

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration**  
**Conflict of Interest Disclosure for Non-Federal Government Individuals Who are Candidates to**  
**Conduct Peer Reviews Required by the OMB Peer Review Bulletin**  
**OMB Control No. 0648-0567**

**PART A**

**Abstract**

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

**Justification**

**1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.**

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued government-wide guidance to enhance the practice of peer review of government science documents: [OMB's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review](#) ("Peer Review Bulletin" or PRB) which establishes minimum peer review standards for influential scientific information that federal agencies intend to disseminate. The PRB also directs federal agencies to adopt or adapt the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) policy for evaluating conflicts of interest when selecting peer reviewers who are not federal government employees (federal employees are subject to federal ethics requirements which address conflict of interest). For peer review purposes, the term "conflict of interest" means any financial or other interest which conflicts with the service of the individual because it could: (1) significantly impair the individual's objectivity, or (2) create an unfair competitive advantage for any person or organization.

NOAA has adapted the NAS policy and developed two confidential conflict of interest disclosure forms which the agency uses to examine prospective reviewers' potential financial conflicts and other interests that could impair objectivity or create an unfair advantage. One form is for peer reviewers of studies related to government regulation; the second form is for peer reviewers of any other influential scientific information subject to the Peer Review Bulletin. The forms include questions about employment as well as investment and property interests and research funding. Both forms also require the submission of a curriculum vitae (CV).

**2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.**

NOAA is seeking to collect this information from potential peer reviewers (non-government employees) when conducting a peer review pursuant to the PRB, or an OAR laboratory peer review. The number of peer reviews conducted pursuant to the PRB each year will vary, but for illustrative purposes, NOAA currently has fifty peer review plans posted on its Peer Review Agenda, including those completed in the past year, in progress, or pending shortly). The information collected in the conflict of interest disclosure is essential to NOAA's compliance with the OMB PRB, and helps to ensure that government studies are reviewed by independent, impartial peer reviewers.

NOAA 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 NOAA be required to release any of 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 collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.**

The NOAA peer review conflict of interest forms are available in Word, downloadable from the NOAA Office of the Chief Information Officer's Information Quality Web page: [http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services\\_programs/info\\_quality.html](http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/info_quality.html) and fillable on a computer. The format allows the user to electronically complete and sign the form, then email it and his/her CV to the NOAA office conducting the peer review.

**4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Question 2**

This information collection is specifically required by OMB's Peer Review Bulletin. Each potential peer reviewer is asked to disclose any potential conflicts with regard to a given study. A potential reviewer will only complete one conflict form per study. NOAA is unaware of any other similar collection of information. However, NOAA will continue to investigate whether there are any existing common form collections that are used for the same purpose.

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

This information collection does not impact small businesses or other small entities, only individuals. The information collected is the minimum amount necessary to determine any potential conflict of interest.

**6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.**

If the information collection requirements are not completed, NOAA would be in violation of OMB's PRB requirements for screening potential peer reviewers for conflicts of interest. Alternatively, the agency would not be able to solicit non-governmental peer reviewers, a practice which would be contrary to the clear intent of the PRB.

**7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted**

**in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.**

This information collection will be conducted in a manner consistent with OMB guidelines.

**8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publications in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.**

A Federal Register Notice published on April 30, 2020 (85 FR 23950) solicited comments on his request. No comments were received.

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 were met with no response.

**9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.**

No payment or gifts will be made to respondents.

**10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy. If the collection requires a systems of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.**

[NOAA's Policy on Conflicts of Interest for Peer Review subject to the OMB Peer Review Bulletin](#) states that, except as provided for in the Policy, specific conflict of interest information obtained by NOAA – or the entity commissioned by NOAA to manage the peer review process – from: 1) the NOAA conflict of interest disclosure form; 2) amended disclosures; and 3) the public and other sources will be held in confidence by NOAA. Access to such information within NOAA will be limited to those offices whose proper business requires access to that information. Such information will not be released by NOAA, or the entity commissioned by NOAA to manage the peer review process, except with the approval of the individual to whom the information pertains, unless release is required by law. As specified in NOAA's Policy on Conflicts of Interest, the exception to the non-disclosure policy is the public disclosure of the names of reviewers and their organizational affiliations. For peer reviewers of highly influential scientific assessments, the reviewer's credentials and relevant experience must also be disclosed, as required by the PRB. Although the OAR laboratory reviews are not subject to the PRB, the same procedures are followed, but with the disclosure of the reviewer's credentials and relevant experience not applicable for these reviews.

**11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.**

No questions of a sensitive nature are included in this information collection.

**12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.**

Information Collection	Type of Respondent (e.g., Occupational Title)	# of Respondents/year (a)	Annual # of Responses / Respondent (b)	Total # of Annual Responses (c) = (a) x (b)	Burden Hrs / Response (d)	Total Annual Burden Hrs (e) = (c) x (d)	Hourly Wage Rate (for Type of Respondent) (f)	Total Annual Wage Burden Costs (g) = (e) x (f)
Conflict of Interest Disclosure Forms	Scientists	321	1	321	30 min	161	\$37.28	\$6,002.08
<b>Totals</b>				<b>321</b>		<b>161</b>		<b>\$6,002.08</b>

\*Hourly wage rate determined using mean hourly wage for Life, Physical, and Social Science major occupation from BLS's *Occupational Outlook Handbook*.

<https://www.bls.gov/bls/blswage.htm>

**13. Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected on the burden worksheet).**

There are no costs associated with this collection of information as the forms are submitted via email.

**14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.**

Cost Descriptions	Grade/Step	Loaded Salary /Cost	% of Effort	Fringe (if Applicable)	Total Cost to Government
Federal Oversight	GS-13	\$166,604	8%		\$13,328.32
Contractor Cost					
Travel					
Other Costs:					
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$13,328.32</b>

The Loaded Salary was calculated using the 2020 GS Rest of U.S. locality pay table, Step 10 for a GS-13 annual salary and adding 40% for benefits. The percent of effort is the estimated annual time spent reviewing each completed conflict of interest form and administering this information collection.

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

Information Collection	Labor Costs		Miscellaneous Costs		Reason for change or adjustment
	Current	Previous	Current	Previous	
Conflict of Interest Disclosure Forms	\$6,002	Unknown	0	0	Wage rates not calculated in previous renewal.
<b>Total for Collection</b>	<b>\$6,002</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>Difference</b>	<b>\$6,002</b>		<b>0</b>		

**16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.**

This collection of information will not be published.

**17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.**

The agency plans to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection on all instruments.

**18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions.”**

The agency certifies compliance with [5 CFR 1320.9](#) and the related provisions of [5 CFR 1320.8\(b\)\(3\)](#).

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

This collection does not employ statistical methods.