SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Teacher at Sea Program Application
OMB Control No. 0648-0283

Abstract

This is a request for revision and extension of an approved information collection. This submission revises the previous collection to remove redundant instruments. The NOAA Health Services Questionnaire, which selected educators must complete to participate in the program, is covered under its own OMB Control Number (0648-0824) and need not be included in this collection. Additionally, participating educators are no longer required to submit a final report.

This collection is sponsored by NOAA Fisheries' Office of Communications on behalf of NOAA's Teacher at Sea Program, through which NOAA provides educators an opportunity to gain first-hand experience with field research activities aboard ocean-going research vessels. Selected educators spend 2-4 weeks at sea working alongside NOAA scientists to conduct ongoing research projects.

This collection covers the Teacher at Sea Program application. The online application solicits information from interested educators, including basic personal information, information about the educator's school or institution, teaching experience, lesson development experience, and ideas for applying program experience in their classrooms. The application also requires recommendations (in the form of questionnaires) from two professional references nominated by each applicant. This collection enables NOAA to select suitable participants for a limited number of opportunities. NOAA does not collect information from this universe of respondents for any other purpose than to determine which educators will participate in the NOAA Teacher at Sea Program.

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.

Through the Teacher at Sea Program, NOAA provides educators an opportunity to gain first-hand experience with the agency's field research activities. Selected educators spend up to 3 weeks at sea on a NOAA research vessel, participating in an ongoing research project with

NOAA scientists. Participants write a blog documenting the events and scientific work of their cruise. Upon return, they develop ideas for classroom activities based on what they learned while at sea.

NOAA is explicitly directed to support educational programs such as this one under Section 4002 of the America COMPETES Act (as amended in 2022) "to enhance public awareness and understanding of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, and atmospheric science and stewardship by the general public and other coastal stakeholders." The opportunity to join NOAA scientists for a research experience at sea doubles as both highly valuable professional development for the educators (see Section 4002 (b) (5)), increasing their own marine science literacy and skills, and as an avenue to increase their students' interest and participation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) (see Section 4002 (b) (1)).

The nature of the available sailing opportunities changes year to year, depending on scientists' schedules. Opportunities for NOAA Teachers at Sea to sail on research cruises monitoring one or more of the United States' 18 national marine sanctuaries are further supported under the research, monitoring, and education stipulations of Section 309 (16 U.S.C. 1440) of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (as amended in 2000.)

This collection covers the Teacher at Sea Program application. The online application solicits information from interested educators, including basic personal information, information about the educator's school or institution, teaching experience, lesson development experience, and ideas for applying program experience in their classrooms. The application also requires recommendations (in the form of questionnaires) from two professional references nominated by each applicant. A multi-level review of the collected information enables NOAA to select suitable participants for a limited number of opportunities. NOAA does not collect information from this universe of respondents for any other purpose.

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.

Applications are accepted annually, typically in November, for the purpose of identifying prospective participants in the Teacher at Sea Program. The specific items of information on the application will be used in the following manner:

Name, Home Address, Home Phone, Name of School, School Address, Work Phone, email address, citizenship, and Age Range are necessary self-identification information for the applicants.

Sex information is used to accommodate berthing requirements aboard the ship.

The questions: What subjects and grades do you currently teach? and What subjects and grades are you likely to teach next year? are used to determine the areas of discipline of the applicant. This information is useful when placing more than one teacher on a ship in order to match their areas of expertise, when evaluating their classroom activities for their appropriate subject matter and age level, and to determine that an applicant is, in fact, an educator.

The question: What leadership roles have you held in education? is used to evaluate the applicants. Applicants are given a higher score for holding leadership roles in their schools, participating in their own professional development, and being a role model for their students. These skills and activities directly relate to a teacher's ability to translate the experience into their classroom.

The question: Please list below all dates that you would be available to participate on a cruise. Identify what dates the teachers are available to sail. And part B. Type of research that interests you most encourages applicants to consider what type of research they would be most interested in pursuing and why. It also encourages them to consider where they would be most suited and most likely to become meaningfully engaged in the project.

Question #1, How will you use this experience to benefit your students, colleagues, and community? Are the most important selection criteria on the application. The information details what plans the teacher has for their follow-up classroom activities, as well as their plans for conducting workshops, in-service training, and writing articles for publication. These are the "products" that NOAA can show to justify the existence of the program.

Question #2, Describe your experience and ability to write your own classroom activities. Please be specific and offer examples. Please upload an example lesson plan or activity. directly relates to an educator's ability to make use of the experience for teachers and students. The more skilled a teacher is at writing curriculum and adapting life experiences to the classroom the better they are at taking an immersive experience, like being at sea, and translating it to classroom lessons.

