

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
For-Hire Telephone Survey
OMB Control No. 0648-0709

Abstract

This request is for extension of a currently approved information collection, to implement the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHTS) in all states along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, except Louisiana and Texas. The primary purpose of the FHTS data is to estimate for-hire fishing effort (i.e., the number of angler trips taken aboard for-hire vessels) and evaluate for-hire fishing trip characteristics. For-hire fishing effort estimates are combined with catch per unit effort (CPUE) estimates derived from complementary intercept survey data to produce estimates of catch (harvest and discards) by species.

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.

Collection of recreational fisheries catch and effort data is necessary to fulfill statutory requirements of Section 303 of the [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#) (16 U.S.C. 1852 *et. seq.*), which requires that conservation and management measures prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery, and also to comply with [Executive Order 12962](#) on Recreational Fisheries, which orders Federal agencies, to the extent permitted by law and where practicable, and in cooperation with States and Tribes, improve the quantity, function, sustainable productivity, and distribution of U.S. aquatic resources for increased recreational fishing opportunities. Section 303 (a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act specifies data and analysis to be included in Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), as well as pertinent data that shall be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce under the plan.

Recreational fishing catch, effort and participation statistics are fundamental for assessing the influence of fishing on any stock of fish. The quantities taken, the fishing effort, and the seasonal and geographical distribution of the catch and effort are required to assess the health of fish stocks and develop and evaluate national fisheries management policies and plans. Recreational fisheries data are essential for NOAA Fisheries, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, the Interstate Fisheries Commissions, state conservation agencies, recreational fishing industries, and others involved in the management and productivity of marine fisheries. The managing authorities use results of catch and effort surveys in stock assessments to help inform fisheries management decisions that affect the allocation of fishery resources.

The For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHTS), which samples from lists of for-hire fishing vessels, was implemented in the Gulf of Mexico in 1998 and the Atlantic coast in 2003 to estimate fishing effort on for-hire vessels. Sampling from lists of for-hire vessels is efficient and results in appropriate sampling of for-hire fishing effort. *The FHTS is now implemented in all states along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, with the exception of Louisiana and Texas*¹. The FHTS will be conducted for five, two-month reference waves

¹ Recreational saltwater fishing activity in LA and TX is monitored independently by the LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the TX Parks and Wildlife Department, respectively.

(March/April – November/December) in the states along the Atlantic Coast, with the exceptions of Maine, New Hampshire, North Carolina and Florida. The survey will be conducted for three waves (May/June – September/October) in Maine and New Hampshire. In North Carolina and the Gulf States (including both coasts of Florida, the FHTS will be conducted for six reference waves (January/February – November/December). These specific reference periods encompass the majority of annual recreational saltwater fishing activity within the study area. Prior surveys indicated recreational fishing outside these periods is uncommon, contributes a very small percentage of annual fishing effort and fishery landings, and is disproportionately expensive to sample.

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 agency uses FHTS information with information from catch surveys to produce estimates for fishing catch and effort for charter boats and head boats. Data collected in past surveys have been used by NOAA Fisheries, regional fishery management councils, interstate marine fisheries commissions, and state fishery agencies to develop, implement and monitor fishery management programs. Catch and effort statistics are fundamental for assessing the influence of fishing on any stock of fish. The quantities taken, the fishing effort, and both the seasonal and geographic distributions of the catch and effort are required for the development of regional management policies and plans. Accurate and timely catch statistics collected over the range of a species must be used in association with biological studies to perform the stock assessments necessary for monitoring the effectiveness of fishery management planning for optimum yield.

Specific data elements that will be collected in the FHTS include:

1. The numbers of fishing trips, fishing trips with paying passengers, and non-fishing trips taken by the vessel during the reference week to differentiate trip type and estimate the total number of for-hire vessel trips.
2. For each trip:
 - a. The date/day of the week - to be used to validate that the reported trip occurred during the reference week;
 - b. Number of anglers on that trip - to be used to estimate the total number of anglers fishing on for-hire vessels;
 - c. The state, county, and fishing access site to which that trip returned - to assess coverage of the vessel frame;
 - d. The time (to the nearest half-hour) that the boat left the dock for that trip, returned from that trip, and fished on that trip - to be used to validate that the reported trip occurred during those times and estimate hours of fishing effort;
 - e. The fishing method or methods used on that trip - to determine fishing activities;
 - f. Area fished/distance from shore - to be used to determine whether the vessel fished in state tidal waters (e.g. in a river, sound, inlet, or bay), state ocean waters, or Federal ocean waters;
 - g. Species targeted on each trip to estimate fishing directed at particular species.

