

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration**  
**Alaska Saltwater Sport Fishing Economic Survey**  
**OMB Control No. 0648-0639**

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT PART A**

**Abstract:**

This is a request to reinstate a previous NOAA collection 0648-0639.

- 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 request is for reinstatement with changes of a previously approved information collection (OMB Control Number 0648-0639). Relative to the previously approved information collection, this information collection focuses on collecting data from a subset of the Alaska saltwater angler population targeted in previous collections, specifically all Alaska saltwater anglers fishing by charter boat rather than all Alaska saltwater anglers. The focus on charter anglers excludes anglers who fish from a private boat or from shore. The focus on the charter angler subpopulation is due to that population being of primary concern for fishery managers. Charter anglers fishing for federally-regulated Pacific halibut are subject to different regulations and management actions compared with other Alaska saltwater anglers. Harvest regulations (e.g., daily bag limits) for Pacific halibut off Alaska have been unchanged for decades and are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. Charter fishing for halibut in Alaska, on the other hand, has experienced a number of important changes that affect both charter anglers and the charter fishing businesses providing charter fishing services. The proposed data collection is needed to improve estimates of fishing trip values and fishing behavior potentially affected by changes in federal recreational fisheries off Alaska, including recent declines in populations of Pacific halibut and subsequent measures to manage harvest in the Alaska recreational charter fishing sector. Numerous questions in the survey have been updated to better reflect, and understand the effects of, recent changes in Alaska marine recreational fisheries.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is the agency responsible for collecting and analyzing scientific data on the Nation's living marine resources, including Pacific halibut in the North Pacific Ocean off Alaska. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (see Section 303), Executive Order 12962 (Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics, Section 1(h)) and Executive Order 12866 (Section 1(b)(6)). NMFS is required to provide economic analyses of Federal management actions and policies to improve the Nation's fisheries. This data collection project will meet these statutory and administrative requirements by providing resource managers with the information necessary to understand the likely future impacts of management actions on the Pacific

halibut sport fishery in Alaska.

The Pacific halibut sport fishery in Alaska is quite large. During 2022, for instance, approximately 350,000 halibut were harvested by sport anglers in the state (and a ten-year mean annual harvest of 373,000).<sup>1</sup> Several regulatory changes have occurred since 2011 affecting the halibut charter fishery. In February 2011, a program was implemented to limit entry into the saltwater charter boat recreational fishery in Alaska (75 Federal Register 554). This policy sets a limit on the number of charter vessels that may participate in the guided sport halibut fishery in U.S. waters off Alaska. The limited entry program is separate from other policies intended to regulate harvest of halibut by the guided fishing sector, specifically the Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) (78 FR 75843). The CSP was implemented during 2014 and formalizes the process (a) of allocating catch between the commercial and guided fishing sectors and (b) for evaluating changes to harvest restrictions for charter anglers. The CSP allows leasing of commercial halibut individual fishing quota (IFQ) by eligible charter businesses. Leased halibut IFQ (called guided angler fish, or GAF) could then be used by charter businesses to relax harvest restrictions for their angler clients, since GAF fish would not be subject to the charter sector-specific size and bag limits that may be imposed—though the non-charter sector size and bag limit restrictions (currently two fish of any size per day) would still apply to charter anglers individually. The CSP also establishes a process for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to evaluate halibut-specific harvest restrictions in the guided charter sector, which are then recommended to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) before implementation by NMFS. At present, numerous harvest restrictions have been adopted by the Council aimed at fishing in the charter boat industry, such as restrictions on client or crew fishing behavior (e.g., bag and size limits and day of the week closures). Under the CSP, these restrictions are evaluated and potentially changed on an annual basis.

Other recent changes could also significantly impact the halibut charter fishery, in particular a recently created recreational quota entity (RQE) that can participate in the Pacific Halibut and Sablefish Individual Fishing Quota Program (83 FR 47819). In 2020, NMFS approved the Catch Accounting Through Compensated Halibut (CATCH) Association to serve as the RQE. The RQE is authorized to buy halibut quota shares (QS) on behalf of the recreational charter sector. The associated pounds of halibut from the RQE-held QS would be added to the annual allocation that the charter halibut sector receives under the CSP and thus can influence the charter angler harvest restrictions on Pacific halibut. The funding mechanism for the RQE has yet to be established, but the Council in April 2022 adopted a motion to establish a halibut stamp program, whereby charter anglers would need to purchase a halibut stamp to harvest Pacific halibut on a charter fishing trip.<sup>2</sup> This stamp would be an added cost to charter halibut anglers. To be able to assess the impacts of potential regulatory changes on charter angler behavior, it is necessary to have updated estimates of the demand for halibut charter fishing trips and a current understanding of the factors that affect it. Moreover, recent efforts to develop bioeconomic simulation models for assessing ecosystem, environmental, and management

