

Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA)

The PRA requires federal agencies to obtain clearance in order to ask questions of members of the public. All questions asked by west coast groundfish observers have been approved under OMB Control No. 0648-0593 through 12/31/2021. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and implementing regulations, vessels are required to answer any question related to observer and vessel safety. However, vessels are not required to answer any other question asked by the observer. Vessel's willingness to answer all questions asked by observers is voluntary and this willingness is appreciated as it will ensure observer data collected on the vessel can be used in future analyzes.

The observer program can be contacted toll free at: (866) 780-8064 or by the program's email address at NWFSC.observerprogram@noaa.gov if anyone has any questions.

A "Paperwork Reduction Act Information" sheet is mailed to all selected vessels for observer coverage and is included with their selection letter.

Paperwork Reduction Act Information

Information collected through the observer program is used to: (1) monitor catch and bycatch; (2) understand the population status and trends of fish stocks and protected species, as well as the interactions between them; (3) determine the quantity and distribution of net benefits derived from living marine resources; (4) predict the biological, ecological, and economic impacts of existing management actions and proposed management options; and (5) ensure that the observer programs can safely and efficiently collect the information required for the previous four uses. In particular, these biological and economic data collection programs contribute to legally mandated analyses required under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), Executive Order 12866 (EO 12866), and other applicable law.

Most of the information collected by observers is obtained through "direct observation by an employee or agent of the sponsoring agency or through non-standardized oral communication in connection with such direct observations". Under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) regulations at 5 C.F.R. 1320.3(h)(3), facts or opinions obtained through such observations and communications are not considered to be "information" subject to the PRA. The public reporting burden for responding to the questions that observers ask and that are subject to the PRA is estimated to average: 117 minutes, Northeast Fisheries Observer Program and At-Sea Monitors; 56 minutes, North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer Program and Processing Plants; 15 minutes, Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program; 58 minutes, West Coast Groundfish Observer Program; 86 minutes, Pacific Islands Region Observer Program; 75 minutes, Southeast Shark Fishery Observer Program; 85 minutes, Southeast Pelagic Observer Program; 110 minutes, Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish and Shrimp Observer Program; 62 minutes, West Coast Region Observer Program; 75 minutes, Southeast Reef Fish Program per trip, including the time for hearing and understanding the questions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: West Coast Groundfish Observer Program, 2725 Montlake Blvd. East, Seattle, WA 98112.

Providing information related to observer and vessel safety is mandatory under regulations at 50 C.F.R. 600.746. However, all other requested information is voluntary. Although you are under no legal obligation to answer non-safety related observer questions, we would appreciate your support as it ensures observer data can be used for its intended purpose. The information collected will be kept confidential as required under Section 402(b) of the MSA (18 U.S.C. 1881a(b)) and regulations at 50 C.F.R. Part 600, Subpart E. Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.