It is anticipated that the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support publicly disseminated information. NOAA Fisheries 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. Prior to dissemination, the information will be subjected to

quality control measures and a 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 FHTS samples a list-based frame and the survey mode is by telephone interview. The FHTS utilizes Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology with built-in error and logic checks and skip patterns that both reduce the response burden and improve data quality. The CATI system is designed to minimize interview time by allowing interviewers to quickly record responses to each question.

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

NOAA Fisheries Service has the lead Federal responsibility for collection of data from marine recreational fishermen and coordinates informational needs with other agencies. NOAA Fisheries Service has also worked with the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions and State fishery agencies to coordinate data collection efforts and avoid duplication. NOAA Fisheries has reduced duplication of effort by eliminating TX and LA from the survey because these state agencies are collecting the information that is needed.

The FHTS overlaps with a vessel trip reporting (VTR) program administered by the NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (OMB Control No. 0648-0212) and with the Southeast Region Logbook Family of Forms 1) Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS) and 2) another data collection program, hereafter referred to as [SEFHIER](#), administered by the NOAA Southeast Regional Office (OMB Control No. 0648-0016).

Headboats in NC, SC, GA, AL, MS, and FL are excluded from the FHTS to avoid overlap with the SRHS. The VTR program mandates logbook reporting for all vessels permitted under the Atlantic mackerel, squid, butterfish, Atlantic sea scallop, Atlantic surf clam, ocean quahog, Northeast (NE) multispecies, monkfish, summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, Atlantic bluefish, spiny dogfish, Atlantic herring, tilefish, red crab and skate fishery management plans. Many for-hire vessels in the Greater Atlantic Region are required to submit VTRs as a consequence of permitting. However, the VTR program does not include all for-hire fishing vessels. Operators of for-hire vessels that only fish in state waters for species that do not require a federal permit are not required to submit VTRs. Likewise, SEFHIER reporting only requires federally permitted vessel reporting. Not all for-hire vessels require a federal permit. Therefore, the VTR and SEFHIER data alone cannot be used to monitor fishing effort for all for-hire vessels. Federally permitted and unpermitted for-hire vessels are currently included in the FHTS. We attempt to minimize burden for VTR vessels by incorporating VTR data in lieu of FHTS telephone interview data when the vessel representative indicates they submitted their VTR data. SEFHIER is a developing program and not yet fully implemented. We will evaluate the potential to use SEFHIER program data in lieu of FHTS telephone data. The VTR and SEFHIER data are submitted electronically by respondents.

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

All charter boat and head boat vessel operators who respond to the For-Hire Telephone Survey are

considered small businesses. The survey instruments have been restricted in length to minimize response time per interview. In addition, CATI technology is implemented to ease reporting and minimize reporting burden.

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.

A continuous time series of data is scientifically essential. If the survey were conducted less frequently, NOAA Fisheries and state natural resource agencies would experience difficulty in effectively carrying out their responsibilities to meet statutory, administrative, and other obligations to end overfishing of marine fishery resources. An ongoing survey of recreational anglers is required to monitor changing conditions in the fishery and support modifications in fishery regulations both within fishing seasons and among fishing years. In addition, a continuous time series of data is scientifically essential to assess the impact of recreational fishing on fish stocks. Failure to conduct these data collections would prevent the Secretary from meeting statutory requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. In addition, NOAA Fisheries would be unable to implement Recommendation One of its Marine Recreational Fisheries (MRF) Policy with a resulting loss in service and credibility to the MRF constituency.

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

There are no special circumstances that would cause the FHTS information collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent 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 September 5, 2023 (88 FR 60649) solicited public comments. No public comments were received in response to the notice and therefore, no agency comment response actions were taken. The FHTS is an ongoing survey (OMB Control No. 0648-0709) and is a component of NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP).