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<sup>1</sup> From Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Statewide Harvest Survey website: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/sportfishingsurvey/index.cfm?ADFG=region.home>. Accessed June 24, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> In January 2023, Congress passed an appropriations bill that was signed into law by the President that in part authorizes NMFS to develop rules to fund the RQE (16 U.S.C. § 1862 (Supp. 2023)).

changes on fisheries and fish stocks that explicitly account for recreational fishing behavior are ongoing within NMFS. These data will provide some of the data necessary to begin building a Pacific halibut-focused bioeconomic simulation tool that can be used to predict changes in the fishery (on halibut anglers, local economies, and Pacific halibut biomass). The reinstated data collection would provide the data necessary to do this by updating information about current charter fishing behavior and preferences.

**2. 1Indicate 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.**

Information from this collection will be used by NMFS economists in the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) and Alaska Regional Office, and by staff at the NPFMC, to address issues discussed in Question 1, and others that may arise. Using these data, econometric and statistical models will be estimated to describe the demand for, and value of, Pacific halibut fishing trips by charter anglers in Alaska, and assess the effects of regulatory changes in support of efforts to develop, implement, and monitor fishery management plans. Studies that measure the impacts of regulatory changes on the demand and value of saltwater recreational fishing trips in Alaska using data collected in past surveys include Dame et al. (2025), Lew and Larson (2011, 2012, 2015, 2017), Larson and Lew (2013), and Whitehead and Lew (2020). These data are also used in combination with input-output regional economic models to assess the direct and indirect economic impacts of changes occurring in Alaska's Pacific halibut recreational fisheries on the economies of specific regions of Alaska, the state of Alaska, and the nation (Lew and Seung 2010; Seung and Lew 2017). These studies and their results have provided fishery managers with information necessary to understand some of the trade-offs and impacts of management actions on anglers and the regional, state, and national economy.

The information collection consists of conducting a push-to-web survey using a sample of individuals who participated (and a small sub-sample of those who did not participate) in a saltwater charter sport fishing trip in Alaska. For this implementation, we will mail instructions and survey links to the sampled individuals, who will be asked to use the personalized URL or QR code to access and complete the password protected web-based survey. Follow-ups to the initial mailing will be done to encourage response from those who have not completed the survey. Among the follow-up efforts will be a postcard reminder, a second mailing, and a telephone (phone call or text message) or e-mail contact with non-responding license holders for whom we have telephone numbers or e-mail addresses to encourage responses and gather data for assessing non-response behavior. For those non-respondents contacted via e-mail or text message, a personalized URL or QR code will be provided for accessing a short web survey.

Although earlier mail surveys were successfully completed ("Alaska Saltwater Sport Fishing Economic Survey" conducted under OMB Control Numbers 0648-0535 and 0648-0639) in 2007, 2012, and 2017, respectively, we will conduct a small pretest to test the web-based survey implementation protocols before administering the full survey. There are two survey instruments, one for non-resident charter and non-charter anglers and one for Alaska resident charter and non-charter anglers. The survey versions and the follow-up

telephone interview/web survey are described below.

The two main web-based questionnaires collect information about respondents' behavior and preferences for saltwater charter fishing in Alaska, which include fishing for halibut<sup>3</sup>. The questionnaires are each divided into eight sections. The following is a discussion of how particular questions in the questionnaire will be used.

### **Web-Based Questionnaires for Non-Residents and Residents**

The non-resident (NR) survey will be administered to anglers who live outside of Alaska and the resident version of the survey will be administered to anglers who are residents of Alaska. A separate survey instrument is needed for non-residents due to key differences in recreational travel behavior and constraints faced by non-resident anglers compared to resident anglers, as well as probable differences in preferences for saltwater charter fishing. This requires asking several questions in the NR version that are different from the resident version. However, all survey versions are similar in structure and most questions are identical. The following will discuss the features common to the surveys and point out the differences where appropriate. The purpose of switching from a mail questionnaire to a web-based format is due to the additional features available in web-based survey platforms including piping of previously entered information to customize questions later in the survey, ArcGIS based questions to get precise locations of fishing trips, and lower implementation cost.

#### **Section A: 'Your 2025 Sport Fishing Activities in Alaska Block'**

In both versions, section A collects general participation information about the respondent's sport fishing activities in Alaska. Both provide instructions and definitions for freshwater, saltwater, and saltwater charter fishing to be used in the survey. The resident versions include instructions to exclude subsistence fishing activities, which apply only to some residents, in the survey and a definition of "local" and "non-local" fishing trips, which will be differentiated in questions later in the survey. Questions in this short section are used to determine basic experience and participation in fishing activities in Alaska. Question A1 asks whether the individual has taken a recreational fishing trip in Alaska in 2025 (under the maintained assumption that the survey is implemented in 2026 for fishing done in 2025). This will be used to determine whether respondents will complete the full survey. Question A2 in the NR version asks respondents how many different visits were taken to Alaska that included recreational fishing during 2025. This information provides the context for recreational fishing trip behavior by non-resident anglers. Basic information about overall fishing effort, both in freshwater and saltwater (charter and non-charter trips), for the previous season is collected in questions A2 through A6 in the resident version and A3 and A4 in the NR version. This question will be used to determine whether respondents will complete the charter or non-charter portion of the survey. In the resident version, we ask respondents to identify the number of local fishing trips they took in 2025 to help

