

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
NMFS Alaska Region Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Program
OMB Control No. 0648-0445

SUPPORTING STATEMENT PART A

Abstract

The National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS), Alaska Regional Office, requests extension and revision of this currently approved information collection for the NMFS Alaska Region Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Program pursuant to proposed rule 0648-BM42.

NMFS requires owners and operators of selected vessels participating in federally managed groundfish and crab fisheries off Alaska to obtain, install, and maintain an operational, NMFS-approved VMS. Tracking vessel location using VMS is required to monitor compliance with area-specific catch allocations, monitor compliance with requirements to redeploy or remove fishing gear from commercial fishing grounds, and monitor compliance with complicated time and area closures in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands to protect Steller sea lion or essential fish habitat.

This information collection is revised due to the proposed rule (RIN 0648-BM42) to implement Amendment 16 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ Off Alaska. Amendment 16 and the rule would establish Federal fishery management for all salmon fishing that occurs in the Cook Inlet Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which includes commercial drift gillnet and sport (recreational) salmon fisheries.

This collection is revised to include vessels commercially fishing for salmon in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area that would be required to install and maintain an operational VMS. This increases the number of respondents for this collection.

This rule would also add a new information collection for the Cook Inlet EEZ commercial salmon fishery under a new OMB control number. NMFS is submitting a separate request for the new 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.

NMFS Alaska Region manages the groundfish and crab fisheries in the exclusive economic zone of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI) and the groundfish fisheries of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) under fishery management plans (FMPs) for the respective areas. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council prepared, and NMFS approved, the FMPs under the authority of the [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#), (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*, Magnuson-Stevenson Act). The [Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982](#) at 16 U.S.C. 773–773k provides the Secretary of Commerce with the authority and general responsibility to carry out the requirements of the Convention between the United States and Canada for the Preservation of the Halibut Fishery of the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea. Regulations implementing the FMPs appear at 50 CFR parts [679](#) and [680](#).

NMFS requires the owners and operators of selected vessels participating in federally managed groundfish and crab fisheries off Alaska to obtain, install, and maintain an operational, NMFS-approved VMS. Tracking vessel location using VMS is required to monitor compliance with area-specific catch allocations, monitor compliance with requirements to redeploy or remove fishing gear from commercial fishing grounds, and monitor compliance with complicated time and area closures in the GOA and BSAI designed to protect Steller sea lion or essential fish habitat. Table 1 summarizes these VMS requirements by providing information about who must provide vessel location information to NMFS through VMS, references for the regulatory requirements, and a brief explanation of the reason for the VMS requirement.

VMS is an essential component of monitoring and management for complicated, geographically widespread fishing closures. NMFS uses information from VMS to identify where vessels are operating, to organize patrols so as to increase the number of fishing vessels visually examined, or to focus examination of vessels of greatest concern, and as evidence in prosecutions.

NMFS has determined that traditional methods of relying on industry reports, observer reports, and periodic surveillance by the U.S. Coast Guard and NMFS Office for Law Enforcement (NMFS OLE) are not adequate to monitor the complex, overlapping, and numerous closure areas, area-specific allocations to individuals and entities, and other regulatory limitations. These determinations were made through the rulemaking process for the various actions implementing VMS requirements. More information about the background and history of the Alaska Region’s VMS requirements is available on the Alaska Region web site (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/enforcement#vessel-monitoring>) and in the proposed and final rules that implemented these VMS requirements.

Revision Due to Proposed Rule (RIN 0648-BM42)

This information collection is revised due to the proposed rule (RIN 0648-BM42) to implement Amendment 16 to the Salmon FMP. Amendment 16 and the rule would establish Federal fishery management for all salmon fishing that occurs in the Cook Inlet EEZ, which includes commercial drift gillnet and sport (recreational) salmon fisheries. This action is necessary to comply with rulings from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska, and to ensure the Salmon FMP is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action would implement new recordkeeping, reporting, and compliance

requirements necessary for required Federal management and monitoring of the Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon fisheries.

This collection is revised because vessels commercially fishing for salmon in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area would be required to install and maintain an operational VMS. The other recordkeeping, reporting, and monitoring requirements implemented by this rule for the Cook Inlet EEZ commercial salmon fishery will be under a new OMB control number. NMFS is submitting a separate request for the new collection.

