

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**ALASKA PROGRESS REPORT: COOPERATIVE MINIMIZATION OF THE**  
**INCIDENTAL CATCH OF PACIFIC HALIBUT**  
**OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0697**

This is a request for revision of an existing information collection due to modifications requested by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (Council).

**BACKGROUND**

The [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#), 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq. (Magnuson-Stevens Act) authorizes the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to prepare and amend fishery management plans for any fishery in waters under its jurisdiction. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) manages the United States (U.S.) groundfish fisheries of the exclusive economic zone off Alaska under the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska and the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area. The fishery management plans were approved by the Secretary of Commerce under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act as amended in 2006. The fishery management plans are implemented by regulations at [50 CFR part 679](#).

In 2014, the Council announced continued plans for reducing Pacific halibut incidental catch in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Island Management Area (BSAI) groundfish fisheries.

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

**1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.**

Representatives of the five BSAI groundfish sectors (American Fisheries Act (AFA) Catcher/Processor, AFA Catcher Vessel, Amendment 80, Freezer Longline Cooperative, and Western Alaska Community Development Quota (CDQ)) indicated their willingness to voluntarily provide additional information to the Council as requested, because the information is seen as an important component of reducing Pacific halibut incidental catch. The new, voluntary information is expected to provide the fleet with more flexibility to adapt fishing operations to changing environmental and market conditions than would result from placing the information as a regulatory requirement.

**2. 1Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. 1If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.**

**a. Incidental Catch of Pacific Halibut Progress Report**

During its February 2014 meeting, the Council requested an annual, voluntary, non-regulatory report from the five BSAI groundfish sectors. This annual report would describe the progress the sectors achieved to minimize Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) by implementing new, voluntary actions through their cooperative and/or inter-cooperative agreements; namely

development of effective and verifiable measures for halibut avoidance, individual accountability, and use of incentives to reduce PSC. These progress reports were presented at the June 2014 Council meeting.

After accepting the presentations from the groundfish sectors during its June 2014 meeting, the Council identified its plans for further reducing Pacific halibut incidental catch in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. First, the Council requested additional voluntary actions to reduce halibut mortalities in the BSAI resulting from halibut PSC use and discards in the directed halibut fishery, by a cumulative 10 percent from the current 5-year average levels, through the 2014-15 fishing seasons. The Council requested that industry report back to the Council on 1) voluntary halibut reduction measures and 2) the effectiveness of those measures in terms of absolute reductions in halibut mortalities. These reports are scheduled for presentation to the Council at the February 2015 meeting.

NMFS has changed the time to complete the progress report based on a comment. Much of the information requested is already available to the cooperatives, because it is collected through observer data that are available to the cooperatives. However, NMFS agrees that additional time could be required to prepare and respond to the specific data requests.

The report may be provided electronically or by paper submittal, perhaps with an additional oral presentation to the Council.

**Progress report on Incidental Catch of Halibut**

- Development and implementation of effective and verifiable measures for halibut avoidance
- Individual accountability and use of incentives
- Halibut reduction actions
- Effectiveness of those measures: how many absolute reductions in halibut mortality

Correction to number of respondents: change 6 to 5. Add email as a means of transmittal. Change burden from 8 hr to 40 hr.

| <b>Progress Report Incidental Catch of Halibut, Respondent</b> |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Number of respondents</b>                                   | <b>5</b>       |
| <b>Total annual responses</b>                                  | <b>5</b>       |
| Frequency of response = 1                                      |                |
| <b>Total burden hours</b>                                      | <b>200 hr</b>  |
| Time per response = 40 hr                                      |                |
| <b>Total personnel cost</b> (\$37/hr x 200)                    | <b>\$7,400</b> |
| <b>Total miscellaneous cost</b> (7.70)                         | <b>\$8</b>     |
| Fax (6 x 1 = 6)  |                |
| Email (0.05 x 4 = 0.20)  |                |
| Photocopy cost (5 x 6 pp x 0.05 = 1.50)                        |                |

| <b>Progress Report Incidental Catch of Halibut, Federal Government</b> |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Total annual responses</b>  | <b>0</b> |
| <b>Total burden hours</b>  | <b>0</b> |
| <b>Total personnel cost</b>  | <b>0</b> |
| <b>Total miscellaneous cost</b>  | <b>0</b> |

It is anticipated that the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support publicly disseminated information. The Council will retain control over the information

and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (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](#).