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<sup>3</sup> Saltwater charter sport anglers who catch halibut sometimes catch or target other species on the same trip, such as salmon, lingcod, and rockfish. Since these species potentially act as substitute target fish species for halibut, it is important to collect information about the demand for these species as well.

differentiate travel costs and trip frequency from non-local trips. Responses to this question will be used to determine participation rates for freshwater and saltwater fishing and as covariates in statistical models. In addition, a question is asked to determine in what regions of Alaska the individual fished (A7 and A8 in the resident version and A5 and A6 in the NR version). This question is principally used to familiarize individuals with the regions in Alaska that will be used throughout the survey. An interactive map embedded in the survey will be available for questions requiring respondents to identify specific locations. We end this section in both versions by asking respondents to identify past years in which they participated in a recreational fishing trip, and of those years, which they went charter fishing for Pacific halibut.

### Section B: ‘Saltwater Charter Fishing Background’

In general, questions in section B collect information about recent charter fishing and fishing-related travel. In addition, for non-residents who must travel to Alaska to fish and for non-local fishing trips taken by residents, who generally participate in more than fishing activities, section B gathers basic information about their most recent trip and details about their trip including their saltwater charter fishing. For these respondents, information in section B provides the building blocks for calculating travel costs that are the basis for the recreation demand modeling of these types of anglers. In the resident survey version, Section B also collects detailed information about the respondent’s saltwater charter fishing activities during the past season. Responses from this section form the basic data needed to estimate the seasonal demand models for charter fishing trips to sites in Alaska and assess changes to demand resulting from potential regulatory changes.

#### *Non-resident version:*

Non-residents must travel to Alaska before they can fish in Alaska. While visiting Alaska, they may take more than one charter fishing trip. If they are visiting the state for additional non-fishing reasons, not all of the travel costs they accrue are appropriate for inclusion in the fishing trip cost used in the recreation demand modeling. As a result, this version asks respondents for details of their most recent visit to Alaska during 2025 that can be used to calculate the appropriate portion of their costs associated with saltwater charter fishing activities on that visit. Calculating travel costs associated with fishing for non-resident anglers is a challenge that requires getting details about their Alaska visit, as well as information about the fishing activities engaged in and travel taken within the state to fishing locations. To understand what alternatives people have to charter fishing, the section includes a question asking about other activities they engaged in on the visit to Alaska and how important those activities were on making the decision to visit Alaska.

#### *Resident version:*

For resident anglers, section B (also containing “Local Saltwater Charter Fishing Trip Behavior Block” and “Non-Local Saltwater Charter Fishing Background Trip” blocks) elicits general information about saltwater charter fishing for the season, including the total number of days spent saltwater charter fishing locally and non-locally. As opposed to non-

resident anglers, it is common for resident anglers to participate in multiple saltwater recreational fishing trips over a season. Due to the size of Alaska, we differentiate saltwater charter fishing trips between local and non-local trips. Local trips are trips where the respondent leaves and returns to their home address within a single day. Non-local trips, however, are classified as trips that require at least one overnight stay. The difference between local and non-local trips are critical to determine a respondents choice set, travel costs, and behavior over a season. If the respondent participated in a local saltwater charter fishing trip, then we ask additional information on the location of the fishing trip, fishing and non-fishing expenditures, and species that were targeted, caught, and kept. These questions are also asked of non-local trips and from non-residents as described further in section C. For non-local trips, we ask a series of follow-up questions to respondents that are generally the same to those in section B in the non-resident version. These questions include information on the length of the trip, the number of people in their group, the mode of transportation, and other activities they engaged in on their non-local trip and how important those activities were on making the decision to take this trip.