This rule would require VMS to monitor participation in the Cook Inlet EEZ commercial salmon fishery, help Federal managers estimate expected removals from each opening, and ensure that participants remain within EEZ waters open to fishing. VMS transmits the real-time GPS location of fishing vessels to NMFS. This would help ensure that vessels are not fishing in both State of Alaska (State) and EEZ waters during the same fishing trip, which would be prohibited under the rule to improve the accuracy of catch accounting for Federal managers. VMS would also help verify when a vessel may be lawfully transiting through Cook Inlet EEZ Area waters after participating in a State fishery. A vessel with a Salmon Federal Fisheries Permit would be required to keep its VMS active within State waters to ensure that entire fishing trips are monitored and to help verify that no fishing occurred within State waters during a fishing trip that included salmon harvest in the Cook Inlet EEZ.

During fishing operations, a drift gillnet is not always attached to the vessel and the position of the vessel as determined by VMS may be different than the exact location of the net it deployed. However, because drift gillnet vessels in Cook Inlet remain relatively close to their nets due to the significant tidal currents in the area, VMS data, when combined with logbook information and vessel or aircraft enforcement patrols, provides robust information to determine compliance with Federal fishing area, time, and catch accounting regulations. This approach is also more practicable and cost-efficient to fishery participants than the alternatives of comprehensive electronic monitoring systems or human fishery observers.

While VMS requirements would increase costs to commercial fishery participants, they are required by NMFS to manage the fishery and prevent overfishing. Specific consideration was given in their development to minimize burden to the extent practicable while also providing required information to Federal fishery managers in a timely manner. All entities that would be directly regulated by this action could also choose to continue participating in only the State waters fisheries to avoid being subject to these Federal requirements.

Some vessel operators have already acquired VMS units under existing VMS programs; therefore, these vessels are already included in the number of respondents and responses in this information collection. NMFS expects that all vessel operators participating in the Cook Inlet EEZ commercial salmon drift gillnet fishery that have not yet had a VMS unit installed would qualify for reimbursement of purchase of their initial unit under the VMS Reimbursement Program.

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.

Table 1 summarizes the VMS requirements by providing information about who must provide vessel location information to NMFS through VMS, references for the regulatory requirements, and a brief explanation of the reason for the VMS requirement. The statutes to that apply to all the requirements described below are governed by Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.* and The Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982 at 16 U.S.C. 773–773k and are not added to the table. No forms are required for these requirements.

Table 1. VMS Requirements in the Federally Managed Fisheries Off Alaska.¹

Who is required to carry an operational VMS?	Regulatory reference 50 CFR	Needs and Uses
Vessels that operate in a Federal reporting area when the vessel is authorized to participate in the Atka mackerel, Pacific cod, or pollock directed fisheries and the vessel's authorized species and gear type is open to directed fishing. These VMS requirements do not apply to vessels using jig gear.	§ 679.7(a)(18) , instructions for Federal Fisheries Permit application form, and § 679.28(f)(6)(i)	To monitor compliance with time and area closures to protect Steller Sea lions.
Vessels named on a Federal Fisheries Permit or Federal Crab Vessel Permit while operating in the Aleutian Islands subarea or operating a federally permitted vessel ² in adjacent State of Alaska waters. In addition, vessels using trawl gear in the Aleutian Islands must set their VMS to transmit vessel location at least 10 times per hour.	§§ 679.7(a)(21) , 679.28(f)(6)(ii) and (f)(6)(ix) , 679.28(f)(7)	To monitor compliance with area closures to protect Essential Fish Habitat.
Vessels harvesting Crab Rationalization Program crab in the Bering Sea.	§§ 680.7(c)(2) and 680.23(d)	To monitor proper accounting of area-specific allocations.
Federally permitted vessels operating in the GOA with non-pelagic trawl or dredge gear on board.	§§ 679.7(a)(22) , 679.28(f)(6)(iii)	To monitor compliance with area closures to protect Essential Fish Habitat.
GOA Rockfish Program — vessels assigned to a rockfish cooperative must use VMS at all times when operating in a reporting area off Alaska from May 1 until November 15; or until that rockfish cooperative has submitted a rockfish cooperative termination of fishing declaration that has been approved by NMFS. In addition, vessels assigned to a rockfish cooperative and subject to a sideboard limit must use VMS at all times when operating in a reporting area off Alaska from July 1 until July 31.	§§ 679.5(r)(7) , 679.7(n)(3) , 679.28(f)(6)(iv)	To monitor proper accounting of area-specific allocations.
Amendment 80 catcher/processors at all times while operating in the BSAI or GOA.	§§ 679.5(s)(7) , 679.28(f)(6)(vi)	To monitor proper accounting of area-specific allocations.

