

ensuring robust protection for the Nation's waters and biodiversity (86 FR 7619). In addition, NOAA acknowledges that submarine cables have been designated as critical infrastructure by the U.S. Government due to their importance for U.S. commercial and national security interests.

As authorized in the NMSA, NOAA protects nationally-significant marine resources while facilitating compatible uses in sanctuaries. 16 U.S.C. 1431(b)(6). Cable construction projects have been proposed, approved by NOAA, and successfully built within national marine sanctuaries. However, for the policy reasons described above and in consideration of the public and industry comments NOAA has received, NOAA considers it timely to evaluate and seek input on the need to update the SUP category for commercial submarine cables. During the pendency of this process, to avoid uncertainty, NOAA has determined it appropriate to suspend the application of the submarine cable SUP category for a two-year period for national marine sanctuaries designated after August 16, 2024.

NOAA has a thorough understanding of how cables impact national marine sanctuaries designated before August 16, 2024, and, for those sites, has established methods to approve prohibited activities related to cables and to consider and issue SUPs for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables on the seabed. NOAA may use different approval types depending on differences in its regulations for each national marine sanctuary, findings, or other agency permits. Approval processes in place for national marine sanctuaries designated before August 16, 2024 provide reasonable predictability and assurance and suspending the SUPs for the continued presence of commercial cables for a short two-year period could disrupt existing management, therefore, NOAA is not extending the pause to those sites.

Within the two-year suspension period, NOAA intends to consider and respond to public comments on a separate, proposed update to its submarine cable permit guidance document. In updating and improving the submarine cable permit guidance document and providing an opportunity for the public to comment on the updated guidance document, NOAA intends to be responsive to CHNMS draft designation documents comments⁵ requesting clearer guidance

on the permitting and approval process for cables.

III. Request for Comments

NOAA is seeking public comment on the following:

- The use of the SUP category for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables;
- Potential modifications to this SUP category; and
- The current (2011) submarine cable permit guidance and input on updating the guidance.

Any subsequent FRN proposing updates to the SUP category and/or to the submarine cable permit guidance will consider and address public comments received on this notice.

IV. Classification

A. National Environmental Policy Act

NOAA has concluded this action will not have a significant effect, individually or cumulatively, on the human environment. This action is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement in accordance with the NOAA Categorical Exclusion G7 and because there are no extraordinary circumstances precluding the application of this categorical exclusion. Specifically, this action is a notice of an administrative and legal nature, and any future effects of subsequent actions are too broad, speculative, or conjectural to lend themselves to meaningful analysis and will be subject to later NEPA analysis. This action would only temporarily pause the issuance of new special use permits for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables on or within the submerged lands of any national marine sanctuary designated after August 16, 2024. It does not commit the outcome of any particular federal action taken by NOAA. NOAA is proposing to update the 2011 submarine cable guidelines and request public comment on the newly proposed guidance. NOAA will ensure the appropriate NEPA documentation is prepared prior to taking final action or making any irretrievable or irreversible commitment of agency resources.

B. Paperwork Reduction Act

Notwithstanding any other provisions 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 (PRA), 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*, unless that collection of

information displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. NOAA has an OMB control number (0648–0141) for the collection of public information related to the processing of ONMS permits across the National Marine Sanctuary System. NOAA does not anticipate that this temporary two-year suspension of the SUP category for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables in newly designated sanctuaries would alter the public reporting burden for national marine sanctuaries permits. As such, this action does not necessitate a modification to the information collection approval.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1431 *et seq.*

John Armor,

Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for Review and Approval; Comment Request; Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants

AGENCY: National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of information collection, request for comment.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA), invites the general public and other Federal agencies to comment on proposed, and continuing information collections, which helps us assess the impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public's reporting burden. The purpose of this notice is to allow for 60 days of public comment preceding submission of the collection to OMB.

DATES: To ensure consideration, comments regarding this proposed information collection must be received on or before October 15, 2024.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments to Adrienne Thomas, NOAA PRA Officer, at NOAA.PRA@noaa.gov. Please reference OMB Control Number 0648–0538 in the subject line of your

⁵ At <https://www.regulations.gov/>, Docket No. NOAA–NOS–2021–0080.

comments. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted on <https://www.regulations.gov> without change. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Requests for additional information or specific questions related to collection activities should be directed to Mia Logan, 1315 East West Hwy., Bldg. SSMC3, Rm. 15107, Silver Spring, MD 20910–3282, tel. 202–365–1052, or mia.logan@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This request is for a renewal of a currently approved information collection through the *Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants* (Questionnaire). This Questionnaire is used by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to collect information about proposed activities for the purpose of complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA,” 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and other environmental compliance requirements associated with proposed activities. NEPA requires federal agencies to complete an environmental analysis for all major federal actions, including funding non-federal activities through federal financial assistance awards where federal participation in the funded activity is expected to be significant. The Questionnaire is used in conjunction with NOAA Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

The NOFO will indicate the specific questions to which an applicant must respond in one of three ways: (1) the applicable questions are inserted directly into the NOFO with reference to the OMB Approval Number (0648–0538) for this form; (2) the NOFO will specify which questions (*e.g.*, 1, 2) an applicant must answer, with the entire OMB-approved Questionnaire attached to the NOFO; or (3) applicants to be recommended for funding will be required to answer relevant questions from the Questionnaire. The federal program officer will determine which questions are relevant to each specific applicant. Answers must be provided before the application can be submitted for final funding approval. This Questionnaire has been not revised since 2021.

II. Method of Collection

Submissions are collected electronically.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648–0538.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Review: Regular submission [extension of a current information collection].

Affected Public: Individuals or households; Business or other for-profit organizations; Not-for-profit institutions; State, Local, or Tribal government.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 736.

Estimated Time per Response: 3 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 2,208.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: 0.

Respondent's Obligation: Required to Obtain or Retain Benefits.

Legal Authority: National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*).

IV. Request for Comments

We are soliciting public comments to permit the Department/Bureau to: (a) Evaluate whether the proposed information collection is necessary for the proper functions of the Department, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the time and cost burden for this proposed collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) Evaluate ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) Minimize the reporting burden on those who are to respond, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments that you submit in response to this notice are a matter of public record. We will include or summarize each comment in our request to OMB to approve this ICR. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Sheleen Dumas,

Department PRA Clearance Officer, Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, Commerce Department.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget for Review and Approval; Comment Request; Southeast Region Logbook Family of Forms

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of information collection; request for comment.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce invites the general public and other Federal agencies to comment on proposed and continuing information collections in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA), which helps us assess the impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public's reporting burden. The purpose of this notice is to allow for 60 days of public comment preceding submission of the collection to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

DATES: To ensure consideration, comments regarding this proposed information collection must be received by October 15, 2024.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments to Adrienne Thomas, NOAA PRA Officer, at noaa.pra@noaa.gov. Please reference OMB Control Number 0648–0016 in the subject line of your comments. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted on <https://www.regulations.gov> without change. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Direct requests for additional information or questions related to collection activities described in this notice to Rich Malinowski, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Ave South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, telephone: 727–824–5305, email: rich.malinowski@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

The NMFS Southeast Region proposes to revise parts of the information collections currently approved under OMB Control Number 0648–0016 to comply with a court order from the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which effectively invalidated previous regulations implemented by NMFS. The