### Section C:

Section C is separated into three sub-components that capture the primary modes (described below) that a resident or non-resident can participate in a saltwater charter fishing trip. Each of these sections collects detailed information about respondents' most recent Alaska trip that involved saltwater charter fishing for non-residents or the most recent non-local trip (from a randomly drawn month if multiple non-local saltwater charter trips were taken) for residents, including the starting location of this trip, the type of charter fishing trip(s) taken, expenditures the respondent made related to the trip, and the species targeted, caught, and kept. This trip-specific approach is necessary to gather detailed trip-level information that respondents generally cannot reliably recall for an entire season, especially anglers who fish frequently. Asking for detailed expenditure information for the whole season, for instance, is cognitively too difficult. Information about the most recent trip will allow separate estimation of a recreation demand model that focuses on the most recent trip in addition to a seasonal demand model. Respondents that participate in complex trips involving multiple modes may see questions from multiple sub-blocks. Questions in each sub-block generally collect information about the charter fishing that was done including the location(s) in Alaska and number of days spent saltwater charter fishing, the day(s) of the week charter fishing was done, the number of fish by species that were targeted, caught, and kept on the charter fishing trip(s), and the length or duration of each charter fishing trip. Questions about the expenditures spent on fishing-related activities and non-fishing activities on the trip are collected as well. These data provide the basis for constructing economic impact models to assess how charter angler spending affects local and regional economies.

#### *Section C.1: 'Cruise Background Block' and 'Cruise Behavior Block'*

From past surveys, we know that about 20% of non-residents took an Alaskan cruise for at least part of their Alaskan trip that included saltwater charter fishing. To account for residents that may have participated in a non-local saltwater charter fishing trip that

included a cruise experience, we ask cruise related questions in both, the resident and non-resident versions of the survey. Respondents that participated in a saltwater charter fishing trip via a cruise excursion may have unique preferences and behavior that would be ignored from more general questions about fishing behavior. Respondents will only see these questions if they indicated that they went on a cruise for at least part of their Alaskan fishing trip or non-local fishing trip. These questions collect detailed information about the type and length of the cruise, the types and costs of excursions that they participated in, other cruise-related expenditures, and ports visited when they went on a saltwater charter fishing trip. We randomly select a single port (if multiple ports were chosen) from the list of ports respondents indicated that they visited when participating in a saltwater charter fishing trip to ask more detailed fishing behavior questions including the day of the week that saltwater charter fishing occurred, the species targeted, caught, and kept during this excursion, and the other services and amenities offered during the charter trip.

### *Section C.2: ‘Lodge Portion Block’*

Similar to section C.1, we have information from past surveys that suggests approximately one-third of non-residents go saltwater charter fishing from a fishing lodge for at least part of their trip. To account for residents that may have participated in a non-local saltwater charter fishing trip from a fishing lodge, we also ask fishing lodge related questions in both, the resident and non-resident versions of the survey. Fishing lodges often offer services that vary significantly between lodges ranging from lodging only to all-inclusive resorts that plan a custom itinerary for the full trip. Respondents that take a saltwater charter fishing trip from a fishing lodge may have different margins of choice based on the services provided by the lodge. This block asks questions about the services offered by the fishing lodge in addition to fishing lodge-related expenditures. More generally, the questions from this section collect the same information as section C.1 including the fishing lodge location, the number of days spent at the fishing lodge, the length of saltwater charter fishing while staying at the lodge, and species targeted, caught, and kept. As opposed to a randomly drawn port from section C.1, we will ask about fishing behavior of the full fishing lodge trip to minimize recall bias as this may be too cognitively difficult.

### *Section C.3: ‘No Cruise/No Lodge Background Block’ and ‘No Cruise/No Lodge Behavior Block’*

Respondents that did not participate in a cruise experience or stay at a fishing lodge for at least part of their trip will see questions from this section. Respondents in this group will comprise the majority of responses from the non-resident and resident survey versions. We ask respondents to identify their home-base, or the location they considered their “starting” point for most of their trip, trip-related expenditures, the saltwater charter fishing type(s) taken, and the day(s) of the week that they participated in a saltwater charter fishing trip(s). We will randomly draw (if more than one saltwater charter type is selected) a saltwater charter fishing type from the types of saltwater charter fishing respondents selected, or the most recent if multiple of the same charter fishing type were taken, and ask respondents about the starting location of this saltwater charter fishing trip type and the species of fish targeted, caught, and kept.

*Section C.4: ‘After/Before Cruise Only Block,’ ‘After/Before Cruise Only Behavior Block,’ ‘After/Before Lodge Only Block,’ ‘After/Before Lodge Only Behavior Block,’ ‘After/Before Cruise and Lodge Block,’ and ‘After/Before Cruise and Lodge Behavior Block,’*

A small group of respondents may have participated in an independent saltwater charter fishing trip before or after their cruise experience and/or fishing lodge stay. The margins of choice during the independent portion of their trip are similar to anglers in section C.3. We account for these trips by asking questions similar to those in the previous section including the identification of their home-base during this portion of their trip (not including their cruise experience and/or fishing lodge stay), trip-related expenditures, saltwater charter fishing type(s) taken, and the day(s) of the week that they participated in a saltwater charter fishing trip(s). Based on the types of saltwater charter fishing respondents selected during this time, we will randomly draw (if more than one saltwater charter type is selected) a saltwater charter fishing type, or the most recent if multiple of the same charter fishing type were taken, and ask respondents about the starting location of this charter fishing trip type and species of fish targeted, caught, and kept.