¹ In addition to the Federal requirements, the State of Alaska also requires VMS for vessels using some gear types in parallel groundfish fisheries under 5 AAC 28.087(c).

² “Federally permitted vessel” is defined at § 679.2 as a vessel that is named on either a Federal fisheries permit or a Federal crab vessel permit.

Who is required to carry an operational VMS?	Regulatory reference 50 CFR	Needs and Uses
Vessels operating in the Western and Central GOA (Federal reporting areas 610, 620, or 630) that receive and process groundfish from other vessels.	§§ 679.7(b)(4)(ii) , 679.28(f)(6)(v)	Monitor compliance with area-specific processing caps in the Western and Central GOA and a requirement that Pacific cod harvested in the GOA may not be delivered to a vessel for processing in a different regulatory area.
Vessels fishing for individual fishing quota (IFQ) sablefish in the Bering Sea or Aleutian Islands IFQ regulatory areas (including vessels using pot gear).	§§ 679.28(f)(6)(vii) , 679.42(k)(1)	Monitor proper accounting of area-specific allocations.
Vessels using pot gear to fish for IFQ or CDQ halibut or CDQ sablefish in the BSAI.	§§ 679.7(f)(26) , 679.28(f)(6)(viii) , 679.42(m)(4)(ii)	Monitor proper accounting of area-specific allocations, and to monitor vessels using pot gear to retain halibut IFQ or CDQ.
Vessels operating in a GOA IFQ regulatory area and using longline pot gear to fish IFQ sablefish or to retain halibut incidentally in longline pot gear.	§§ 679.7(f)(25) , 679.28(f)(6)(viii) , and 679.42(k)(2) and (l)(7)(ii) , Annual halibut management measures (88 FR 14066, 03/07/2023)	Monitor compliance with requirements to redeploy or remove pot gear from the fishing grounds within a specified time period.
Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program (PCTC Program) — catcher vessels assigned to a PCTC Program cooperative or that are subject to sideboard limits detailed in § 679.133 must use functioning VMS equipment as described at § 679.28(f) at all times when operating in a reporting area off Alaska during the A and B season.	§§ 679.7(m)(3) , 679.134(f)(5)	Monitor proper accounting of area-specific allocations.
Cook Inlet EEZ Commercial Salmon Fishery — vessels required to have a Salmon Federal Fisheries Permit issued under § 679.114 in the waters of Cook Inlet and have drift gillnet gear onboard.	§ 679.115(d) [new]	Monitor participation in the Cook Inlet EEZ salmon fishery and compliance with Federal fishing area, time, and catch accounting regulations.
OPTIONAL Any vessel that carries a transmitting VMS while fishing for halibut in Area 4A, 4B, 4C, or 4D, and until all halibut caught in any of these areas is landed, is exempt from vessel clearance requirements.	Annual halibut management measures (88 FR 14066, 03/07/2023) No. 15--Vessel Clearance in IPHC Regulatory Area 4, No. (16)	Monitor proper accounting of area-specific allocations. These requirements in the halibut annual management measures are not subject to the PRA.

What type of information is collected? VMS units automatically transmit the location of a vessel several times per hour using a Global Positioning System satellite. The VMS unit is passive and automatic, requiring no reporting effort by the vessel operator. A communications service provider receives the transmission and relays it to NMFS OLE.

Who must comply with this information collection? Owners and operators of vessels required to carry transmitting VMS units are the people required to comply with the components of this information collection. From 2020 to 2023, an average of 559 commercial fishing vessels per year participating in the federally managed groundfish, crab, and scallop fisheries off Alaska transmitted vessel location via VMS. NMFS estimates 100 vessels will likely install VMS due to

the rule. This estimate is derived from the number of vessels that have participated in Federal Cook Inlet in past years, that some vessels that will participate already have VMS installed so are already included in the vessel count due to their participation in other VMS programs, and an assumption that many vessels will choose to only fish in State waters to avoid additional monitoring cost and impacts to their operations with Federal management. Therefore, the annual number of vessels carrying VMS units is estimated at 659 vessels (559 vessels 3-yr average + 100 expected new vessels).

