

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
**West Coast Fisheries Participation Survey**  
**OMB Control No. 0648-0749**

**Abstract**

This request is for a revision and extension of an existing information collection. This survey updates the 2023 survey to remove a question regarding identity in underserved groups and provide multiple choice answer options for two questions that were previously open-ended in order to reduce response time. The overall purpose of collecting these data is to develop stakeholder-based societal inputs relative to fisheries participation, but these survey data will also increase the capacity of NOAA to respond effectively to relevant mandates and executive orders that guide social science activities within the National Marine Fisheries Service (NEPA and Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MFCMA) and its National Standard 8).

**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.**

The National Marine Fisheries Services' (NMFS) developing interest in ecosystem-based management (EBM) and its implementation has allowed for the development of ecosystem models, including models of California Current Large Marine Ecosystem processes along the U.S. West Coast. In conjunction with these efforts, the California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (CCIEA) process has specified a need for human dimensions data and fisheries models that include behaviors of and social influences on fisheries participants (Levin et al. 2011). These actions, however, require updated data collection and the development of new models.

Previous efforts to use extant data to characterize fishing have been presented to fishery managers at the Pacific Fishery Management Council as part of the California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (Levin et al. 2013) and the annual State of the California Current Report, and stakeholders and fishery managers have additionally requested improved data and analyses on fishing behaviors and fishing communities. Data from this survey has been used to support analysis of several Pacific Fishery Management Council actions and program reviews.

While commercial fishery participation is often assumed to be motivated exclusively or primarily by traditional economic factors, the role of non-financial psychological and social factors that directly motivate participation or mediate the responses of fishermen to changes in profitability have been ignored in management modeling. There is a substantial social science literature

indicating that many fishermen obtain utility from fishing itself – apart from its role in providing income (e.g., Anderson 1980; Smith 1981; Gatewood and McCay 1990; Pollnac and Poggie 2006; Pollnac et al. 2015). Anderson (1980) coined the term “satisfaction bonus” to describe this tendency and suggested it could affect the adaptive responses of fishermen to falling rents in open access fisheries, leading to greater depletion than might otherwise occur. Fishing may also contribute significantly to a sense of individual identity and social capital, particularly in strongly fishery-dependent communities. Fish kept for personal use or sharing with friends and family is also an important benefit of fishery participation (Poe et al. 2015). Taken together, this collection of factors may influence participation decisions in ways that would not be obvious if only standard market economic motivations were considered.

Given these gaps in information about these factors, and in concert with the evolution of EBM approaches on the West Coast, NMFS researchers at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, partnering with the University of Washington and Washington Sea Grant have begun an effort to develop these data collections and modeling developments. The goal in continuing the proposed study is to collect original, longitudinal data regarding the participation of West Coast fishermen in the full suite of commercial fisheries and to develop scientifically rigorous ecosystem models that explicitly consider social perspectives and behaviors alongside oceanographic and biological considerations.

For this reason, the Northwest Fisheries Science Center seeks to conduct a fourth iteration of a survey of West Coast commercial fisheries participants. As before, fishing permit owners will be asked, via a mail survey, a series of general questions regarding their connections to and participation in West Coast fisheries.

Information collected under this clearance will include economic data, fishing patterns, data on social linkages between resource users and the resource as well as data related to other activities that influence living marine resource use. The overall purpose of collecting these data is to develop stakeholder-based societal inputs relative to fisheries participation, but these survey data will also increase the capacity of NOAA to respond effectively to relevant mandates and executive orders that guide social science activities within the National Marine Fisheries Service (NEPA, MFCMA and its National Standard 8).

**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.**

Information will be collected for this longitudinal survey, using a mail survey format, and will be disseminated, in an aggregate form (with no personally identifiable information attached), to the public upon request. The information will be used to develop fisheries participation analyses by Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) scientists. These analyses will also be disseminated to the public in the form of *interpreted products*, including technical memoranda and peer-reviewed publications. Such products will be developed in conjunction with the associated research project. For example, information collected from prior iterations of this survey have been made available via a [website](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/west-coast-fisheries-participation-survey-results)<sup>1</sup> to survey respondents, as well as the general public (). Research partners will administer the data collection tool over a period of 10-12 weeks,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/west-coast-fisheries-participation-survey-results>

until all applicable respondents have been contacted. This is the only period over which the survey will be conducted. The written form of the survey ensures that the survey is reproducible, and the Northwest Fisheries Science Center's experience in implementing surveys of this nature will help to ensure that the quality of the information collected, at the level of raw data, meet NOAA's Information Quality Guidelines.

