

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
South Pacific Tuna Act
OMB Control No. 0648-0218

Abstract

This request is for extension of a currently approved information collection. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) collects vessel license, vessel registration, catch, and unloading information from operators of U.S. purse seine vessels fishing under the provisions of the Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America (Treaty). The Treaty provides access for U.S. purse seine vessels to fish in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of Pacific Island Parties to the Treaty (PIPs). The PIPs include Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. This collection of information is required to meet U.S. obligations under the Treaty.

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 Treaty on Fisheries Between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America, signed in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, in 1987, and its annexes, schedules and implementing agreements, as amended (Treaty), authorizes United States (U.S.) purse seine vessels to fish within the national fishing zones of the 16 Pacific Island States that are party to the Treaty. The [South Pacific Tuna Act of 1988](#)¹ (16 U.S.C. 973g and 973j) and U.S. implementing regulations ([50 CFR Part 300, Subpart D](#)²) authorize the collection of information from participants in the Treaty fishery.

- 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**

Vessel operators participating in the Treaty fishery must apply annually for vessel licenses using

¹ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/16/chapter-16C>

² <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-III/part-300/subpart-D>

"Schedule 1" forms and supplementary submissions. These forms gather details on the vessel, operator, associated helicopters and insurance information, and any bankruptcy or Treaty violations. Operators must also apply annually for inclusion on the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) Vessel Register, registering their Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) units (also known as automatic location communicators or mobile transceiver units) via "FFA Vessel Register Application for Registration" forms. This process collects details on vessel specifications, VMS units, UVI/IMO numbers, AIS data, and prior registration history. Once licensed, operators must submit written catch and effort reports ("RPLs") after each trip (roughly five times per year), including reporting on whale shark encirclement. Additionally, operators must file transshipment and unloading reports ("Purse Seine Transshipment and other Unloading Logsheets") after each event (about six times per year).

Alongside the license and register applications, operators must submit supplementary non-form documentation: requested licensing period; designated agent in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, who will receive and respond to any legal issue on behalf of the vessel, in accordance with the Treaty; proof of maritime liability insurance covering all risks and liabilities normally covered by maritime liability insurance for the requested licensing period; a financial competency statement if subject to U.S. bankruptcy proceedings; a copy of the current USCG Certificate of Documentation; full-color photos of the vessel (including bow-to-stern side views and international radio call sign markings); a schematic stowage/well plan; and a VMS installation certificate.

Applicants may optionally submit an "expression of interest" ahead of the complete application. If license applications exceed availability, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) uses this information to determine eligibility. New applicants must provide: (1) requested licensing period; (2) current vessel name, international radio call sign, and USCG Certificate of Documentation number (if known); (3) owner/master names and addresses; (4) USCG Certificate of Documentation copy, or if not issued, a statement of whether application has been or will be made for one, including any endorsements sought ; (5) prior licensing history under this section; and (6) a statement of the total amount of tuna species landed or transshipped by the vessel within the United States since 1988. License renewals require only items (1) and (2).

NMFS collects this information for the U.S. Government and forwards it to the FFA (the Treaty Administrator based in Honiara, Solomon Islands). NMFS evaluates initial license eligibility, while the FFA reviews vessel register and license applications to assess operational capability and financial responsibility. Catch, effort, and transshipment data enable the FFA to evaluate regional tuna stock status, track fishery performance, and determine catch totals within each Pacific Island State's EEZ for fair Treaty fund distribution.

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.

NMFS accepts email submission of all information. At present, there is no existing system that would be as efficient and as simple as using the required forms, although NMFS has engaged the FFA in discussions to move the fishery to fully automated (electronic) reporting.

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.

To avoid duplication, the U.S. Government (via NMFS), the FFA, and Treaty Pacific Island States regularly consult and cooperate. No other programs collect this information or use these forms. Any proposed changes to forms or data collection are vetted with the U.S. Government and industry during annual Treaty consultations to ensure Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) compliance.

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

No specific methods are used to minimize the burden for small business entities. All participants in the South Pacific Tuna Treaty fishery are subject to the same reporting requirements to ensure compliance with international treaty obligations and 50 CFR Part 300, Subpart D. Establishing lesser requirements for small entities is not legally permissible under the terms of the Treaty.