How is the information collected? Vessel owners comply with the requirements to submit vessel location information to NMFS by purchasing, installing, and maintaining an approved and operational VMS unit. Prior to participating in operations requiring VMS, a vessel owner must obtain a NMFS-approved VMS transmitter and install it or have it installed on board the vessel. The VMS transmitter must be available for inspection by NMFS personnel, observers, or authorized officers. The vessel owner must ensure that the VMS transmitter is not tampered with, disabled, destroyed, or operated improperly, and must pay all charges levied by the VMS service provider agreement.

How frequently is the information collected? An average of 7.2 million VMS transmissions per year were transmitted from the 559 vessels from 2020 to 2023. Most of these vessels were transmitting location information every half hour (two times per hour) when not in port and every hour while in port. Vessels using trawl gear to fish in the Aleutian Islands were required to transmit their location via VMS at least ten times per hour. With the addition of the vessels expected due to the rule, NMFS estimates an average of 7.3 million VMS transmissions per year will be transmitted from the 659 vessels.

VMS transmissions are not considered responses or included in the burden hour estimates for this collection summarized in Question #12 because vessel position location is automatically transmitted from the VMS unit. The vessel transmission rates and total transmissions are used to estimate the communications costs associated with providing the vessel location information (see Question #13).

What is this information used for? VMS allows verification of where fishing is occurring in real time. VMS allows verification that vessels fishing in an area are permitted to fish in that area, facilitates enforcement of area closures in certain fisheries, and allows NMFS OLE to check the accuracy of vessel position information reported by the vessel operator in the daily logbooks. VMS also helps ensure harvested fish are properly debited or reported because NMFS can track vessels as they arrive in port to offload the product. In addition, NMFS OLE uses VMS to monitor compliance with requirements to redeploy or remove pot gear from the fishing grounds within a specified time period. VMS is used to track the management areas in which vessels are fishing on a given trip, and agents could then follow up with a dockside inspection to see what gear was returned to shore when making a landing.

VMS data also is used by NMFS and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to analyze the impacts of current fisheries and proposed fishery conservation and management actions.

Is this information shared? [Section 515 of Public Law 106-554](#) (the Information Quality Act) requires NMFS to ensure the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information it publicly

disseminates. Data submitted by VMS units is aggregated, synthesized, summarized, and presented in a non-confidential format to the public in reports and analyses of fishery conservation and management measures. Public dissemination of these data is governed by [NOAA's information quality guidelines](#), which were issued on October 30, 2004.

Reports and analyses prepared with VMS data generally fall under NOAA's information quality category "synthesized products." These products have been developed through analysis of original data by applying methods that require some scientific evaluation and judgment; however, these methods of analysis generally are well documented and relatively routine. Therefore, peer review is generally not required for reports and analyses prepared using VMS data.

Reports and analyses undergo internal agency review by people familiar with the underlying data and fisheries being described. In addition, analyses presented to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council are reviewed by its Scientific and Statistical Committee.

Data from the VMS unit registration are maintained and used primarily by NMFS OLE to monitor compliance. This information may periodically be made available to the public in summary form as was done to prepare the projections used in this analysis.

How have the collection requirements changed? There have been no revisions to this collection since this collection was last extended in 2021.

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 VMS collection-of-information is automated and integrates current information technology in the fishery management and monitoring process.

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

No other management agency requires the submission of VMS data from fishermen participating in the federally managed fisheries off Alaska. In general, Alaska Region information collections are prepared and reviewed by staff familiar with all of the information collection requirements for the region. Staff work together to develop information collection requirements for new programs. In addition, NMFS staff work closely with the staff of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the International Pacific Halibut Commission to reduce duplication in information collection requirements to the extent possible given overlapping jurisdictions and complex fisheries. Senior staff at the Alaska Region, NMFS headquarters, and the Department of Commerce General Counsel review all new and revised information collection requirements that are associated with rulemakings. This process minimizes the potential for duplication of information collection requirements for participants in the Federal fisheries off Alaska.

