMMARY:

We expect these three changes to increase the total burden on all respondents by about $0 + 1200 + 100 - 600 = 700$ minutes or 11 hours, which averages to about one minute per respondent.