

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that Heather E. Liwanag, Ph.D. (California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407-0401) has withdrawn an application for a permit to conduct research on Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) near McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

**ADDRESSES:** The application and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 427-8401; fax (301) 713-0376.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Sara Young or Amy Sloan, (301) 427-8401.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On August 3, 2016, notice was published in the *Federal Register* (81 FR 51189) that a request for a permit to conduct research on Weddell seals had been submitted by the above-named applicant.

The applicant has withdrawn the application from further consideration.

Dated: October 20, 2016.

**Julia Harrison,**

*Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 2016-25764 Filed 10-24-16; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Atlantic Herring Amendment 5 Data Collection

**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 December 27, 2016.

**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](mailto:Jjessup@doc.gov)).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Daniel Luers, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Dr., Gloucester, MA 01930, (978) 282-8457, [Daniel.luers@noaa.gov](mailto:Daniel.luers@noaa.gov).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### I. Abstract

This request is for extension of a current information collection. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Secretary of Commerce has the responsibility for the conservation and management of marine fishery resources. Much of this responsibility has been delegated to NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Under this stewardship role, the Secretary was given certain regulatory authorities to ensure the most beneficial uses of these resources. One of the regulatory steps taken to carry out the conservation and management objectives is to collect information from users of the resources.

Data collection for Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan requires renewal of Category E permits for limited access herring permit holders. This collection also requires herring carrier vessels that sell herring (rather than deliver those fish on behalf of a dealer for purchase) to obtain or maintain an At-Sea Atlantic Herring Dealer Permit. Vessels that have both an At-Sea Atlantic Herring Dealer Permit and a Federal fishing permit are required to fulfill the reporting requirements of both permits as appropriate.

This collection has several vessel monitoring system (VMS) and vessel trip reporting (VTR) components. Category E vessels must submit daily VMS reports, weekly VTRs, and maintain a VMS unit on their vessels and declare intent to target Atlantic herring via VMS. This collection allows a vessel that opts to enroll as a herring carrier to do so via VMS rather than obtaining a letter of authorization (LOA). By declaring a herring trip via VMS, a vessel is exempt from daily VMS catch reporting, and is not bound by the 7-day enrollment period required by the herring carrier LOA. Vessels with limited access herring permits, Category E permits, and vessels declaring herring carrier trips via VMS also must give a pre-landing notification to the NMFS Office of Law Enforcement via VMS. In addition, vessels are prohibited from turning off VMS units while in port. A

vessel representative must request a letter of exemption (LOE) from NMFS to turn off its VMS if that vessel will be out of the water for more than 72 hours. A vessel owner is able to sign a herring vessel out of the VMS program for a minimum of 30 days by requesting and obtaining an LOE from NMFS. A vessel is not able to leave the dock unless the VMS unit is turned back on.

This collection also requires that vessels with limited access herring permits, vessels with open access Category D permits that are fishing with midwater trawl gear in Areas 1A, 1B, and/or 3, vessels with open access category E permits, and herring carrier vessels contact NMFS at least 48 hours in advance of fishing to request an observer. Vessels currently contact NMFS via phone, and selection notices or waivers are issued by NMFS via VMS. Vessels with limited access herring permits, Category E permits, and vessels declaring herring carrier trips via VMS must notify NMFS via VMS of their intent to participate in the herring fishery prior to leaving port on each trip by entering the appropriate activity and gear codes in order to harvest, possess, or land herring on that trip.

Additionally, this collection requires vessels issued limited access permits working cooperatively in the herring fishery to provide NMFS-approved observers with the estimated weight of each species brought on board or released on each tow.

Finally, this collection requires that all herring vessels (*i.e.* any area throughout the EEZ, any gear type) bring all catch aboard the vessel and make it available for sampling by an observer. If catch is not made available to an observer before discard, that catch is defined as slippage, and the vessel operator must complete a "Released Catch Affidavit" form within 48 hours of the end of the fishing trip which details why catch was slipped, estimates the quantity and species composition of the slipped catch, and records the time and location of the slipped catch.

##### II. Method of Collection

Information is collection on paper forms, by telephone, or electronically.

##### III. Data

*OMB Control Number:* 0648-0674.

*Form Number(s):* None.

*Type of Review:* Regular (extension of a current information collection).

*Affected Public:* Business or other for-profit organizations; individual or households, state, local, or tribal government.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 16,065.

*Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours:* 1,231.

*Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public:* \$46,877 in recordkeeping/reporting costs.