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

This collection-of-information impacts some small entities. NMFS has attempted to minimize the burden of the VMS requirements on small entities primarily through the VMS Reimbursement Program to offset the cost of purchasing a VMS unit. More information about this program is in the response to Question #13.

The VMS requirements added by the rule (RIN 0648-BM42) are part of the monitoring, recordkeeping, and reporting measures that would increase direct costs and burden to the participants of the Cook Inlet EEZ commercial salmon fishery. It is expected that all vessel operators participating in the Cook Inlet EEZ salmon drift gillnet fishery would qualify for a reimbursement under the VMS Reimbursement Program. However, vessel operators would have to replace their VMS units at their own expense as units wore out or became technologically obsolete.

While these requirements do increase costs to commercial fishery participants, they are required by NMFS to manage the fishery and prevent overfishing. Specific consideration was given in their development to minimize burden to the extent practicable while also providing required information to Federal fishery managers in a timely manner. All entities that would be directly regulated by this action could also choose to continue participating in only the State waters fisheries to avoid being subject to these Federal requirements.

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.

The VMS is an integral part of the management of the fisheries in the Alaska Region for reasons described in more detail in the response to Questions #1 and # 2. The inability to collect vessel location through VMS would reduce NMFS's ability to monitor and enforce complex, overlapping, and numerous closure areas, area-specific allocations to individuals and entities, and other regulatory limitations.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

This collection will be conducted in a manner consistent with OMB guidelines. Although VMS units transmit the location of a vessel several times per hour, the VMS unit is automatic and requires no reporting effort by the vessel operator. Therefore, this information collection does not require respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly.

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 proposed rule (RIN 0648-BM42) soliciting public comments will be published coincident with this submission.

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

No payment or gift to respondents is provided under this program.

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.

All VMS units include systems to minimize the risk of direct or inadvertent disclosure of vessel position. The information collected, including VMS transmissions, is confidential under section 402(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1881a *et seq.*), and also under [NOAA Administrative Order 216-100](#), which sets forth procedures to protect confidentiality of fishery statistics.

The System of Records Notice that covers this information collection is [COMMERCE/NOAA #6: Fishermen's Statistical Data](#).

The Privacy Impact Assessment that covers this information collection is [NOAA NMFS Alaska Region Local Area Network \(NOAA4700\)](#).

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.

This information collection does not involve information of a sensitive nature.

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

Total estimated unique respondents are 659. This total includes 100 new vessels that NMFS estimates will install a new VMS unit due to this rule. Although, some additional vessels may

install VMS, NMFS estimates that these additional vessels are covered in the conservative estimates of respondents already included in this collection.

VMS transmissions are not considered responses or included in the burden estimates because vessel position location is automatically transmitted from the VMS unit.

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)
VMS installation of new units	Vessel owner	33 annualized (100/3)	1	33*	6 hrs	200 hrs annualized (600 hrs/3)	*	*
VMS installation of replacement units	Vessel owner	33 annualized (100/3)	1	33*	6 hrs	200 hrs annualized (600 hrs/3)	*	*
VMS maintenance	Vessel owner	659	1	659*	4 hrs	2,636 hrs	*	*
VMS failure troubleshooting (assume 5% failure rate/year)	Vessel owner	33 (659 x 0.05)	1	33*	2 hrs	66 hrs	*	*
Totals				758[†]		3,102 hrs		\$0*

* The vessel owner is present during installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting operations, so there are burden hours associated with being required to be present for these activities. However, the vessel owner pays a technician an average of \$128/hour to perform this work, so the labor costs associated with these activities are recorded below under miscellaneous costs. Because there is no information collected by NMFS in advance, during, or after the installation, maintenance, or troubleshooting of the VMS units, these events do not contribute to the number of responses for this information collection.

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).

Table 13a. Summary of estimates of total annual cost burden to respondents, including capital and start-up costs and operations and maintenance costs, including the costs to hire technicians to do VMS installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting.