#### Section D: Travel Cost Reconciliation Block

In the previous section, we ask respondents about trip and trip-related expenditures. Due to the possibility of recall biases and other complex trips (see multiple sub-blocks in section C), we allow respondents to revise the expenditure amounts they originally. We begin this section by presenting trip and trip-related expenditures for their full Alaskan trip and non-local trip that included saltwater charter fishing (including all expenditures for complex trips) and ask the respondent if they want to modify any of these amounts. If they choose to modify any of these values, then we will ask a follow-up question after the modification regarding the confidence in their updated expenditures. The confidence in each trip and trip-related expenditure value may be used as a covariate or for weighting during our statistical and econometric analysis.

#### Section E: Travel Choice Questions Block

Since time costs are significant components of the overall trip costs, respondents are asked several questions to reveal how they value the time spent in traveling and onsite participating in saltwater charter fishing. This includes a question to assess the importance of different aspects of the travel experience to the individual and subsequent questions presenting counterfactuals and asking trade-off questions wherein respondents choose between the travel itinerary they took and ones that differ in terms of the characteristic’s individuals identify as important to their travel decisions (e.g., type of transportation, route taken, schedule, total travel duration, and cost)<sup>4</sup>. These questions are used to assess how individuals value the time they spend traveling on the trip, which is information that helps to refine estimates of travel costs used in the recreation demand models.

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<sup>4</sup> These types of questions are commonly employed in transportation studies (e.g., Small et al. 2005) and in the recreation demand literature as well (e.g., Czajkowski et al. 2019).



#### Section F: ‘Pre-Contingent Behavior for Charter Anglers Block’ and ‘Contingent Behavior for Charter Anglers Block’

Section F collects stated preference response information needed to understand respondents’ preferences for saltwater charter fishing trips in Alaska and how their fishing behavior may change under counterfactual conditions. This includes questions to determine the factors that affect the respondent’s recreational fishing decisions, such as whether or not to take a charter fishing trip, which fish to target, and when and where to go charter fishing. These questions prepare the respondent for questions that present counterfactual situations in which one or more of the factors (e.g., regulations or fishing conditions) that they indicated may affect their charter fishing decisions change from the baseline levels they have experienced in the past. How people respond to these contingent behavior questions provide a basis for predicting how the economic value and behavior change in response to management, ecosystem, or economic changes (e.g., Lopes and Whitehead 2023; Yi and Herriges 2017; Xie et al. 2023). There are small differences in this section between the non-resident and resident versions due to the different nature of saltwater charter fishing trips for resident and non-resident charter fishing. This information will be used to understand how changes to fishing trip characteristics will affect participation in saltwater charter fishing, particularly charter fishing for Pacific halibut. Responses to these contingent behavior questions will be analyzed in recreation demand models that combine the behavioral information provided in sections A, B, and C with the stated preference information in this section (Whitehead et al. 2011; Whitehead and Lew 2020).

#### Section G: Contingent Behavior Questions for Non-Charter Anglers

A majority of the survey focuses on saltwater charter anglers to address issues discussed in Question 1. To adequately model the Alaskan recreational fishery for Pacific halibut, however, we need to understand behavior that may cause non-charter anglers to switch to the saltwater charter fishery. As described in section F, responses to contingent behavior questions allow us to predict how fishing mode (charter vs. non-charter) may change due to changes in the ecosystem, regulations, or other exogenous economic factors. The primary margin of choice being analyzed by non-charter anglers is the fishing mode decision which will only require a sub-sample from the full non-resident and resident samples to obtain the statistical power necessary for interpretation. Questions asked in this section are generally identical across non-resident and resident versions. These responses will be analyzed using recreation demand models to predict the likelihood of changing from non-charter to charter trips. We will use these predictions in our Pacific halibut bioeconomic model to consider changes in recreational charter fishing effort (days fished) from ecosystem, regulation, or other economic changes.

#### Section H: About You and Your Household

The final section is identical across versions and consists of questions about the respondent

and the respondent's household to be used as explanatory variables in the recreation demand models, for comparing respondents to non-respondents (non-response bias), and for informing resource managers of the characteristics of the population. Socioeconomic and demographic information collected includes sex, age, household size, number of workers in the household, education, ethnicity, race, employment status, hours worked per week, wage, and income. Respondents are also asked to indicate the number of years they have been fishing. This provides a measure of fishing experience that can be incorporated into the recreation demand models.

