



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35).

Agency: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Title: Southeast Region Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Related Requirements.

OMB Control Number: 0648-0544.

Form Number(s): NA.

Type of Request: Regular submission (extension of a current information collection).

Number of Respondents: 905.

Average Hours Per Response: Installation/activation checklist, 15 minutes; power down exemption request, 5 minutes; fishing activity report, 1 minute. Annual maintenance is 2 hours, but not counted as a response.

Burden Hours: 2,383.

Needs and Uses: This request is for extension of the current information collection.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) authorizes the Gulf of Mexico 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 reef fish fishery in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico under the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The vessel monitoring system (VMS) regulations for the Gulf reef fish fishery may be found at 50 CFR §622.9.

The FMP contains several area-specific regulations where fishing is restricted or prohibited in order to protect habitat or spawning aggregations, or to reduce fishing pressure in areas that are heavily fished. Unlike size, bag, and trip limits, where the catch can be monitored onshore when a vessel returns to port, area restrictions require at-sea enforcement. However, at-sea enforcement of offshore area restrictions is difficult due to the distance from shore and the limited number of patrol vessels, resulting in a need to improve enforceability of area fishing restrictions through remote sensing methods. In addition, all fishing gears are subject to some area fishing restrictions. Because of the sizes of these areas and the distances from shore, the effectiveness of enforcement through over flights and at-sea interception is limited. An electronic VMS allows a more effective means to monitor vessels for intrusions into restricted areas.

The VMS provides effort data and significantly aids in enforcement of areas closed to fishing. All position reports are treated in accordance with NMFS existing guidelines for confidential data. As a condition of authorized fishing for or possession of Reef Fish in or from the Gulf of Mexico Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), a vessel owner or operator subject to the requirements for a VMS in this section must allow NMFS, the United States Coast Guard (USCG), and their authorized officers and designees, access to the vessel's position data obtained from the VMS.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations.

Frequency: Annually, one time and on occasion.

Respondent's Obligation: Mandatory.

OMB Desk Officer: OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov.

Copies of the above information collection proposal can be obtained by calling or writing Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, (202) 482-0336, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at JJessup@doc.gov).

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov.

Dated: September 28, 2012

Gwellnar Banks,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

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