

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration**  
**Evaluation of Public Visitors' Experience at the National Marine Sanctuaries**  
**Visitor Centers and Exhibits**  
**OMB Control No. 0648-0582**

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT PART A**

**Abstract**

This request is for the extension of a current information collection. The evaluation of visitor demographics, experiences, and opinions about visitor centers and exhibits is needed to support the conservation, education, and management goals of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) to strengthen and improve the stewardship, sustainable use, and protection of natural, cultural, and historical resources. Under the jurisdiction of ONMS and to satisfy legal mandates, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is authorized to conduct evaluations, such as this information collection, under the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (Section 314(c), codified at 33 U.S.C. § 893(a)) to ensure education programs have measurable objectives and milestones, as well as clear, documented metrics for evaluating its programs. We therefore are seeking to find out if people visiting ONMS' visitor centers and exhibits are receiving our new messages by conducting an optional exit survey. Conducting thorough evaluations will aid in vital decisions regarding exhibit renovation, new exhibits, interpretation programs, and educational content.

**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.**

This information collection request will assist resource managers and communications/education staff at ONMS in implementing program priorities. ONMS proposes to collect information from the general public to improve visitor services and educational programming and to better communicate key messages and stewardship actions.

Up-to-date visitor opinions, participant experiences, and demographics are needed to support the conservation, education, and management goals of ONMS to strengthen and improve the stewardship, sustainable use, and protection of natural, cultural, and historical resources under the jurisdiction of the ONMS pursuant to the [National Marine Sanctuaries Act](#) (16 U.S.C. §§ 1431 et seq). NOAA is authorized to conduct evaluations, such as this survey, under the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (section 314(c), codified at 33 U.S.C. § 893(a)) to ensure education programs have measurable objectives and milestones, as well as clear, documented metrics for evaluating its programs.

ONMS has identified a lack of information on the effectiveness of its education, outreach, and

communications initiatives as they relate to sanctuary/monument visitor centers, exhibits (permanent or traveling/temporary), and educational programming offered by its visitor centers and partner facilities. Additionally, the survey will cover questions about educational programming offered at ONMS visitor centers or partner facilities to gauge the effectiveness of the information presented. Not enough data is currently available to evaluate how well materials and programs are providing the public with information about the conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, cultural, archaeological, scientific, educational, or aesthetic qualities of national marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments.

**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 primary focus for the survey will be to gather objective information on how successful ONMS is in enhancing public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of national marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments in the National Marine Sanctuary System through ONMS and partner visitor centers, exhibits, kiosks, and associated educational programs. The purpose of this information collection is to assess the view of the general public, including sanctuary/monument constituents, on education and outreach initiatives as a way to guide future efforts. The survey is designed to reveal visitor satisfaction, retention of key messages, and demographic profiles. The information may be used to influence future exhibits, education, and outreach or to determine where visitor services may need to be enhanced or reduced.

Data gathered during this collection will be used by ONMS headquarters and individual sanctuary/monument staff. The surveys will be conducted by ONMS visitor center staff, education and outreach staff, docents, interns, and volunteers.

The information from this survey will be used to align future exhibit and educational programs developed at ONMS visitor centers. Additionally, information will be used to improve National Marine Sanctuary System messages to over 250,000 patrons.

Surveys will be ongoing within ONMS visitor centers or at partner venues that include an exhibit or kiosk (permanent or traveling/temporary), as well as associated educational programming about a national marine sanctuary or marine national monument managed or co-managed by ONMS. It is anticipated the data gathered from this collection will be used on an as-needed basis throughout the year based on variable hosting timelines for traveling exhibits, temporary exhibits, etc.

The information will aid ONMS budget allocation and prioritization, strategic planning, and management review processes. The data will also be used to engage with constituents and the larger community on resource protection and conservation topics. Survey results will be used by sanctuary/monument site superintendents to improve visitor services, education programs, and outreach programs where the survey is administered. Survey responses will also aid sanctuary/monument communication and education staff in effectively communicating key messages and stewardship actions. In addition, the survey data will contribute to NOAA and DOC performance/accomplishment reports and year-end summaries.

The survey items can be categorized into five components: (1) Socio-demographics; (2) Familiarity with

center/exhibits; (3) Use of exhibits; (4) Reactions/satisfaction; (5) Perceptions of messages.

