

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration**  
**Billfish Tagging Report**  
**OMB Control No. 0648-0009**

**Abstract**

This request is for extension of this information collection.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Southwest Fisheries Science Center operates an angler-based billfish tagging program. Tagging supplies are provided to volunteers. When they catch and tag fish, they submit a brief report on the fish tagged and the location of tagging. The information obtained is used in conjunction with tag returns to determine billfish migration patterns, mortality rates, and similar information useful in the management of the billfish fisheries.

**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 Billfish Tagging Program (Program) began in 1963 and is an integral part of the Billfish Research Program at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC). This Program is authorized under 16 U.S.C. 760(e), Study of migratory game fish; waters; research; purpose.

The SWFSC provides tagging supplies to individuals electing to tag and release the billfish they catch (the Program is advertised by a newsletter and fishermen hear in this way and also by word of mouth from others catching billfish). Each Billfish Tagging Report Card is issued with an individual billfish tag and is imprinted with the number matching the accompanying tag. The Billfish Tagging Report Card is the primary mechanism by which these cooperating anglers and commercial fishers return the tag and release information concerning the billfish they have tagged. Individuals cooperating in the Program do so on a strictly voluntary basis.

**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.**

The Program is conducted throughout the year on an ongoing basis to determine billfish habitat, mortality rates, migration patterns, feeding habits, and growth rates. The tagging report cards are sent, along with physical fish tags, to requesting recreational anglers in the US Postal Service as a completely voluntary form of tag information, fishing information, and species biological information. Anglers simply fill out the form and drop it in the mailbox, as the form already has pre-paid return postage to the SWFSC. Fishery biologists investigating the health of billfish resources throughout the Pacific utilize data from this Program. Results aid in ongoing research concerning billfish resources and are published annually in the *Billfish Newsletter*.

The information collection is designed to yield data that meet applicable information quality guidelines. Prior to dissemination, the information will meet 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.**

Data is collected from observations taken at sea on small fishing boats. The data summarizes the actual fishing event that just occurred. Anglers are requested to complete the Billfish Tagging Report immediately and once they return to land, they drop it in the mailbox with the prepaid postage to be mailed to the SWFSC. Automated and/or electronic reporting at the time of tagging is currently unavailable. However, the SWFSC is currently working to develop an online submission that will allow anglers to send the data through an online form. It is estimated that up to 10% of the tag reports may be submitted electronically through the online form.

**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 Program is unique to the billfish angling community because it provides free tagging supplies throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans and results from tagging efforts are published annually. Billfish conservation became very popular during the early 1980s and several foreign and private conservation organizations began tagging programs. This Program cooperates completely with these organizations so that research efforts are expanded and not duplicated.

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

The Program deals with individual anglers cooperating in the Program and does not impact any business entity.

**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.**

Fishery biologists at the SWFSC, and elsewhere, for the purpose of providing management advice, use the Billfish Tagging Program results. A break in the Program time line would jeopardize the usefulness of more than 57 years of continuous billfish tag and recapture data.

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

This collection is conducted in a manner that is 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 Notice (85 FR 37878) published in the *Federal Register* on Wednesday, June 24, 2020, solicited public comments. No public comments were received.

NMFS reached out to several anglers who had submitted Billfish Tagging Reports in an effort 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. No responses were received.

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

No payments are given to those returning the Billfish Tagging Report. Those who tag billfish and submit the Billfish Tagging Report are awarded a tee shirt.

**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.**

The information collected under this OMB Control Number is authorized under SORN COMMERCE/NOAA-19, Permits and Registrations for United States Federally Regulated Fisheries. The information is stored in NOAA system NOAA4930, for which a current PIA is on record at <https://www.osec.doc.gov/opog/privacy/NOAA-pias.html>.

Program data results are not confidential; they are public information. Anglers who tag more than three billfish each year are acknowledged by name in the Billfish Newsletter; however, the contact information of participating anglers is not available to the public. The database storing contact information of participating anglers is password protected and managed by dedicated federal Information Technology Services (ITS) staff of the Southwest Fisheries Science Center. Limited staff, including contractors, have permissions to access the database. All staff with permission have completed the NOAA Cybersecurity Awareness & Privacy Training Course.

**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 sensitive questions are asked.

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

Burden to complete the Billfish Tagging Report card is about five minutes per response. Our active mailing list of taggers varies between 2,000 to 3,000 volunteers. Recent annual average (2019) number of Billfish Tagging Report cards received was 952. The projected annual average is 1,000 responses. The estimated time burden is 83 hours (1,000 x 5 minutes/60 minutes = 83). The annualized cost to

respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information is \$996, based on the California minimum wage of \$12.00/hour as of January 1, 2020 ([https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/faq\\_minimumwage.htm](https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/faq_minimumwage.htm)).

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)
Billfish Tagging Report	Recreational anglers	1,000/year	1	1,000	0.083	83	\$12.00	\$996
<b>Totals</b>				<b>1,000</b>		<b>83</b>		<b>\$996</b>

**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 capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with this information collection.

**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	ZP4	\$345,000 (\$115,000 annually)	5%		\$17,250
Contractor Cost		\$124,875 (\$41,625 annually)	50%	N/A	\$62,437.50
Other Costs:					\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$79,687.50</b>

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

There are no changes to the information collection since the last OMB approval.

**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.**

The Program is conducted on a calendar year with the *Billfish Newsletter* published in the first half of each year. The Billfish Newsletter is the method by which the SWFSC provides feedback to the fishing community and is written for cooperating anglers participating in the Program. Content of the Billfish Newsletter varies annually but always includes angling effort by area and species captured, reported catches, results from the Billfish Tagging Program as well as general interest articles directed to the billfish angler. The Billfish Newsletter is published publically as a 508-compliant PDF on the SWFSC website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/science-data/billfish-newsletter> and distributed to consenting public via email.

**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\(b\)\(3\)](#).