### **Telephone/E-mail Follow-Up**

Following the initial mailing, postcard reminder, and second mail reminder, we will contact non-respondents by telephone or e-mail to encourage them to complete the survey and to collect limited information from those who decide not to participate in the survey at all. For those contacted by text message or e-mail, the text or e-mail will include a personalized URL to a short web survey. For those contacted by telephone, individuals will be asked to participate in a short interview. The information provided by these non-respondents can be compared with that from respondents to address issues concerning non-response bias. Selected socioeconomic and demographic questions, along with a few key behavioral questions, are asked to statistically test whether non-respondents differ from respondents with respect to these characteristics. The behavioral questions include versions of questions from Section A of the questionnaire to identify basic fishing behavior and an additional question about charter fishing for halibut during the year of interest. This information can be used to evaluate and adjust the results for potential non-response bias among sample members (e.g., using techniques described in Lew et al. 2015).

Justification for collecting address and email address from the respondent.

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game is transitioning to a fully electronic system to collect fishing license and charter logbook data, but for the current sample, there are still many records that were completed by hand. Records that were completed by hand may have a higher likelihood of mistakes for addresses and/or email addresses, such as numbers being interpreted as letters, symbols being unrecognizable or illegible, or insufficient space on the form to complete the full contact information. Since this is a phone interview, we know that the phone number is correct, but we do not know if the other contact information matches the respondents current contact information. For this reason, the login instructions may have never been received. We will only verify the contact information from respondents that indicated in the non-response survey that they would complete the full survey if a new set of login instructions were sent. We are verifying with the respondent that we have their correct contact information (email and address) before we send them a set of follow-up login instructions. If the contact information we have is incorrect, then the survey firm will make the change in their system before sending the follow-up login instructions.

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 survey data collection will be conducted via an online survey platform (Qualtrics). To participate, respondents will need to have access to the internet and a computer or smartphone to take and submit the survey. Qualtrics does not require any additional software to be installed on the respondent's computer or smart phone to fully participate in taking the survey or survey submission. A recent study by Pew Research Center estimates that about 95% of Americans use the internet, 90% have a smartphone, and 80% have access to high-speed internet suggesting a migration to a web-based survey will result in minimal effects on coverage bias.<sup>5</sup>

**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.**

The information collected in this survey is not collected by other Federal, state, or local agencies. To date, the NMFS Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, and its add-ons have not been conducted in Alaska. We have informed the Council, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission about this project. None of these entities have conducted or are conducting similar economic data collections. Although there is no economic content, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) regularly conducts a survey that collects effort and catch data of Alaska sport fisheries, including saltwater recreational fisheries. ADF&G also administers a mandatory saltwater charter logbook program that collects information from charter fishing businesses necessary to understand catch and effort, but does not collect economic information.

Studies conducted in 1997 and 2003 provide an incomplete picture of the demand for halibut sport fishing trips. The 1997 study concentrated on trips taken to the Kenai Peninsula in Southcentral Alaska, which accounts for about half of the fishery's harvest (Lee, et al., 1999). Since halibut fishing opportunities in other areas of Alaska are different from those offered in this area, it is difficult to rely on these results to make inferences about halibut fishing behavior elsewhere in Alaska. A 2003 NMFS study collected information about halibut sport fishing from all Alaska sport anglers. This study was the first effort to characterize the demand for the entire Alaskan sport halibut fishery, and consequently, it was recognized that a follow-up survey would be necessary to update the estimates. Moreover, the study did not collect detailed information about actual fishing behavior, focusing instead on understanding angler preferences for trip attributes that affect the demand for halibut fishing. As a result, demand models based on observed fishing behavior in Alaska could not be estimated from that data.

The proposed data collection described herein is an update of a NMFS survey conducted in

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/01/31/americans-use-of-mobile-technology-and-home-broadband/>

2007, 2012, and 2017 that collected information on angler behavior during the 2006, 2011, and 2016 fishing seasons, respectively (Lew, Lee, and Larson, 2010; Lew and Seung 2010; Lew and Larson 2015). These data collections updated the 2003 NMFS survey and addressed changes in the variables that affect the economic value of marine recreational fishing trips (particularly halibut fishing trips), utilized improved methodologies, and improved welfare estimates of trip value. The current updated survey will assist NMFS in understanding trends in preferences and behavior that cannot be discerned with a single, cross-sectional study, as well as provide information on preferences for recent and proposed fishing regulations and conditions in the fishery that were not present when the earlier surveys were conducted.

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

The collection does not involve small businesses or other small entities.

**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.**

If the data collection is not conducted, the Council and NMFS will not have information on angler preferences and values associated with recent and proposed changes in the management of the charter halibut fishery. In addition, no information will be available about changes to charter fishing values under current conditions and regulations, which the 2007, 2012, and 2017 survey data alone cannot inform. As a result, it will not be possible to monitor the impact of existing or proposed regulatory programs on demand for Alaska halibut sport charter fishing.

**7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:**

- requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;
- requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;
- requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;
- requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records, for more than three years;
- in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;
- requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;
- that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or

- **requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.**

The majority of said collection is consistent with OMB guidelines. Due to the limiting spacing involve with the publishing and length of each survey; it was found more efficient to utilize the approved SPD-15 Figure 3. Race and Ethnicity Question with Minimum Categories Only.