Specifically, each question in the proposed survey is designed to elicit certain data of direct benefit to the ecological and socioeconomic modeling efforts underway at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center. The questions in the proposed survey all relate to elements we will use in our models as potential predictor variables. These will enable us to examine how different segments of the West Coast fishing population are thinking about their fisheries participation, their fishery and economic alternatives, their linkages to local fishing communities and their levels of satisfaction with fishing as an occupation.

### Involvement in Commercial Fishing

In the first section of the survey, the first five questions are designed to garner basic information from survey respondents, as well as information about respondents' historical and current involvement in fishing.

### Fishing Community Connections

In the second section of survey, questions 7-11 will allow for the development of a respondent-informed definition of fishing community, including respondents' familial and local connections to fishing.

### Fishing Job Satisfaction

A set of subsequent questions are designed to measure respondents' general level of satisfaction with fishing as an occupation and are aimed at producing an enhanced understanding of some of the challenges related to fishing as a livelihood.

### Fisheries Participation

In the fourth section of the survey, questions 16- 23 will allow for improved information on differing levels of participation in the variety of fisheries available to West Coast fishermen. These questions are also designed to gather information that would ameliorate models reflecting how and when fishermen choose to move between different fisheries and why fishermen might access alternative, non-fishing occupations.

The final set of questions are designed to measure fishing crew employed by respondents, identify how much and which kinds of fish are retained for designated "personal use" harvests, and how fisheries incomes and benefits vary and accommodate incomes from other occupations. As with prior iterations of the survey, a question about health insurance coverage will augment microdata analyses and expand the geographic information on health risks within the commercial fishing industry (Speir, et al. 2020).

**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 information described in the survey will be collected through the use of completed paper surveys sent via U.S. mail. Northwest Fisheries Science Center staff will contract with Hardwick Research to mail out the survey via U.S. mail, and NWFSC scientists will be responsible for analyzing the data and disseminating the findings generated by the survey. The mail questionnaire will follow the written survey instrument provided and will adhere to all protocols that have been developed according to the University of Washington's Institutional Review Board's [Human Subjects Division](#)<sup>2</sup> as well as the Office of Management and Budget requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act. This approach has demonstrated effective response and minimal burden in both 2017, 2020, and 2023.

**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 social scientists at the NWFSC work closely with regional academics, community-based organizations, industry groups, and other parties interested in this type of information. Reviews of existing information are common practice when initiating social science studies. A thorough literature review has been completed, and we are confident there is no duplication. An overall strategic research plan will also guide this process and ensure that all data collected is relevant, new, and essential for achieving NMFS social science goals. The NMFS point of contact for this research, Dan Holland, also has presented his research to the Ecosystem Subcommittee of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Science and Statistical Committee (SSC), so he keeps informed of the Council's activities and has verified with the organization that they have not commenced or planned duplicative social research efforts. The longitudinal nature of this study requires that the information collection be done using the same general survey format and the same universe of possible respondents, such that there are no similar sources of information available for satisfying the purposes of this study.

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

The study is designed to survey individual respondents – at the permit owner level - regarding a range of information, and the respondents are not anticipated to be small businesses. Instead, the survey seeks to collect information from individuals involved in the fishing industry. Only the minimum data necessary for the research is requested and the estimated time for the completion of the survey is 15 minutes per individual.

**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 current information on the human dimensions of fisheries and coastal use practices, NMFS and the Regional Councils will be unable to adequately understand and predict the potential impacts of policy decisions on people, particularly those people who do not regularly attend public meetings, but are nonetheless affected by the decisions of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC).

