discrimination or denials of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice.

Hearing impaired persons who will attend the hearing and require the services of a sign language interpreter, should contact Betty Edmiston, Administrative Services and Clearinghouse Division at (202) 376–8105 (TDD (202) 376–8116), at least five (5) working days before the scheduled date of the hearing.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Barbara Brooks, Press and Communications, (202) 367–8312.

Dated: May 11, 1998.

Stephanie Y. Moore,

General Counsel.

[FR Doc. 98–12939 Filed 5–14–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6335–01–M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Permits for Incidental Taking of Endangered or Threatened Species; Proposed Collection

ACTION: Proposed collection; comment request.

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, Pub. L. 104–13 (44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A)).

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before July 14, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Linda Engelmeier, Departmental Forms Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 5327, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20230.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument(s) and instructions should be directed to Karen Salvini—F/PR3, Office of Protected Resources, Room 13623, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910–3226 (301–713–1401 ext.130).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et. seq.) imposed prohibitions against the taking of endangered species. In 1982, Congress revised the ESA to allow permits authorizing the taking of endangered species incidental to otherwise lawful activities. The corresponding regulations established procedures for persons to apply for such a permit. In addition, the regulations set forth specific reporting requirements for such permit holders.

The regulations contain three sets of information collections: (l) Applications for incidental take permits, (2) applications for certificates of inclusion, and (3) reporting requirements for permits issued. Certificates of inclusion are only required if a general permit is issued to a representative of a group of potential permit applicants, rather than requiring each entity to apply for and receive a permit. There are currently no general incidental take permits, and no certificates of inclusion, and none are expected in the next three years.

The required information is used to evaluate the impacts of the proposed activity on endangered species, to make the determinations required by the ESA prior to issuing a permit, and to establish appropriate permit conditions. In order to issue a permit as required by ESA section 10(a)(2)(B), NMFS must determine that (i) the taking will be incidental; (ii) the applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impacts of such taking; (iii) the applicant will ensure that adequate funding for the plan will be provided; (iv) the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild; and (v) any additional measures required by NMFS as being necessary or appropriate for the purposes of the conservation plan will be met.

When a species is listed as threatened, section 4(d) of the ESA requires the Secretary to issue whatever regulations are deemed necessary or advisable to provide for conservation of the species. In many cases those regulations reflect blanket application of the section 9 take prohibition. However, in an interim rule for protection of listed coho salmon NMFS recognized certain exceptions to that prohibition, including one for restoration actions taken in accord with approved watershed action plans in Oregon or California. While watershed plans are prepared for other purposes in coordination with or fulfillment of various state programs, a watershed group wishing to take advantage of the exception for restoration activities (rather than obtaining a section 10 permit) would have to submit the plan for NMFS review.

II. Method of Collection

Permit applicants must submit an application to NMFS, including all appropriate information listed on the instructions. These instructions are a user-friendly version of the requirements at 50 CFR 222.22(b) for applications for incidental take permits.

Once issued, the permit requires that permit holders submit an annual report on activities. These reports must include information on: The activity causing incidental take, any endangered species taken (species, dates, location, and condition of animal), and the status of implementing a conservation plan to offset the impact to the species.

For watershed plans, a watershed council or other local group would submit its watershed plan to NMFS (and the state) for review against state guidance which meets the standards of 50 CFR 222.22(c). If the plan is found consistent with the state guidance, the group would not need to apply for a section 10 permit for any incidental take that might be associated with a restoration action called for in the plan. No annual or other reporting is associated with the restoration activity exception.

III. Data

OMB Number: 0648–0230.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Regular submission.

Affected Public: State, local, or tribal government; business or other for-profit; individuals; not-for-profit institutions.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 21 (11 permit-related, 10 for watershed plans).

Estimated Time Per Response: 80 hours for a permit application, 10 hours for a watershed plan, 8 hours for a permit report, and 30 minutes for a Certificate of Inclusion application.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 1,068.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: $0 (no capital expenditures).

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: May 12, 1998.

Linda Engelmeier,

Departmental Forms Clearance Officer, Office of Management and Organization.

[FR Doc. 98–12956 Filed 5–14–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Alaska Region Gear Identification; Proposed Collection

ACTION: Proposed collection; comment request.

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, Pub. L. 104–13 (44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A)).

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before July 14, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Linda Engelmeier, Departmental Forms Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 5327, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20230.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument(s) and instructions should be directed to Patsy A. Bearden, F/AK01, NOAA/NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802–1668 (907–586–7228).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

Participants in the groundfish fishery in the Alaska Region are required to identify all longline marker buoys carried onboard or used by any vessel. This requirement is currently cleared under OMB Control Number 0648–0305, which dealt with all NOAA gear-marking requirements, but those requirements will now be submitted on a regional basis.

II. Method of Collection

The vessel's name, Federal fisheries permit number, or the vessel's registration number shall be in characters at least 4 inches (10.16 cm) in height and 0.5 in. (1.27 cm) in width in a contrasting color visible above the water line and shall be maintained so the markings are clearly visible.

III. Data

OMB Number: New Number to be Assigned.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Regular Submission.

Affected Public: Individuals, Business and other for-profit (commercial fishermen).

Estimated Number of Respondents: 1,916.

Estimated Time Per Response: 0.25 hour.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 3,450 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: The cost to fishermen is minimal. Materials needed are paint and paint brush, or permanent ink applicator, and possibly a stencil. Labor costs probably range between $10 and $15 per hour with the average estimated time varying from 1 to 5 minutes to paint/mark each buoy. Total estimated cost per vessel varies greatly with the type and amount of gear being used. Given the adverse weather conditions and salt water, we expect each number will need to be repainted, repaired, or replaced annually.

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: May 12, 1998.

Linda Engelmeier,

Departmental Forms Clearance Officer, Office of Management and Organization.

[FR Doc. 98–12957 Filed 5–14–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Northwest Region Gear Identification Requirements; Proposed Collection

ACTION: Proposed Collection; Comment Request.

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, Public Law 104–13 (44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A)).

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before July 14, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Linda Engelmeier, Departmental Forms Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 5327, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20230.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument(s) and instructions should be directed to William L. Robinson, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, 206–526–6140.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

The success of fisheries management programs depends significantly on regulatory compliance. Requirements that fishing gear be marked are essential to facilitate endorsement. The ability to link fishing gear to the vessel owner or operator is crucial to endorsement of regulations issued under the authority of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act to govern domestic and foreign fishing, and the Atlantic Tunas Convention act. The marking of fishing gear is also valuable in actions concerning damage, loss, and civil proceedings.

The regulations specify fishing gear must be marked with the vessel's official number, federal permit or tag number, or some other specified form of identification. The regulations further specify how the gear is to be marked,