Information Collection	# of Respondents/year (a)	Annual # of Responses / Respondent (b)	Total # of Annual Responses (c) = (a) x (b)	Cost Burden / Respondent (h)	Total Annual Cost Burden (i) = (c) x (h)
VMS installation of new units	33 annualized (100/3)	1	33	\$0 ¹	\$0
VMS installation of replacement units	33 annualized (100/3)	1	33	\$3,100 per replacement unit	\$102,300
VMS daily transmission costs	659	2	659 ²	\$720 ³	\$474,480 ³
VMS installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting	758	1	758	\$3,102 hrs x \$128/hr (Table 13b below)	\$397,056
TOTALS	659		758		\$973,836

¹ NMFS expects that all vessels participating in the Cook Inlet EEZ commercial salmon fishery would qualify for reimbursement under the VMS Reimbursement Program. See explanation of program under the heading "Response to Question 13 (continued)."

² The automatic transmission of vessel location data from the VMS unit is not considered a response under the PRA because the information is sent automatically from the unit with no need for any action by the vessel operator or crew.

³ See explanation under heading "Response to Question 13 (continued)."

Table 13b. Explanation for calculation of miscellaneous costs to hire a technician to install new or replacement VMS units and maintain and troubleshoot VMS units.

Information Collection	Number of respondents	Number of responses per entity per year	Total annual responses	Estimated time per response	Total annual hours	\$/hr labor cost	Total labor cost
VMS installation of new units	33 annualized (100/3)	1	33 annualized (100/3)	6 hrs	200 annualized (600 hrs /3)	\$128 ¹	\$25,600
VMS installation of replacement units	33 annualized (100/3)	1	33 annualized (100/3)	6 hrs	200 annualized (600 hrs /3)	\$128 ¹	\$25,600
VMS maintenance	659	1	659	4 hrs	2,636 hrs	\$128 ¹	\$337,408
VMS failure troubleshooting (assume 5% failure rate/year)	33 (659 x 0.05)	1	33	2 hrs	66 hrs	\$128 ¹	\$8,448
Totals			758		3,102 hrs		\$397,056

¹ See explanation under heading "Response to Question 13 (continued)."

Response to Question 13 (continued).

As noted above, NMFS estimates that approximately 559 vessels are carrying operating VMS units in the groundfish, crab, and scallop fisheries off Alaska and 100 vessels would install units due to the rule. Depending on which brand of VMS is chosen, NMFS estimates the price of a VMS unit ranges from about \$2,500 to \$3,200. All 559 of the currently operating VMS units have already been purchased.

In 2006, NOAA established a VMS Reimbursement Program to offset the cost of purchasing a new VMS unit for the purpose of complying with fishery regulations pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act (see <http://www.psmfc.org/program/vessel-monitoring-system-reimbursement-program-vms>). The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission in collaboration with NMFS OLE distributes the allocated reimbursement funds to eligible, confirmed vessel owners and operators. The reimbursement program is for eligible vessels that have not had a VMS unit installed before and reimburses the cost of the base unit of the first VMS unit up to \$3,100. Many of these reimbursements were made because of requirements to upgrade or replace outdated VMS units. NMFS expects that all vessel operators participating in the Upper Cook Inlet salmon drift gillnet fishery would qualify for a reimbursement under this program.

VMS units periodically wear out or break down and must be replaced, and some vessel operators voluntarily upgrade their VMS units. NMFS estimates that 100 units will be replaced over the course of the 3-year renewal period of this information collection, or an annualized rate of 33 VMS replacements per year (100/3). These replacement units are not likely to be eligible for reimbursement due to the “one time” provisions of the reimbursement program. Each of these 33 replacement units are estimated to cost \$3,100 per unit for a total annual cost of \$102,300. NMFS selected \$3,100 as a cost estimate for the replacement units because it is the maximum allowed for new unit reimbursement and probably represents a good average cost of a new or replacement unit.

Depending on which brand of VMS is chosen, the average monthly cost of a VMS service provider agreement is approximately \$60 for transmission two times per hour and approximately \$190 for transmission ten times per hour (trawling in the Aleutian Islands). NMFS is unable to breakdown the total estimate of 7.3 million VMS transmissions per year between three categories of transmission rates (ten times per hour, two times per hour, and one time per hour when a vessel is in port). Therefore, for purposes of estimating the average cost of VMS transmissions per vessel and overall, NMFS assumes that each vessel required to use VMS pays for a 12-month service provider agreement at the \$60/month rate. The majority of the vessels will be fishing in areas and fisheries that require transmission of location information two times per hour; however, the assumption that each vessel will be paying for VMS transmission the full 12-months of the year is conservative, so balances out the fact that some of the vessels will be paying a higher monthly charge for more frequent transmissions.

