

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT  
COOPERATIVE GAME FISH TAGGING REPORT  
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0247**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

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

This request is for extension of a currently approved information collection.

The Cooperative Game Fish Tagging Program was initiated in 1971 as part of a comprehensive research program resulting from passage of P.L. 86-359, [Study of migratory game fish](#), and other legislative acts under which the National Marine Fisheries Service operates. The Cooperative Tagging Center (formerly the Cooperative Gamefish Tagging Program) attempts to determine the migratory patterns and other biological information of billfish, tunas, red drum, tarpon, amberjack, cobia, king mackerel, and swordfish by having anglers tag and release their catch.

The Fish Tag Issue Report card is a necessary part of the tagging program. Fishermen volunteer to tag and release their catch. When requested, NMFS provides the volunteers with fish tags for their use when they release their fish. Usually a group of five tags is sent at one time, each attached to a Report card, which is pre-printed with the first and last tag numbers received, and has spaces for the respondent's name, address, date, and club affiliation (if applicable).

When the angler releases a fish, he takes the Fish Tagging Report card with a tag attached, removes the numbered tag, applies the tag to the fish, and then mails the completed card (which has a number matching the tag number) to NMFS.

When a tagged fish is recaptured, the tag has the address of NMFS and a tag number. The person with the tagged fish can mail the tag to NMFS, where information on the fish is recorded and matched with the release data.

**2. . 1Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. 1If 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.**

Information on each species is used by NMFS to determine migratory patterns, distance traveled, stock boundaries, age, and growth. These data are necessary input for developing management criteria by regional fishery management councils, states, and NMFS. The tag report cards are necessary to provide tags to the volunteer angler, record when and where the fish was tagged, the species, its estimated length and weight, tag number, and information on the tagger for follow-ups if the tagged fish is recovered. Failure to obtain these data would make management decisions very difficult and would be contrary to the NMFS Marine Recreational Fishing policy objectives.

Anglers are made aware of our tagging program through several forms of media: newspaper and magazine articles, through both [The Billfish Foundation](#) and the [Southeast Fisheries Science Center](#) websites, peer review papers, and by word of mouth. Anglers who wish to obtain tag kits or report recaptured tags can contact the cooperative tagging center via phone at 800-437-3936, via email addressed to [tagging@noaa.gov](mailto:tagging@noaa.gov), or via written request sent to:

Cooperative Tagging Center  
75 Virginia Beach Dr.  
Miami, Fl 33149.

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.**

No other satisfactory method of obtaining movement information on oceanic pelagic fish has been identified. Although more sophisticated electronic tags exist, their expense prohibits their use in this program. Automated data entry by persons tagging fish isn't practical; the information is best entered at the time of tagging on fishing vessels.

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

No duplication was evident during consultations with other conservation agencies. No similar information is available except what has been developed by this program.

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

Small entities are not involved.

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

The usefulness of this program would be compromised if the collection of data did not take place on a continual basis. It would be impossible to track trends in fish movement,

stock definitions, and growth rates. In addition, a less than annual frequency would have an adverse effect on the voluntary participation rate.

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

This collection is consistent with OMB guidelines, except that reports may be submitted more often than quarterly - whenever tagging takes place.

**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 October 3, 2017 (82 FR 46039) solicited public comment on this renewal. No public comments were received.

The program consulted with Travis Moore, a researcher and manager of the Gray Fishtag tagging program. He noted that the card layout and spacing was adequate. He also noted that he liked how we had a box to check as to whether the length was lower jaw or total length. He was unsure of the need for a box indicating whether the hook was offset, however, we have had some anglers use offset hooks. He also suggested having a box for vessel name;

Response: In the past we have had a field for vessel name and found it not as useful as the angler name.

We also heard from a respondent, Axel Nanko: Maybe one field for notes, where every fisherman can put in some interesting notes. For example injury of a fin, spinning gear... etc. And for sending in the tagging cards via email, if you like, I could also send pictures of the fish?

Response: We told him that we already have a field where comments can be made, it is the field labeled fish condition/remarks. We also said that we love to see pictures of the fish.

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

Tag release participants receive acknowledgment letters after submitting release data and a tag history letter upon the tag's recapture. Tag recapture participants receive a tag history letter and a Cooperative Tagging Center baseball cap or face buff as a reward.

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

Data on names and addresses are included in the [Commerce/NOAA-6, Fishermen's Statistical Data, Privacy Act system of records](#) and are protected as [Privacy Act](#) records. Handling procedures are described in various NOAA Directives.

**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.**

Estimated responses per year: 10,000  
Mean time/response: 2 minutes  
Total hours: 333 (10,000 x 2 minutes/60 minutes).

**13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection.**

There is no cost to respondents; the postage is prepaid on the tag cards.

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

Annual cost of operation of the Cooperative  
Tagging Center:  
Equipment = \$30,000  
Labor = \$82,400  
**Total cost = \$112,400.**

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

No adjustments were made.

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

A summary of tagging effort is produced annually. Data is used in scientific studies and journal articles.

**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.**

There are no exceptions.

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

This collection does not employ statistical methods.