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 this information collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, the United States Government will be unable to fulfill its binding international obligations under the Treaty on Fisheries Between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America (Treaty) and the South Pacific Tuna Act of 1988 (16 U.S.C. 973g and 973j). Specifically, discontinuing or reducing the frequency of these collections would lead to severe operational, legal, and environmental consequences:

- **Breach of Treaty & Loss of Fishing Access:** The Treaty explicitly requires timely submission of licensing data, VMS registration, catch reports, and unloading log sheets to the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) on behalf of the 16 Pacific Island Parties (PIPs). Without continuous data submission, U.S. purse seine vessels would lose valid licenses and VMS clearance to fish within the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of PIP nations, effectively grounding the U.S. distant-water tuna fleet in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.
- **Disruption of Treaty Fund Disbursements:** Catch and transshipment data collected after each trip and unloading are used by the FFA to verify spatial catch locations and

calculate fair financial distribution of Treaty funds among PIP nations. Inaccurate or infrequent data would delay financial settlements, risking geopolitical friction and political instability in U.S. relations with Pacific Island partner nations.

- **Impaired Regional Stock Assessment & Management:** Regional fishery management organizations—including the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)—depend on trip-level catch and effort data (RPLs) to conduct stock assessments for highly migratory tuna species (e.g., skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye tuna). Reducing reporting frequency would create critical data gaps, compromising scientific management, quota monitoring, and sustainable conservation of regional tuna stocks.
- **Legal & Regulatory Non-Compliance:** Under 50 CFR Part 300, Subpart D, vessel operators are legally required to report after each fishing trip and unloading. Failing to maintain this collection frequency would leave NMFS without the regulatory mechanisms required to verify vessel eligibility, monitor incidental interactions (such as whale shark encirclements), and enforce statutory compliance.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

The terms and conditions of the Treaty dictate the format and frequency of most aspects of this information collection. Under these requirements, vessel owners or operators must submit license application details on an annual basis. They may also submit an optional expression of interest—an initial subset of the application—ahead of the annual deadline. While voluntary, most applicants are expected to utilize this process to increase their chances of securing a license. Additionally, owners and operators are required to report on fishing activities following every fishing trip and unloading. Because these reporting events depend on operational activity, they may occur more frequently than quarterly. On average, vessels complete five fishing trips and six unloadings per year. Information gathered from operators generally aligns with 5 CFR 1320.6 standards, with respondents asked to submit measurements in metric units, such as metric tons of fish caught or unloaded. Full compliance with these reporting mandates is necessary. Failure to supply the required data places the vessel owner or operator in violation of the Treaty’s implementing regulations, exposing them to potential fines and prosecution. Furthermore, non-compliance prevents the U.S. Government from meeting its treaty obligations and hinders proper management of fishery stocks.

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 notice soliciting comments was published in the *Federal Register* (91 FR 35464) on June 11,

2026. No comments were received.

NMFS also 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.

No payment or gifts to respondents will be provided.

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.

Most of the data are collected for use by the FFA. Some of the data are used by NMFS to determine eligibility for licenses. [NOAA Administrative Order 216-100](#) governs confidential data collected by NMFS. In addition, the South Pacific Tuna Act of 1988 (16 U.S.C. 973j) provides for confidentiality of catch and unloading information provided by vessel operators.

Consistent with OMB's guidance implementing the Privacy Act of 1974, "an agency record-keeping system on firms it regulates may contain "records" (i.e., personal information) about officers of the firm incident to evaluating the firm's performance. Even though these are clearly "records" under the "control of" an agency, they would not be considered part of a system as defined by the Act unless the agency accessed them by reference to a personal identifier (name, etc.). That is, if these hypothetical "records" are never retrieved except by reference to company identifier or some other nonpersonal indexing scheme (e.g., type of firm) they are not a part of a system of records." NOAA believes this guidance speaks directly to this scenario and suggests that while the information system certainly will collect and maintain personally identifiable information (PII), it is not maintained in a system of records.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

No questions of a sensitive nature will be asked.