Based on these assumptions:

The cost for VMS transmission for a single vessel is \$720 (12 months * \$60/month).

The cost for VMS transmission for all vessels is \$474,480 (659 vessels * \$720/hour).

The hourly charges for installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting by a qualified marine electronics technician vary by location. Based on responses to informal interviews, Seattle rates are approximately \$115 per hour; Kodiak rates are approximately \$135 per hour; and Dutch Harbor rates are approximately \$142 per hour. Thus, the average of the high and low rates, \$128 per hour, has been used to estimate this burden.

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.

Alaska Region VMS data are monitored and interpreted by NOAA OLE. Currently, no officers are directly dedicated to the NMFS Alaska Region VMS Program; however, a program manager and an enforcement technician work on VMS.

The fully loaded salary cost includes 52 percent of the salary to account for benefits and other overhead costs (e.g., \$78,056 * 1.52 = \$118,645 loaded salary). The grade and step are from the Department of Commerce Alternative Personnel System (CAPS) pay tables (<https://www.commerce.gov/hr/practitioners/caps/pay-administration>). The general schedule grade equivalent for CAPS is included in parentheses.

Cost Descriptions	Grade/Step	Loaded Salary /Cost	% of Effort	Fringe (if Applicable)	Total Cost to Government
Federal Oversight program manager	ZA-4 step 4 (GS 13/14)	\$267,023	3%		\$8,011
Other Federal Positions					
enforcement technician	ZS-4 step 4 (GS 7/8)	\$118,645	12%		\$14,237
Contractor Cost					\$0
Travel					\$0
Other Costs:					\$0
TOTAL					\$22,248

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

This collection is revised because the proposed rule (RIN 0648-BM42) would require vessels commercially fishing for salmon in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area to install and maintain an operational VMS. NMFS estimates 100 vessels will install a VMS due to this rule, which increases the number of respondents for this collection. The respondents have also been updated to reflect current participation in the federally managed fisheries off Alaska that require a VMS. The tables below identify the adjustments and program changes made to this collection.

Information Collection	Respondents		Responses		Burden Hours		Reason for change or adjustment
	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	
VMS installation of new units	33	—	33	—	200	—	The rule adds vessels that are expected to install VMS. No new installations were expected during the last renewal period. (program change)
VMS installation of replacement units	33	33	33	33	200	200	No change
VMS daily transmission costs	659	550	659	550	2,636	2,200 ¹	The rule increases the annual number of vessels that would be expected to have transmission costs (program change), and there was a small increase in the average number of vessels that currently have transmission costs (adjustment).
VMS installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting	33	28	33	28	66	56	The rule increases the number of vessels annually that would be expected to hire a technician to install, maintain, and troubleshoot VMS units (program change).
Total for Collection	659	550	758	611	3,102	2,456²	
Difference	109 (100 program change; 9 adjustment)		147 (138 program change; 9 adjustment)		646 (610 program change; 36 adjustment)³		

¹ Incorrectly reported in the previous supporting statement as 2,220 hr.

² Incorrectly reported in the previous supporting statement as 2,476 hr

³ Difference is 646 based on correct burden time. However, the actual Adjustment is 16 based on the numbers previously entered into ROCIS.

Information Collection	Labor Costs		Miscellaneous Costs		Reason for change or adjustment
	Current	Previous	Current	Previous	
VMS installation of new units	0	—	0	—	The rule adds vessels that are expected to install VMS. No new installations were expected during the last renewal period. (program change)
VMS installation of replacement units	0	0	102,300	102,300	No change
VMS daily transmission costs	0	0	474,480	396,000	The rule increases the annual number of vessels that would be expected to have transmission costs (program change), and there was a small increase in the average number of vessels that currently have transmission costs (adjustment).
VMS installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting	0	0	397,056	314,368	The rule increases the number of vessels annually that would be expected to hire a technician to install, maintain, and troubleshoot VMS units (program change).
Total for Collection	\$0	\$0	\$973,836	\$812,668	
Difference	0		\$161,168 (\$150,080 program change; \$11,088 adjustment)		

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.

NMFS has no plans to publish the results of this information collection.

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.

There are no forms associated with this information collection on which to display an expiration date.

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