The federal mandates and executive orders described in Section A of this document require the analysis of the impacts that government actions have on the individuals and communities involved in fishing and coastal related activities. Social impacts assessment, analysis of the affected human environment, cumulative impacts as well as the distribution of impacts with a special emphasis on vulnerable or at-risk communities are all examples of these requirements. The ability of the NWFSC Social Scientists to adequately respond to this charge rests on access to timely and relevant information about the stakeholders involved. Currently, social scientists are largely dependent on extant data limited to fishing vessels and the fishing trips and landings attributed to these vessels. Existing information does not include research and data on the full set of coastal fisheries stakeholders and their satisfaction with fisheries occupations along with their capacities to access different fisheries as ocean and policy conditions change within target fisheries.

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

The collection 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 published on December 10, 2025 (90 FR 57182) solicited public comments on this survey. No comments were received.

Additionally, NMFS reached out to several stakeholders in an effort to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported. No responses 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 \$5 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. Singer (2002) provides a comprehensive review of the use of incentives in surveys. She notes that giving respondents a small financial incentive (even a token amount) in the first mailing increases response rates in mail-based surveys and is 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. Moreover, the use of a \$5 incentive has an even greater potential to foster survey responses. James and Bolstein (1992) have indicated that \$5 incentives at first mailing are associated with response rates at or near 50%.

The proposed survey contractor that would be tasked with mailing out the survey, Hardwick Research, has suggested several additional steps to obtain a 50% response rate. The first involves a multi-part mailing process that would include a postcard announcement notifying participants that a questionnaire will be coming and a thank you gift will be enclosed. This would be followed by the initial mailing of the survey with incentive included and return postage-paid envelope enclosed, a second postcard reminder, and a follow-up postcard reminder to all non-responders.

There are several reasons why we believe inclusion of both a financial incentive and follow-up contacts will be needed to reach desired response rates. The principal reason is because the use of a token incentive in prior NMFS surveys achieved an overall response rate of 57% (e.g., Lew, et al. 2010). Given the similarity of survey protocols and survey materials for this proposed survey, we anticipate a similar response rate for this data collection. Additionally, although every attempt is made to ensure the survey is easy to read, understand, and complete, the amount of information it needs to present and the number of questions it needs to ask to contribute to a survey requiring more respondent attention than some surveys. For these reasons, we expect both incentives and follow-up contacts will be required to obtain a suitable response rate and to evaluate potential non-response biases.

The steps in the data collection follow a modified Dillman Method protocol (Dillman, et al. 2014) and are as follows. Overall, attempted contacts are made via postcard mailing, since most of the potential respondents within the database of fisheries permit holders do not have email or telephone contact information included.

### Mail attempt when phone/email screening is not available:

The first mail contact to a potential fisherman recipient will be a prenotice postcard sent out to all addresses in the database of commercial fisheries permit holders. The postcard will notify potential respondents of the survey booklet's imminent arrival, and describe, in brief, the survey instrument's purpose.

### Mail attempt with survey booklet:

Next, the full survey packet itself will be sent, including the incentive. The survey packet will include introductory language, a survey booklet, and a postage-paid business reply envelope.

Second mail reminder:

One week after the survey booklet has been sent out, a postcard reminder will be distributed to all survey recipients reminding them that they will have received the survey, expressing gratitude for any completed surveys, and asking them again for their assistance in filling out the survey - if they have not already done so.

Mail attempt with no prior successful contact:

If the survey is not completed within a period of two months, a second postcard reminder will be sent by mail to non-responsive survey recipients asking them again for their assistance in filling out the survey if they have not already done so.

**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 system of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.**

As stated in the survey materials, the data collected will be kept anonymous and will not be released for public use except in aggregate statistical form without identification of sources. The survey approach renders respondent participation in the survey entirely voluntary.

No system of record is required because no personally identifiable information (PII) is collected. The PIA for [NOAA4600](#)<sup>3</sup> captures the data from this information collection.

**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.**

There is one area where issues of a potentially sensitive nature will be explored.

Employment and economic status: Questions regarding employment and income can be considered sensitive information to some individuals.