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

Information Collection	Type of Respondent (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)	Mean Hourly Wage Rate (for Type of Respondent) (f)	Total Annual Wage Burden Costs (g) = (e) x (f)
Catch Report Form	45-1011	20	6	120	1	120	\$30.16	\$3,619
License Application Form	45-1011	20	1	20	1	20	\$30.16	\$603
FFA Vessel Registration Application/VMS Registration Form	45-1011	20	1	20	0.75	15	\$30.16	\$452
Unloading and Transshipment Logsheet Form	45-1011	20	6	120	0.5	60	\$30.16	\$1,810
Expression of Interest		21	1	21	0.3333	7	\$30.16	\$211
Expression of Interest - Initial	45-1011	1	1	1	2	2		\$60
Expression of Interest - Renewal	45-1011	20	1	20	0.25	5		\$151
Totals				301		222		\$6,695

Wage rates were obtained from the BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Query System (<https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/area/0000000/2025>) pulled on 10/15/2026.

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).

All forms in this collection are submitted electronically. The only costs associated are the costs of FFA registration (\$5,071 per respondent) and VMS hardware maintenance (\$900 per respondent). The registration fee charged by the FFA is not within the control of NMFS and has decreased since the last renewal of this collection.

Information Collection	# of Respondents (a)	Annual # of Responses / Respondent (b)	Total # of Annual Responses (c)=(a) x (b)	Cost Burden / Respondent (h)	Total Annual Cost Burden (i) = (c) x (h)
FFA Vessel Registration Application/VMS Registration Form	20	1	20	5,971	119,420
TOTALS			20		119,420

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

The Commerce Alternative Personnel System (CAPS) pay tables³ for the Rest of U.S. locality were used to determine the base salary as NOAA employees are geographically dispersed. The upper bound of Interval 3 for each Pay Band was used as the base salary and a multiplier of 1.5 applied to calculate the loaded salary.

Cost Descriptions	Grade/ Step	Loaded Salary /Cost	% of Effort	Fringe (if Applicable)	Total Cost to Government
Federal Oversight					
Staff review and processing of expressions of interest	ZP 3	174,543	0.5%		\$ 873
Staff review and processing of license applications	ZP 3	174,543	0.6%		\$ 1,047
Staff review and processing of catch report forms and unloading log sheets	ZA 3	174,543	5%		\$ 8,727
Contractor Cost					
Data entry of catch report forms and unloading log sheets		82,000	35%		\$ 28,700
Travel					
Other Costs: Printing and Mailing Unloading Log sheets					\$ 120
TOTAL					\$ 39,467

³ <https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2026-01/CAPS%20Standard%20Pay%20Tables%202026.pdf>

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

Information Collection	Respondents		Responses		Burden Hours		Reason for change or adjustment
	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	
Catch Report Form	20	20	120	110	120	110	The number of responses was adjusted using the average recent number of annual trips per vessel, which in turn affected the estimated burden hours.
License Application Form	20	20	20	20	20	20	No Change
FFA Vessel Register Application/VMS Registration Form	20	20	20	20	15	15	No Change
Unloading and Transshipment Logsheet Form	20	20	120	110	60	55	The number of responses was adjusted using the average recent number of annual trips per vessel, which in turn affected the estimated burden hours.
Expression of Interest - Initial	1	1	1	1	2	2	No Change
Expression of Interest - Renewal	20	20	20	20	5	5	No Change
Total for Collection	101	101	301	281	222	207	
Difference	0		20		15		

Information Collection	Miscellaneous Costs		Reason for change or adjustment
	Current	Previous	
FFA Vessel Register Application/VMS Registration Form	119,420	138,620	There have been changes to the FFA registration fees since the previous renewal.
Total for Collection	119,420	138,620	
Difference	-19,200		

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 information collected is not for publication.

NMFS 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. Although the information collected is not expected to be disseminated directly to the public, the information will support information which will be disseminated to the public. Should NOAA Fisheries Service decide to disseminate the information, it will be subject to the quality control measures and pre-dissemination review pursuant to [Section 515 of Public Law 106-554](#).

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.

All forms except the RPL supplemental instructions for whale shark encirclement reporting used in the information collection are developed and supplied by the FFA. They do not display the expiration date for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval. NMFS has created and previously submitted a cover sheet that will display the OMB number and expiration date along with the description of the information collection and a privacy act statement. This cover sheet is shared by NMFS with applicants when they are provided with the FFA application.

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