Question #3, Describe how you work as a member of team. Use examples from your own experience that detail your role and the contributions you made to the team effort. encourages applicants to discuss ways they worked as part of a team. Teamwork is a vital skill in sailing and conducting research at sea.

Question #4, Discuss your ability to adapt to the physical and personal demands of life on-board a ship, is an attempt to encourage the applicants to consider what life is like on board a ship. The quarters are small, space is limited, it is difficult to "get away" from other people, communications and medical facilities are limited. All these factors are important considerations

to make before one embarks on a three-week cruise in the open ocean. While this information is not used in the rating process, it is important for the applicants to give due consideration to these conditions.

The recommendations, one from an administrator and one from a colleague, give good insight into an educator's teaching ability and their creativity in the classroom. This is an important evaluation criterion.

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.

NOAA does not plan to disseminate the submitted Participant's Applications to the public.

Between 2009-2025, this information collection gathered 2861 applications from educators interested in participating in NOAA's Teacher at Sea Program. A structured, multi-level review of those responses allowed NOAA to select 322 applicants as finalists for participation during that range of years. Note that this time frame encompasses a 2-year pause in applications and operations during the pandemic.

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 Teacher at Sea Program application is an online application accessible at a dedicated website developed and hosted by a third-party contractor, ECS Federal, on behalf of NOAA's Teacher at Sea Program. During the typically 30-day window each year that the application is open, the Teacher at Sea Program links to the application website from the main, NOAA Fisheries-hosted Teacher at Sea program site and from associated social media accounts. Generally, promotional print and electronic materials direct interested applicants first to the main Teacher at Sea website (www.teacheratsea.noaa.gov) to find information about the program and application process and then the link to the application itself. Colleagues and supervisors nominated to submit recommendations on behalf of applicants are directed to the application website via email.

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

NOAA routinely reviews agency and federal education databases, intern/fellowship portals, and cross-bureau educational initiatives to ensure this information collection does not duplicate any existing efforts. While NOAA and other federal science agencies (such as NSF, NASA, and USGS) administer various STEM training, fellowship, and grant initiatives, the Teacher at Sea Program is unique in its design, operational environment, and scope. It is the only federal program that places full-time kindergarten through college-level educators directly aboard ocean-going scientific research vessels alongside agency researchers.

Existing federal application systems or generic education rosters cannot be utilized or adapted for this collection because they do not capture the operational and pedagogical requirements unique to this mission—specifically, evaluating an educator's curriculum development experience, ability to translate at-sea scientific research into classroom activities, physical adaptability to living in close quarters on active research ships, and shipboard berthing constraints. Furthermore, NOAA has actively audited this collection to eliminate internal duplication. The medical clearance instrument (NOAA Health Services Questionnaire) has been separated into its own approved collection (OMB Control No. 0648-0824), and redundant post-cruise reporting requirements have been eliminated to ensure that only the essential data needed for participant evaluation and selection are collected under this OMB number.

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

No small businesses will be responding to this collection.

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.

The annual collection of Teacher at Sea applications is essential to fulfilling NOAA’s legislative directives under the America COMPETES Act and the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. If this collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, the consequences would include:

- **Statutory Non-Compliance & Diminished STEM Outreach:** NOAA would be unable to fulfill its mandate to promote ocean literacy and STEM engagement through hands-on, educator-led scientific research experiences.
- **Threats to Maritime Operational Compatibility:** Operating at sea requires rigorous matching of applicant dates, research discipline interests, berthing accommodations, and adaptability to small-space maritime living. Without this screening, NOAA could face unviable placements, mission disruptions, or safety hazards aboard research ships.
- **Reduced Equity and Merit-Based Selection:** An open, annual online application ensures fair, competitive recruitment across all U.S. states and territories. Suspending or reducing collection frequency would eliminate open recruitment and restrict opportunities to a narrow, non-representative pool.
- **Misalignment with Annual Fleet Sailing Schedules:** Cruise research projects and berth availability vary on an annual cycle. Collecting information less frequently would prevent NOAA from aligning selected educators with current ship operational dates and research priorities.

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

This collection does not require respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly.

This collection does not require respondents to prepare a written response to it fewer than 30 days after receipt of it.

This collection does not require respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document; in fact, it does not require the submission of any particular document.

This collection does not require respondents to retain records for more than three years.

This collection is not connected to a statistical survey.