The research supported by this information collection is designed to inform fisheries management in terms of its capacity to mitigate risks to marine ecosystems and associated livelihoods and facilitate sustainable adaptation. Accordingly, demographics and other information on fishery industry participants and community members are needed, in that these data allow for the development of fishery ecosystem models that account for non-pecuniary fishing benefits, as well as the ways in which fishing practices shape individual and community

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/NOAA4600%20PIA%20FY25-%20SAOP%20Approved%20Delegated.pdf>

well-being.

The nature of the survey methodology ensures anonymity regarding these sensitive areas. The introductory text of the survey instrument will indicate that the information is collected in such a way as to preserve anonymity and will not be released publicly in any way that would allow for respondent identification. All publicly available information will be based on aggregate statistical forms that do not allow for the identification of sources.

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

The total burden hours are projected at 681.25, all of which will be incurred during a single time, annualized to 227 hours. Response time includes not only the time necessary for respondents to answer the questions, but also the time needed to make the initial contact. Participants are not expected to spend time gathering information because the information sought is based on participants’ personal experiences, perceptions, and knowledge.

Information Collection	Type of Respondent (e.g., Occupational Title)	# 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 (for Type of Respondent) (f)	Total Annual Wage Burden Costs (g) = (e) x (f)
West Coast Fisheries Participation Survey	Fisherperson/angler	2,725 Annualized to 908	1	908	0.25	227	19.54*	10,657.65
<b>Totals</b>				<b>908</b>		<b>227</b>		<b>4435.58</b>

\*Opportunity cost based on wage information on transportation workers (most common source of non-fishing income) from <https://www.bls.gov/bls/blswage.htm>

**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).**

The total recordkeeping/reporting cost burden to respondents is \$0, as there will be postage-paid envelopes included with the mailed surveys. There are no start-up, capital, or maintenance costs associated with this collection. No new or specialized equipment is needed to respond to this collection.

**14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.**

Funding for this research is provided via an internal NOAA/NMFS research grant, through

which research partners will develop and deploy the survey work via contract. The survey has thus far been conducted at three-year intervals. The contractor cost shown below incorporates all survey mailings, the postage-paid envelopes, and the incentive.

The Commerce Alternative Personnel System (CAPS) [pay tables](#)<sup>4</sup> for the Rest of U.S. locality rate was used to determine the base salary for federal staff. The Rest of U.S. locality was used since NOAA staff are geographically dispersed. The upper bound for a ZP-3 Interval 3 was used and a multiplier of 1.5 was used to calculate the loaded salary.

Accordingly, the cost to the Federal government for 2026 is anticipated to be \$96,264, but annualized over three years, this amounts to \$32,088 per year.

Cost Descriptions	Grade/Step	Loaded Salary /Cost	% of Effort	Fringe (if Applicable)	Total Cost to Government
Federal Oversight	ZP 03 03	\$ 174,543	0.1		\$ 17,454
Other Federal Positions					
Contractor Cost		\$78,810*	100		\$ 78,810
Travel					
Other Costs:					
<b>TOTAL</b>					\$ 96,264 Annualized to \$32,088.

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

In response to survey respondent feedback, utility of information collected as determined by analyses, and management analysis needs, the agency has proactively implemented some minor adjustments. Changing write-in questions to box checking is more easily useable and less ambiguous information and may slightly reduce response time required. These changes will not significantly change estimated burden hours as compared to past years, leaving response time at 15 minutes for each respondent.

**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.**

The survey results are not intended for publication for statistical use by others. Data will be analyzed using standard social science quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. Where possible and relevant, final reports and other relevant portions of the research process will be posted on the appropriate web site<sup>5</sup>. Where relevant, the study in its entirety may be published as an internal report or in part may be submitted for publication in journals to encourage peer

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2026-01/CAPS%20Standard%20Pay%20Tables%202026.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/west-coast-fisheries-participation-survey-results>

review of data collected through this process as well as to disseminate findings.

As explained in the preceding paragraphs, the information gathered has utility for the National Marine Fisheries Service in its efforts to carry out science in service to management needs. NOAA will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. See response to Question 10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. The information collection is designed to yield data that meet all applicable information quality guidelines. Prior to dissemination, the information will be subjected to quality control measures and a pre-dissemination review pursuant to [Section 515 of Public Law 106-554](#).

**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 expiration date for OMB approval will be displayed on the forms.

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

**References**

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