*Estimated Time per Response:* Category E permit renewal, 1 minute; At-Sea Herring Dealer Permit renewal, 5 minutes; weekly dealer reports, 15 minutes; VMS activity declarations, 5 minutes; VMS power-down exemption letter, 5 minutes; VMS pre-landing notification and gear declaration, 5 minutes; catch reports and vessel trip reports, 5 minutes; request for an observer prior to a trip, 5 minutes; cancellation of trip, 1 minute; estimate of catch/discard provision, 1 minute; documentation of slippage, 5 minutes.

#### 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: October 20, 2016.

**Sarah Brabson,**

*NOAA PRA Clearance Officer.*

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**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Patent and Trademark Office

[Docket No. PTO-P-2016-0040]

#### Request for Comments on Examination Time Goals

**AGENCY:** United States Patent and Trademark Office, Commerce.

**ACTION:** Request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The United States Patent and Trademark Office (Office or USPTO) is soliciting public feedback as part of an effort to reevaluate its examination time goals. Examination time goals vary by technology and represent the average

amount of time that a patent examiner is expected to spend examining a patent application in a particular technology. The Office plans to use the public feedback as an input to help ensure that the Office's examination time goals accurately reflect the amount of time needed by examiners to conduct quality examination in a manner that responds to stakeholders' interests. In addition to accepting public feedback through the submission of written comments, the Office will provide the following avenues for increased interactive participation: IdeaScale®, a Web-based collaboration tool that allows users to post comments and interact with the posted comments of others; and five roundtables that the Office will be conducting in: Alexandria, Virginia; Detroit, Michigan; Denver, Colorado; Dallas, Texas; and San Jose, California.

**DATES:** *Written Comments Deadline:* To be ensured of consideration, written comments must be received on or before December 27, 2016.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments should be sent by electronic mail addressed to *ExternalExaminationTimeStudy@USPTO.gov*. Comments also may be submitted by postal mail addressed to: Mail Stop Comments—Patents, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, marked to the attention of Raul Tamayo, Senior Legal Advisor, Office of Patent Legal Administration, Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Patent Examination Policy.

Although comments may be submitted by postal mail, the Office prefers to receive comments by electronic mail in order to facilitate posting on the USPTO's Internet Web site (<http://www.uspto.gov>). Electronic comments may be submitted in plain text, ADOBE® portable document format, or MICROSOFT WORD® format. Comments not submitted electronically should be submitted on paper in a format that facilitates digital scanning into ADOBE® portable document format.

The comments will be available for viewing via the USPTO's Internet Web site (<http://www.uspto.gov>). The comments also will be available for public inspection at the Office of the Commissioner for Patents, currently located in Madison East, Tenth Floor, 600 Dulany Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. Because the comments will be made publicly available, information that the submitter does not desire to make public, such as an address or phone number, should not be included in the comments.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** *Roundtable information, including roundtable registration information:* Elizabeth Magargel, Strategic Planning Project Manager, Office of the Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Patent Operations, by telephone at (571) 270-7248.

*Written comments:* Raul Tamayo, Senior Legal Advisor, Office of Patent Legal Administration, Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Patent Examination Policy, by telephone at (571) 272-7728.

*Examination time goals:* Daniel Sullivan, Director Technology Center 1600, by telephone at (571) 272-0900.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Office has a staff of approximately 8,400 patent examiners who examine patent applications in hundreds of technology areas. Each technology area is assigned an examination time goal. The goals are used by the Office for a variety of purposes, including forecasting pendency and staffing needs and evaluating individual examiner performance. The goals originally were assigned over 40 years ago and have been adjusted twice.

Since the examination time goals were originally assigned, significant changes to the examination process have occurred, including increased use of electronic tools, changes in law due to court decisions, a growing volume of prior art, and progress in technology, which results in increasingly complex subject matter in applications. In addition, the Office recently transitioned from the United States Patent Classification (USPC) system to the Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC) system. Because the current examination time goals were assigned based on the USPC system, implementation of the CPC system has caused the Office to reconsider and reassess the assignments of examination time goals. Furthermore, the Office is (i) implementing the Enhanced Patent Quality Initiatives in order to provide a higher quality examination to our stakeholders and (ii) assessing the relationship between examination time and value-added examination activities, such as best practices for enhancing the clarity of the record with respect to claim interpretation, interview summaries, and reasons for allowance. All of these factors warrant a reevaluation of the Office's examination time goals.

To help inform public comments responsive to this request for comments (RFC), the Office has prepared background material illustrating the use of examination time goals in the context