(1) Socio-demographics: Summarizes the demographic characteristics of the sanctuary visitors, as an important context for interpreting subsequent analyses and findings about visitors' perceptions. It also presents a profile and comparison of two visitor segments: residents and tourists.

(2) Familiarity with center/exhibits: Determines the awareness and familiarity of visitors with the sanctuary center and exhibits. This will provide analyses of frequency of visits in terms of first time, occasional, and frequent repeat visitors.

(3) Use of exhibits: Provides an overview of the proportion of visitors who looked at selected exhibits or talked with staff. This will provide analyses on exhibit use by various visitor segments, for example, who is more likely to stop at maps, computer simulation, etc., in terms of residents versus tourists and families versus adult-only groups.

(4) Reactions/satisfaction: This is about visitors' opinions of the experience – ratings, what is worthwhile about the visit, what they enjoyed, and what they would want to see again if they return to the center. Includes repeatability of experience.

(5) Perceptions of messages: Information about visitors' perceptions of the main educational messages presented in the visitor center/exhibit. Did visitors understand that these exhibits are about a specific place (e.g., the marine national monument or national marine sanctuary)? Did visitors get any conservation messages or ideas about how they can help with preservation efforts?

**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 visitor center patron assessments will consist of intercept interviews and self-paced assessments. Interviews will be conducted on paper, using a clipboard, or other mixed-mode approaches, for the reasons below:

- Patron aversion to surveys can be tempered via the humanistic learning theory of instructional design (by calling to their values and judgments, interviewers build patron trust)
- Patrons who wish to have their comments recorded who are uncomfortable with a more formal interview assessment process will have the option to do a self-paced assessment.

Survey data collection will primarily be conducted face-to-face and will be recorded on paper forms. If feasible, a mixed mode approach will be done with computer or kiosk assisted interviewing to improve data quality and the number of respondents reached. Surveys will also be made available using a web link.

**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**

There are currently no efforts underway in NOAA to systematically survey guests at visitor centers or at locations hosting NOAA exhibits, therefore there is no overlap of target populations.

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

This project will not impact small entities, businesses, organizations, or government bodies. All respondents will be individuals or families.

**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.**

Without this collection, a critical data gap will remain which could inhibit the ability of ONMS staff to conduct a thorough assessment of its education and communications strategies. The lack of survey data will lead to less informed strategic and budget planning processes.

If this evaluation were not conducted, ONMS visitor centers would not be able to assess whether it is fulfilling NOAA's mandate of having an informed society that comprehends the importance of the ocean, coasts, and atmosphere in the global ecosystem to make the best social and economic decisions. In addition, visitor centers will not be able to modify exhibits and education programs effectively to fulfill NOAA's, the National Ocean Services', ONMS', and site-specific education and outreach goals. Also, as part of NOAA's science education plan, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries evaluates its formal and informal education and outreach programs, and this is one important component of those evaluations.

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

In considering the expanded format for collecting race and ethnicity information, which includes minimum categories, multiple detailed checkboxes, and write-in response areas with example group categories, we determined that such specificity is not required for our purposes. The primary goal of this information collection is to obtain feedback on visitor centers and exhibits in a manner that supports conservation education and management efforts. Streamlining the data collection process allows us to focus on insights that directly contribute to enhancing visitor experiences and fostering a deeper understanding of conservation initiatives.

By simplifying the Race and Ethnicity Question with Minimum Categories (that is format 2, Race and Ethnicity Question with Minimum Categories Only and Examples) we can streamline the data collection process and focus on obtaining valuable insights from visitors. This approach allows us to prioritize the feedback and opinions that will directly contribute to improving visitor experiences and supporting conservation efforts. Ultimately our goal is to gather meaningful information that will help us better serve our visitors and fulfill our mission of conservation education and management.

All other data collected will be 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 was published on June 25, 2024 (89 FR 53064). We received one comment on June 29, 2024 from Jean Public. Due to lack of relevance, no action was taken in response to the comment. A copy of the comment received is included in this submission.

In addition, we reached out to three stakeholders by email for their views on the availability of data, the clarity of instructions on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported, and any comments on the estimated time-burden to the public. One stakeholder responded:

I am hoping that this data will be available to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and all visitor center staff to ensure we know how to better support the centers moving forward. The instructions are clear. I estimate that it will take an average between 15-30 minutes to go through the whole survey.

