

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE NOAA COMMISSIONED
OFFICER CORPS
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0047**

A. JUSTIFICATION

This request is for extension and revision of this information collection: the application process has now been shifted solely to an electronic format, streamlining processing and paperwork.

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

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Commissioned Officer Corps (NOAA Corps) is the uniformed service of NOAA, a bureau of the Department of Commerce. The NOAA Corps provides a cadre of professionals trained in engineering, earth sciences, oceanography, meteorology, fisheries science, and other related disciplines who serve their country by supporting NOAA's mission of surveying the Earth's oceans, coasts, and atmosphere to ensure the economic and physical well-being of the Nation.

The statutory authorities for this information collection are [33 USC Chapter 43](#), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps and [PL 112-166 Section 2. \(gg\)\(1\)](#), Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011. NOAA Corps officers serve under Presidentially-confirmed appointments. The current authorized end-strength of the NOAA Corps is 321 commissioned officers on the active duty list. Officers may resign their commissions, or may request voluntary retirement when eligible. Each resignation or retirement creates a vacancy on the list of active duty officers.

The collection of appropriate personal, educational, and professional qualifications information is critical in order to identify those applicants with the educational background, intelligence, high moral standards, and strong leadership potential required to serve the Nation as a member of this uniformed service. Persons wishing to be considered for a NOAA Corps Commission must submit a complete application package, including NOAA Form 56-42, at least three letters of recommendation, and official transcripts. A personal interview must also be conducted. Eligibility requirements include a bachelor's degree with at least 48 credit hours of science, engineering, or other disciplines related to NOAA's missions, excellent health and normal color vision with uncorrected visual acuity no worse than 20/400 in each eye (correctable to 20/20).

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.

Application information may be submitted on a year-round basis, but the primary periods of collection are immediately preceding summer and winter college graduations. This information is used by the NOAA Commissioned Personnel Center to assess whether an applicant meets or

exceeds the statutory minimum appointment qualifications and other legal obligations of citizenship. Completed applications are examined by the NOAA Officer Personnel Board in order to rate and/or assess the level of qualification, suitability, and availability of candidates for appointment.

The two forms (application, 56-42 and reference, 56-42A) are now fully electronic, the result of efforts to reduce paperwork, clarify the collection process and improve the quality of applicant responses.

The NOAA Corps Commissioned Personnel Center 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. Although the information collected is not expected to be disseminated directly to the public, results may be used in scientific, management, technical or general informational publications. Should the Director, NOAA Corps, decide to disseminate the information, it will be subject to 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.

The primary means of information gathering is through an electronic application process, with the applicant entering data online (<http://www.noaacorps.noaa.gov/recruiting/application.html>). Paper forms are available upon request. Currently, although the data may be entered online, the final version of the application must be printed, signed, and submitted in hard copy due to a lack of infrastructure to support secure digital submissions.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

This is a unique application and there is no duplication with other efforts.

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

This collection of information does not involve any small business or other small entities.

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

The information collected is used for identifying both minimum eligibility and level of qualification of applicants for the NOAA Corps. Reducing or eliminating this collection would severely hinder the ability of the NOAA Corps to recruit officer candidates with the educational background, intelligence, high moral standards, and strong leadership potential required to serve the Nation as a member of this uniformed service.

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

None.

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 November 13, 2018, (83 FR 56310), solicited public comment on this collection. No comments were received.

Those individuals who are selected for a commission provide NOAA Corps recruiting with a customer satisfaction survey once they have completed the recruiting process. Some examples of the information gathered are given below as submitted by the most recent group of candidates in 2018:

- Q: Overall, how would you rate your experience during the application process?
- A: Of the 13 selectees, 2 rated Excellent, 8 Good, 2 Average

- Q: What improvements can you suggest to make these processes better?
- A: "Clearer guidance to the many steps for active duty member moving from one service to another."
- A: "Having more information about what the training will be like."
- A: "The only area that I felt might need improvement was the online e-recruit site. The application process had some glitches and, once selected, the site did not reflect completion of various administrative processes."

(NOAA Corps E-Recruit System is in the formative stages and is being continually improved).

- A: "No suggestions, I think the NOAA Corps provided ample time to complete paperwork & prepare for training."

- Q: Please rate the following specific items:
 - o Communication throughout the selection process: Excellent- 9, Good – 4
 - o Questions were answered quickly and completely: Excellent – 8, Good – 5
 - o Length of the selection and appointment process: Ex. – 4, Gd. – 8, Average – 1
 - o Interviews were systematic and fair: Excellent – 13.

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

No payments or gifts are provided to respondents.

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

This information collection is a Privacy Act Systems of Records, [COMMERCE/NOAA-1, Applicants for the NOAA Corps. The Privacy Act of 1974](#), 5 U.S.C. § 552a, is the statutory authority for confidentiality of this information collection, and assurance of confidentiality citing this authority is provided on the information collection forms.

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 asked.

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

Estimated Total Responses: 900 (application and interview are counted as separate responses)

Annual Burden Hours: 2,475

300 applications x 2 hours/applicant for paperwork = 600 hours
300 applications x 5 hours/applicant for interviewing = 1500 hours
300 applications x 5 references x 15 minutes/reference = 375 hours.

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).

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Respondent: \$21,750

300 applicants x \$10/applicant postage or delivery charge = \$3,000
300 applicants x \$10/applicant college transcripts = \$3,000
300 applicants x \$50/applicant transportation to interview = \$15,000
1500 references x \$0.50/letter postage or delivery charge = \$750.

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

Costs pertaining to this application process include travel for one Officer Personnel Board member to attend board meetings, plus salaries for personnel to review applications and resumes and conduct interviews.

Total annualized cost for recruiting/selection effort: \$ 115,725.00

Salaries for NOAA personnel = \$ 109,725.

2 Staff @ \$51/hr (loaded salary) x 150 applications each x 2 hour/app = \$30,600
12 Staff @ \$40/hr (loaded salary) x 25 interviews each x 5 hours/interview = \$60,000
2 Staff @ \$51/hr (loaded salary) x 150 applicants each x 5 references/applicant x .25 hr = \$19,125

One Officer Personnel Board member travel (2 meetings/year) = \$6,000.00.

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

There is an adjustment to this collection that is caused by an increase in the number of applicants to the NOAA Corps and an increase in the burden hours to complete the application process, as well as an adjustment to more accurately reflect the overall cost to the government in the administration of this collection. The number of applicants to the NOAA Corps has increased from 150 annually to 300 annually and the burden to complete the application and interview process has increased from 6.5 hours to 7 hours. The costs to the government increased from \$6,000 to \$115,725 as a result of including costs for NOAA Corps personnel involved in the review of applications and references and the conducting of applicant interviews. Previously, only travel costs for one Officer Personnel Board member had been included in the cost to the government.

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

N/A.

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.

N/A.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.

N/A.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

N/A.