



This document is scheduled to be published in the Federal Register on 06/08/2016 and available online at <http://federalregister.gov/a/2016-13519>, and on FDsys.gov

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Electronic Monitoring Systems and Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) for Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS)

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before **[INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]**.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW,

Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at JJessup@doc.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Margo Schulze-Haugen, (301) 427-8503 or Margo.Schulze-Haugen@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This request is for extension of a currently approved information collection.

VMS and electronic monitoring systems collect important information on fishing effort, catch, and the geographic location of fishing effort and catch for certain sectors of the Atlantic HMS fleet. Data collected through these programs are used in both domestic and international fisheries management, including for law enforcement, stock assessments, and quota management purposes. Atlantic HMS vessels required to use VMS are pelagic longline, purse seine, bottom longline (directed shark permit holders in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia), and gillnet (directed shark permit holders consistent with the requirements of the Atlantic large whale take reduction plan requirements at 50 CFR 229.39.(h)) vessels. In addition to VMS, pelagic longline vessels are also required to have electronic monitoring systems to monitor catch and account for bluefin tuna harvest and discards.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) monitors fleet adherence to gear- and time-area restrictions with VMS position location data.

Gear restricted areas and time-area closures are important tools for Atlantic HMS management that have been implemented to reduce bycatch of juvenile swordfish, sea turtles, and bluefin tuna, among other species. Electronic monitoring data from the pelagic longline fleet includes bluefin tuna discard and harvest information. These data are used by NMFS to accurately monitor bluefin tuna catch by the pelagic longline fleet, to ensure compliance with Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) limits and requirements, and to ensure that the Longline category bluefin tuna quota is not over-harvested. VMS reporting of bluefin tuna catch is used to monitor the status of IBQ allocations in real-time.

Atlantic HMS fisheries are managed under the dual authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Atlantic Tunas Conservation Act (ATCA). Under the MSA, management measures must be consistent with ten National Standards, and fisheries must be managed to maintain optimum yield, rebuild overfished fisheries, and prevent overfishing. Under ATCA, the Secretary of Commerce shall promulgate regulations, as necessary and appropriate, to implement measures adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

II. Method of Collection

First-time VMS respondents must install a VMS unit and submit an activation checklist to NMFS via mail. Hail-out, hail-in, hourly position reports, and bluefin tuna catch reports must be submitted to NMFS via the VMS communication system. First-time electronic monitoring

respondents must have an electronic monitoring system installed by a NMFS contractor.

Electronic monitoring data must be submitted after each pelagic longline trip via mail.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648-0372.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Review: Regular submission (extension of a currently approved information collection).

Affected Public: Businesses or other for-profit organizations; individuals or households; State, Local, or Tribal government.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 311.

Estimated Time Per Response: Four hours for initial VMS installation; 5 minutes per VMS initial activation checklist; 2 minutes per VMS hail-out/hail-in declaration; 6 hours for electronic monitoring installation; 5 minutes for VMS pelagic longline bluefin tuna catch reporting; 15 minutes for VMS purse seine bluefin tuna catch records; 1 minute for dockside review of bluefin tuna catch records previously submitted via VMS; 2 hours for electronic monitoring data retrieval.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 20,402.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$389,416 in recordkeeping/reporting costs.

IV. Request for Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden (including hours and cost) of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval of this information collection; they also will become a matter of public record.

Dated: June 2, 2016.

Sarah Brabson,

NOAA PRA Clearance Officer.

BILLING CODE: 3510-22-S.

[FR Doc. 2016-13519 Filed: 6/7/2016 8:45 am; Publication Date: 6/8/2016]