- 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.**

Our 60-day FRN was published on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 (89 FR 61402). During said comment period no comments from the public were received. In addition to the Federal Register notice, NMFS contacted stakeholders outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format, and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported. No comments were received.

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

To encourage participation in the mail survey, a token honorarium of \$1 will be given to participants in the initial mailing. Inclusion of an incentive acts as a sign of goodwill on the part of the study sponsors and encourages reciprocity of that goodwill by the respondent. A comprehensive review of the use of incentives in surveys was conducted by Singer (2002). She notes that giving respondents a small financial incentive (even a token amount) in the first mailing increases response rates and are cost-effective. Such prepaid incentives are more effective than larger promised incentives that are contingent on completion of the questionnaire. In tests conducted by Lesser et al. (1999), including a \$2 incentive in a mailing with four contact points was shown to increase response rates by an additional 19 to 31 percentage points. Thus, even a small upfront incentive typically is more cost effective than additional follow-up steps that are often considered. In a review of more recent studies analyzing the effects of incentives on survey response, Singer and Ye (2013) confirm earlier findings that incentives increase response rates across survey modes (including web), monetary incentives have a stronger effect than non-monetary incentives, and prepaid (upfront) incentives have a bigger effect than promised or lottery-based incentives.

There are several reasons why we believe inclusion of a financial incentive along with follow-up contacts will be needed to reach desired response rates. A principal reason is

because a \$1 incentive was provided in the 2007, 2012, and 2017 surveys, which resulted in overall response rates of 57%, 48%, and 51%, respectively. While the survey protocols and mode differ from the earlier, mail-based surveys, we expect to get higher response rates for this data collection with a small monetary pre-incentive than we would achieve without one. Providing a monetary pre-incentive will serve as a small token of goodwill and an incentive to reciprocate by completing the survey. For these reasons, we expect both incentives and follow-up contacts will be required to obtain a suitable response rate.

**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.**

We will receive an Excel spreadsheet from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game that will contain PII information (name, address, phone number, and e-mail address). We will add an additional column to the spreadsheet that will contain a random draw of a six-digit number for each respondent (resident and non-resident). That six-digit number will represent the respondents unique ID and password to enter the survey. That column of passwords will be programmed into Qualtrics so respondents can enter their personal survey. The full spreadsheet (including PII information and IDs/passwords) will be sent to the contracting firm so they can manage survey distribution. We will delete this file so we no longer have access to any PII information. We will send a weekly email to the survey firm of IDs that have completed the survey via Qualtrics so they can track respondents' response rates. The data returned to me from the survey firm at the end of the survey period will only contain the six-digit ID which I cannot link to any PII information from respondents.

This collection of information is covered by system of records notice NOAA-11<sup>6</sup>, Contact Information for Members of the Public Requesting or Providing Information Related to NOAA's Mission. The information will reside temporarily in NOAA4700<sup>7</sup>, Alaska Region (AKR) Local Area Network.

The information collected from this survey is confidential under NOAA Administrative Order 216-100. This order states the procedures to ensure that all fisheries data collected by NOAA/NMFS is protected and confidential. In each mailing, respondents will be told that their responses are voluntary, and following completion of the data collection the survey firm contracted to administer the survey will delete any information identifying individuals (i.e., PII like name and addresses) from the survey responses data file before it is delivered to NMFS or any other participating researchers and agencies. The initial mailing letter and the follow-up mailing letter will also include the following statement:

“Only aggregated results from the survey will be released publicly. To preserve your anonymity, the data files delivered to NOAA from the survey contractor will not connect your personal information (like contact information) to your survey responses. In addition,

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.commerce.gov/node/4985>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/NOAA4700%20PIA%20FY25%20SAOP\\_Approved.pdf](https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/NOAA4700%20PIA%20FY25%20SAOP_Approved.pdf)

data will only be accessible to authorized personnel responsible for management and research of fisheries under the authority of NOAA.”

- 11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and 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.**

There are no questions of a sensitive nature asked in the survey.

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

The survey invitation will be sent to a random sample of approximately 6,750 non-resident and resident saltwater charter anglers identified from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Charter Logbook Data file, which contains the names, mailing addresses, and email addresses of all individuals who have participated in a saltwater charter fishing trip in Alaska. Additionally, we will send the survey invitation to a random sample of 500 non-resident and resident saltwater non-charter anglers identified as Alaskan saltwater sport angling license holders, based on the ADF&G Sport Fish License file which contains the names, mailing addresses, and email addresses of all individuals who have purchased an Alaskan saltwater sport angling license, that did not appear in the ADF&G Charter Logbook Data file. This results in a random sample of 7,250 non-resident and resident saltwater charter and non-charter anglers that will receive an invitation to the survey.