MRIP is a collaborative effort among government agencies, independent scientists, recreational fishing groups and conservation organizations to ensure scientifically rigorous collection of appropriate information that meets manager and stakeholder needs. Subsequently, MRIP staff members maintain regular communication with customers, through workshops, workgroup meetings and one-on-one consultations. For example, The MRIP Executive Steering Committee (ESC), which includes senior managers from NOAA Fisheries, the Executive Directors of the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, and a representative from the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, provides general oversight of MRIP and ensures that the program satisfies Federal, state and stakeholder needs for recreational fishing statistics. The ESC meets annually to review program activities, strategically allocate funds to address data needs and approve research priorities. The MRIP Regional Implementation Team Council, representing state natural resource agencies, interstate marine fisheries commissions and regional fishery management councils,

develop Regional Implementation Plans and convene annually to identify specific needs for recreational fisheries statistics, including needs for survey coverage, resolution, precision and timeliness of survey estimates. The MRIP Regional Implementation Team Council most recently met in July 2023. MRIP staff also participate in numerous meetings sponsored by regional fishery management councils and state natural resource agencies to update fishery managers, scientists and stakeholders on program accomplishments and collect feedback about data needs and concerns about the program.

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

Neither payments nor gifts will be provided 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.

Responses will only be associated with a unique identification code. Any public release of survey data will be without identification as to its source or in aggregate statistical form. All survey data will be stored on secured, password-protected servers, and all transfer of survey data will utilize secure file transfer protocols.

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 requested in this collection of information.

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

As discussed in Part B, Question 1, approximately 21,930 annual responses are expected, averaging 3.5 minutes per response. Annual labor costs to respondents were estimated based on an hourly average wage rate of \$25.79 for Ship and Boat Captains and Operators (Occupational Code 53-5020 in May 2022 (https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/naics2_71.htm#53-0000)). There are no other costs to respondents. There are also no recordkeeping requirements associated with the FHTS. A total of 1,279 annual burden hours is anticipated, resulting in an annual labor cost to respondents of approximately \$32,985.

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)
For-Hire Telephone Survey	Ship and Boat Captains and Operators	21,930	1	21,930	0.0583	1,279	\$25.79	32,985.41
Totals				21,930		1,279		32,985.41

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.

The estimated average annual cost of the For-Hire Telephone Survey to the Federal government will be approximately \$536,000 in contract/grant award money and \$214,000 in Federal Oversight. Federal Oversight involves multiple MRIP staff, each conducting specific tasks for survey frame maintenance, monitoring contractor survey conduct/performance, reviewing deliverables, and statistical analyses/estimation. It is estimated that the combined employee labor effort is equal to the labor of at least one and less than two full-time employees. Contractor/Grantee cost is for interviewer training, survey conducting, data processing, QA/QC tasks, and meeting participation.

Cost Descriptions	Grade/Step	Loaded Salary /Cost	% of Effort	Fringe (if Applicable)	Total Cost to Government
Federal Oversight	ZP-03/04	\$ 214,000			\$ 214,000
Other Federal Positions					
Contractor Cost		\$ 536,000			\$ 536,000
Travel					0
Other Costs:					0
TOTAL					\$ 536,000

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

Adjustment: The previous request was for 1,348 hours. The current total hours requested of 1,279 hours reflects a decrease of 69 hours. The decrease is due to a revision of the estimated number of vessels in the population.

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	
For-Hire Telephone Survey	21,930	23,114	21,930	23,114	1,279	1,348	Revision of the estimated number of vessels in the population
Total for Collection	21,930	23,114	21,930	23,114	1,279	1,348	
Difference	1,184		1,184		-69		

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.

No complex analytical techniques will be used. Each year, NOAA Fisheries administers recreational fishing surveys for six discrete, two-month reference waves, beginning with wave 1 (January/February) and continuing through wave 6 (November/December). The MRIP FHTS will be administered for six successive waves per year, for 3 years, beginning with wave 1 (January/February), 2024 and continuing through wave 6, 2026.

All data collected and analyzed will be included in table format available on the Web page of the Fisheries Statistics Division, Office of Science and Technology, National Marine Fisheries Service. The web site address is <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/recreational-fishing-data/saltwater-recreational-data-and-statistics-queries>. Data from this survey may support research and analyses to be presented at appropriate professional meetings (e.g. American Fisheries Society, Joint Statistical Meetings) and may be submitted for publication in appropriate statistical or fisheries peer-reviewed journals. Summary marine recreational fishery catch statistics produced using data from this survey are included in the annual publication by NMFS, Fisheries of the United States (e.g. FUS 2020, available online: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/fisheries-united-states-2020-report>).

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