

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
Greater Atlantic Region Permit Family of Forms
OMB Control No. 0648-0202

RIN 0648-BF57

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is proposing a change to the 0648-0202 family of forms to add a new information collection requirements for federally permitted fishing vessels. This information collection will remain unchanged, with the exception of a new gear code that will be available for selection when completing a trip report in the vessel monitoring system (VMS). There will be no burden added, and no additional public cost burden associated with this change.

A change request was authorized by OMB for this collection and for related information collection request 0648-0212 – Greater Atlantic Region Logbook Family of Forms, also affected by this rule. The change request was authorized in to address multiple, approximately concurrent rulemakings that affect OMB collections 0648-0202, 0648-0212, and 0648-0229.

The Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) specifies a procedure for approval of additional selective gear. At the request of the New England Fishery Management Council, the Regional Administrator may authorize additional gear if, based upon an experiment, the gear satisfies regulatory standards. On June 8, 2015, the Council sent a letter to NMFS requesting that it authorize the proposed trawl gear for use in the small-mesh fishery in the event that the accountability measure is triggered for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder. Based upon a preliminary review of experimental data, the proposed selective trawl net meets the regulatory standard for approving additional gear. The implementation of this new gear requirement would provide more flexibility in the use of an additional trawl gear that minimizes bycatch of stocks of concern, in a manner consistent with the objectives of the Northeast Multispecies FMP, when fishing under the small-mesh fishery accountability measure.

In order to facilitate the collection of catch information associated with this gear, a new gear code is being added to the list of gear codes currently available for selection in the VMS. The addition of a new gear code does not modify the form, or burdens associated with the data collection. The new gear code provides a better option for vessels to choose when fishing with this modified trawl gear.