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

No payments, gifts or incentives will be offered.

Some sites may offer small complimentary tokens of appreciation, such as stickers or posters to visitors who complete the survey on-site.

**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 interviews will be anonymous; no information will be collected that would identify the specific individual (e.g., name, address, phone number, social security number, driver’s license number); therefore, no assurance of confidentiality will be required or provided. Demographic information will be used only for statistical analysis and aggregate information about the sample (e.g., age, gender, area of residence, visitor group size, and composition).

**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 being asked in this survey.

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

The affected public for this collection are the general public at large who visit an ONMS visitor center or partner facility. This survey will seek one interview per visitor group (pre-existing parties who arrived together, including single adults visiting alone, couples, families, etc.), randomly selected after they have seen exhibits at a visitor center or partner facility and are about to exit the building. One adult (age 18+) per visitor group will be approached and invited to give his/her opinion; participation will be voluntary.

Information Collection	Type of Respondent	# of Respondents (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 * (f)	Total Annual Wage Burden Costs (g) = (e) x (f)
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						(d)]/60		
Visitor Center Surveys	Individual	9,386	1	9386	8 min	1251	\$35.21	\$44,064.08

The average estimated time per respondent is 8 minutes (13% of an hour). The wage rate for All Occupations was used in order to account for the broad range of respondents.

**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 will be no cost to respondents beyond burden hours.

**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.**

We estimate 120 hours of work for the Visitor Center Manager in this capacity as a normal part of their job, and 8 hours of work for other Visitor Center Staff members, also part of their normal job hours. Collection of data will be conducted by a combination of staff and overseen by the manager. Processing of data will be handled by Visitor Center Manager.

Cost Descriptions	Grade/Step	Loaded Salary /Cost	% of Effort	Fringe (if Applicable)	Total Cost to Government
Federal Oversight	ZA-IV (12)	\$196,703 (x12)	5%		\$118,022
Other Federal Positions	ZA-III (12)	\$139,200 (x12)	1%		\$16,704
Volunteer		0			\$-
Contractor Cost					
Travel					
Other Costs:					
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$134,726</b>

The federal salary was determined using the Commerce Alternative Pay System (CAPS) Rest of U.S. locality rate ([https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/CAPS\\_rpStandard\\_2024.pdf](https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/CAPS_rpStandard_2024.pdf)) since NOAA employees are geographically dispersed. The mid-range point of \$131,135 was used as the base salary for a ZA-IV, while the mid-range point of \$92,800 was used as the base salary for a ZA-III. A multiplier of 1.5 was used to obtain the loaded salaries.

Total for all 12 visitor centers would be \$134,726.

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

There is an increase in the number of respondents for the Visitor Center Surveys, due to having 3 new visitor centers since the last survey was approved. Additionally, the IC for Mokupapapa Discovery Center Surveys was deleted and the burden merged with the Visitor Center Surveys since they draw from the same question bank and have the same burden.

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	
Mokupapapa Discovery Center Survey	0	398	0	398	0	53	This IC was merged into the Visitor Center Surveys IC since they all use the same set of questions.
Visitor Center Surveys	9,386	8265	9,386	8265	1251	1102	3 new visitor centers
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9,386</b>	<b>8,663</b>	<b>9,386</b>	<b>8,663</b>	<b>1,251</b>	<b>1,155</b>	
<b>Difference</b>	<b>723</b>		<b>723</b>		<b>96</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.**

NOAA ONMS will retain control over the information and safeguard 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. Information collected is designed to yield data that meet all applicable information quality guidelines. Information gathered is not expected to be disseminated to the public. The assessments results may be used in scientific, management, technical, or general information publications. Should NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries decide to disseminate the information, it will be subject to the quality control measures and pre-dissemination review pursuant to Section 515 of Public Law 106-554.

All reports will be peer reviewed per NOAA standards under the Information Quality Act and posted on the ONMS webpage: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>. A new page (or pages) will be set up on this website to provide the project report to the general public. All data and documentation will be put on a digital platform and will be made available to the general public, subject to any masking of the data required to protect privacy.

**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.**

We are not requesting an exception to displaying OMB documentation.

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