**3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.**

The Cooperative Progress Report may be submitted to the Council electronically as an attachment to an email; it also could be submitted by courier, mail, or fax.

**4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.**

This information collection is part of a specialized and technical program that is not like any other.

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

Cooperatives are not small businesses or small entities; thus this information collection does not impose a significant impact on small entities.

**6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.**

The Council requested that groundfish sector participants voluntarily provide information that would enable the Council to make informed decisions about the most effective regulatory management measures to minimize incidental catch of halibut to the extent practicable. If the collection were not conducted or were conducted less frequently, the information needed by the Council would not be available and the problems of incidental halibut catch would not be solved.

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

No special circumstances exist.

**8. Provide information on the PRA Federal Register Notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons 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 (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.**

A Federal Register Notice was published on August 4, 2014 (79 FR 45177) to solicit public comments. One comment was received from At-Sea Processors Association, on behalf of themselves and four other organizations (Mid-Water Trawlers Cooperative, Freezer Longline Coalition, Groundfish Forum and United Catcher Boats), with representatives of those associations signing the comment.

| Comment   | Response   |
|---|--|
| <p>The notice states that the estimated total annual burden will be 40 hours for all respondents combined and \$7 for the annual cost to the public. These estimates greatly underestimate the costs associated with this reporting. The identified sectors have approximately 200 vessels that participate in upwards of 10 target fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. Due to the complexity and diversity of operations, the time to produce even brief descriptions of the measures used to avoid halibut would exceed the relatively small burden estimated in the notice.</p> <p>Completely responding to the data request by assessing and reporting on the effectiveness of those measures will greatly increase the burden, requiring in excess of hundreds of hours to respond. Detailed data from all of the participating vessels will need to be gathered and reviewed. Analysis of these data will be needed to verify the effectiveness of measures. Since halibut bycatch varies not only with specific fishing practices, but also with space and time, the analysis will need to consider the effects of those factors and the degree to which fishing practices have affected bycatch rates.</p> <p>In development of information collection programs, it is critical to accurately estimate the burdens associated with the collection to ensure that the collection is a worthwhile expenditure of federal and private resources.</p> | <p>NMFS agrees with the commenter that the time required for response to comment could be greater than initially estimated; 50 hours for a single report and 200 hours for all respondents combined. Much of this information is already available to the cooperatives, because it is collected through observer data that are available to the cooperatives. However, NMFS agrees that additional time could be required to prepare and respond to the specific data requests in the formats desired. NMFS has increased the time required to prepare the response from 8 hours each to 40 hours each, based on the new data request made by the Council in June 2014. This increased time would recognize the new data collections that may be required.</p> |

**9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.**

No payment or gift is provided under this program.

**10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.**

This information is voluntary and is required to manage commercial fishing efforts under 50 CFR part 679, under section 402(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1801, et seq.) and

under [16 U.S.C. 1862\(j\)](#), North Pacific Fisheries Conservation. The Council is not requesting any confidential information be included in the report.

**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 information collection does not involve information of a sensitive nature.

**12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.**

Estimated total respondents: 5, decreased from 6. Estimated total responses: 5, decreased from 6. Estimated total burden: 200 hr, increased from 30 hr. Estimated total personnel costs: \$7,400, increased from \$1,100.

**13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in Question 12 above).**

Estimated total miscellaneous costs: \$8.

**14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.**

The Federal government will not incur any costs or burden, because the report is sent to the Council.

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

The Council requested additional information to be included in the report; therefore this is a program change:

Cooperative PSC Progress Report

- a decrease of 1 respondent and response, 5 instead of 6
- an increase of 170 hr burden, 200 hr instead of 30 hr
- an increase of \$6,300 personnel costs, \$7,400 instead of \$1,100
- a decrease of \$2 miscellaneous costs, \$8 instead of \$10

**16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.**

The progress reports will be posted on the Council's web site.

**17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.**

Not Applicable.

**18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.**

Not Applicable.

**B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS**

This collection does not employ statistical methods.