Based on previous experience, up to 10% of addresses in these samples can be expected to be bad or unusable, which means the number of charter (non-charter) anglers receiving the survey will be approximately 6,075 (450). We expect a final response rate of approximately 50 percent (of the valid sample), leading to 3,038 (225) returning completed surveys.<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of computing burden hours, we thus assume 3,263 are expected to be completed after the advance letter, initial mailing, postcard reminder, a second mailed reminder, and a final reminder phone call, text message, or e-mail. The final phone call, text message, or e-mail will act as both a reminder to complete the survey and, if the individual is unwilling to fill out the survey, an opportunity to collect answers to a few questions that will be used to evaluate non-response (via a short interview or providing a link to a short web-based non-response survey). We assume up to 1,000 completing the short non-response survey either via telephone or online. The cover letter will solicit the participation of the individual angler to complete the survey. While our experience has been that respondents typically complete the survey in 20-25 minutes, we assume 36 minutes (0.6 hours) to conservatively compute the potential burden hours of completing the

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<sup>8</sup> The response rate from the push-to-web mixed mode approach described here is assumed to lead to a similar response rate to previous mail survey mixed mode approaches used in earlier data collections. Campbell et al. (2018) report similar response rates resulting from the same survey administered by mail-only and a push-to-web mail mixed mode. The mail survey resulted in a 42% response rate, and the mixed mode achieved slightly lower (39%) response rate. Besides survey mode itself, the mail survey included a \$2 pre-incentive, while the mixed mode respondents did not.

survey and reading the correspondence. As a result, those ultimately completing the mail survey are expected to contribute up to 1,958 hours to the overall hour burden. For the up to 1,000 individuals completing the phone or web-based follow-up survey, we assume the phone interview or short web-based non-response survey takes up to 10 minutes on average to complete, resulting in 150 hours of additional time burden. Thus, totaling the time contribution of the 3,263 completed mail surveys (1,958 hours) with the time from the non-response phone interview or web survey (150 hours) yields a total of 2,108 hours. Assuming an average hourly earnings rate of \$45 (*Occupational Code: 53-5020 Ship & Boat Captains/Operators*) per hour across all individuals, the total burden translated into an opportunity cost of time spent on this data collection instead of in an income-earning activity is  $\$45/\text{hour} \times 2,108 \text{ hours} = \$94,860$ .

The total number of unique respondents to all contacts in the survey implementation will be 3,263 (mail survey respondents) + 1,000 (non-respondents who participate in the phone or web non-response survey). This number consists of respondents who return the questionnaire (3,263 respondents) and respondents who do not return the questionnaire but do provide some survey information during the non-response contact.



Information Collection	Type of Respondent (e.g., Occupational Title)	# of Respondents (a)	# of Responses / Respondent (b)	Total # of Responses (c) = (a) x (b)	Burden Hrs / Response (d)	Total Burden Hrs (e) = (c) x (d)	Hourly Wage Rate (for Type of Respondent) (f)	Total Wage Burden Costs (g) = (e) x (f)
Alaska Saltwater Sport Fishing Economic Survey (Resident)	Responding Alaska charter anglers	3,038	1	3,038	0.60	1,823	-	-
Alaska Saltwater Sport Fishing Economic Survey (Non-Resident)	Responding Alaska non-charter anglers	225	1	225	0.60	135	-	-
<b>Total</b>			1	3,263	0.60	1,958	\$45	\$88,110
Follow-up Non-response Survey	Non-responding Alaska charter angler	1,000 <sup>a</sup>	1	1,000	0.15	150	\$45	\$6,750
<b>Totals</b>				<b>4,263</b>		<b>2,108</b>		<b>\$94,860</b>

(Occupational Code: 53-5020 Ship & Boat Captains/Operators) (<https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/industry/000000>)

- 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).**

No additional cost burden will be imposed on respondents aside from the burden hours indicated above.

- 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.**

Annual cost to the Federal government of the survey is approximately \$140,000 divided as follows: \$100,000 in contract award money and \$40,000 in staff time and resources. Contractor services include assisting with survey design and evaluation, conducting the survey implementation, and preparing a report that documents the survey procedures and response rates.

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

This is a reinstated collection, and is thus a program change. Reasons for this collection were outlined in Questions A1 and A2.

- 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.**

A paper describing economic models used to analyze the data and the results from estimating these models will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal (e.g., Lew and Larson [2011, 2012, 2015], Lew and Seung [2010, 2014]). Statistical data summaries in tabular form will be made available at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center web site.

It is anticipated that the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support publicly disseminated information. As explained above, the information gathered has utility. NOAA Fisheries will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards for, privacy and electronic information. See response to Question 10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on handling of data. 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](#).

- 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 survey cover page will contain the OMB number and the expiration date.

- 18. Explain each exception to the topics of 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\(b\)\(3\)](#).

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