This collection does not require the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB, or even any statistical data classification at all.

This collection includes a pledge of confidentiality that is supported by the Privacy Act of 1974 but which allows for sharing among Department staff for work-related purposes.

This collection does not require respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets or other confidential information.

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 June 11, 2026 (91 FR 35466) solicited public comment on this collection. No comments were received.

NOAA reached out to several Teacher at Sea alumni 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 comments were received.

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

There are no payments made or gifts given to respondents.

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.

NOAA Teacher at Sea applications and recommendations will be protected as a Privacy Act record and treated confidentially. As stated on the form, disclosure of this information is subject to all of the published routine uses as identified in the Privacy Act System of Records Notice COMMERCE/NOAA-11, Contact Information for Members of the Public Requesting or Providing Information Related to NOAA's Mission.

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 are no questions of a sensitive nature or any matters that are commonly considered private.

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

The estimates for the burden of the collection of information have been gathered by querying applicants. The estimates are as follows:

Application Process
Number of respondents expected annually = 275
Frequency of response = once annually
Average response time per respondent = 1 hour and 15 minutes
- 15 minutes to read the application
- 45 minutes to complete the application and upload attachments (lesson/activity examples)
- 15 minutes to deliver and discuss the recommendation forms

Total hours: 344

Recommendations (2 per applicant)
Number of respondents expected annually = 550
Frequency of response = once annually
Average response time per respondent = 15 minutes

Total hours: 138

Information Collection	Type of Respondent (e.g., Occupational Title)	# of Respondents/ year (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)
NOAA Teacher at Sea Program Application	Teachers/Educators	275	1	275	1.25	344	$35.50*	$12,212
NOAA Teacher at Sea Recommendations	Teachers/Educators	550	1	550	0.25	138	$35.50*	$4,899
Totals				**825**		**482**		**$17,111**

*The hourly wage used in this table was derived from data in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2025 Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics. The NOAA Teacher at Sea Program application is open to all full-time U.S. educators. We calculated the average of nationally averaged annual wages for Postsecondary Teachers (25-1000), Preschool, Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and Special Education Teachers (25-2000), and Other Teachers and Instructors (25-3000), weighted by BLS' employment estimates for each category. We then converted this annual wage to an hourly wage.

13. Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected on the burden worksheet).

There are no capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with this information 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.

A NOAA Teacher at Sea Program staff member distributes application links to partners and email listservs; advertises applications on web and social media; receives applications through application system; responds to questions from applicants; works with external partners to review collected applications and make selections.

The Commerce Alternative Personnel System (CAPS) pay tables for the Washington-Baltimore-Arlington locality rates were used to determine the base salary. A multiplier of 1.5 was used to calculate the loaded salary.

Cost Descriptions	Grade/Step	Loaded Salary /Cost	% of Effort	Fringe (if Applicable)	Total Cost to Government
Federal Oversight	ZA III / Step 2	$183,815	10%		$18,382
Other Federal Positions					
Contractor Cost					
Travel					
Other Costs:					
TOTAL					**$18,382**

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

This submission revises the previous collection to remove redundant instruments. The NOAA Health Services Questionnaire, which selected educators must complete in order to participate in the program, is covered under its own OMB Control Number (0648-0824) and need not be included in this collection. Additionally, participating educators are no longer required to submit a follow-up report.

Finally, an accounting adjustment counts a larger number of individual respondents (three per application: the applicant and two recommenders) without increasing the total number of burden hours (1.25 hours per application and 0.25 hours per recommendation.). The previous renewal only indicated 375 respondents with each respondent submitting two responses. Therefore, the number of responses and burden does not change, only the number of respondents.

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	
NOAA Teacher at Sea Program Application	275	375	275	375	344	469	Reduced anticipated number of applicants per year based on the number of applicants in the past 3 years.
NOAA Teacher at Sea Recommendations	550	375	550	750	138	188	The number of respondents was corrected to reflect 2 respondents per each TAS Application.
NOAA Teacher at Sea Follow-Up Report	0	45	0	45	0	90	Participants no longer submit follow-up reports
NOAA Health Services Questionnaire (NHSQ)	0	45	0	45	0	34	NHSQ is a separate collection with its own OMB Control Number
Total for Collection	**825**	**840**	**825**	**1,215**	**482**	**781**	
Difference	**-15**		**-390**		**-299**		

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

NOAA Teacher at Sea Program 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, results may be used in scientific, management, technical or general informational publications. Should NOAA Teacher at Sea Program 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.

The agency plans to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection on all instruments.

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).