

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

**RIN 0648-BI28**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is proposing a change to the 0648-0202 family of forms pursuant to RIN 0648-BI28 to remove an option to declare into the Closed Area I Hook Gear Haddock Special Access Program (CAI HGH SAP) from the Multispecies Common Pool, Multispecies Sector, and Monkfish forms on the Vessel Monitoring System. There will be no burden added, and no additional public cost burden associated with this change.

On November 19, 2004, Framework Adjustment 40-A to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan created the CAI HGH SAP to provide additional opportunities to target healthy stocks. The CAI HGH SAP allowed vessels to access the groundfish year round Closed Area I if they followed certain gear and other restrictions. On April 9, 2018, the Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment eliminated Closed Area I. This rendered the CAI HGH SAP unnecessary, as it no longer allows any activity otherwise prohibited by a closed area. On December 17, 2019, NMFS issued a final rule prohibiting gillnet fishing in Closed Area I, as ordered by a Federal Court, but the area remains open for hook vessels, the only gear type eligible to use the CAI HGH SAP.

NMFS is authorized under section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to make administrative changes to regulations that are necessary to carry out any fishery management plan or amendment. Removal of the CAI HGH SAP regulations at §648.85(b)(7) is consistent with the changes made by the Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment and will help avoid confusion.

To facilitate the elimination of the CAI HGH SAP, the VMS declaration options that allow vessels to declare into the CAI HGH SAP are being removed. These options are currently available on the Multispecies Common Pool, Multispecies Sector, and Monkfish forms on the VMS. It would be confusing, unnecessary, and detrimental to provide vessels with VMS options to declare into a program that no longer exists, so the removal of these options will prevent that outcome.

These revisions will not change the number of participants, the costs associated with these programs, nor the total burden.