TABLE 1—REQUESTED EXEMPTIONS—Continued

| CFR citation | Regulation | Need for exemption |
|---|---|---|
| 50 CFR 648.88 (a)(2)(i) | Handgear permit restrictions | To allow a vessel issued a NE multispecies Handgear permit to use scallop gear to temporarily possess yellowtail and windowpane flounder for catch data collection. |

TABLE 2—PROJECT SUMMARY

| | |
|---|---|
| Project title | Piloting the use of a kite panel on a scallop dredge twine top to reduce bycatch of flatfish and juvenile scallops. |
| Project start | 04/01/2026. |
| Project end | 09/30/2026. |
| Project objectives | To evaluate the potential of attaching a canvas kite to the twine top of scallop dredges as a bycatch reduction strategy. |
| Project location | Statistical Area 539. |
| Number of vessels | 2 (1 primary; 1 back-up). |
| Number of trips | 5. |
| Trip duration (days) | 1. |
| Total number of days | 5. |
| Gear type(s) | Dredge. |
| Number of tows or sets | 7–12 per trip. |
| Duration of tows or sets | 60–90 minutes. |

**Project Narrative**

The applicant proposes to attach a canvas panel to a scallop dredge twine top to act as a kite that will open the dredge bag and facilitate escapement of flatfish species and juvenile scallops. This project was designed to identify optimal kite size, location, and tow speed to achieve optimal bag lift for future testing. To achieve the goal, the researchers would: (1) Conduct underwater video tows with dredge modifications; (2) conduct paired tows between control and experimental scallop dredges; and (3) quantify and compare the scallop catch and bycatch between the dredges.

This EFP would authorize two commercial fishing vessels (one primary; one backup) to complete five total research trips for this project. All trips would occur within Statistical Area 539. URI and/or Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation researchers would accompany the vessels on each trip. The first two trips would consist of video testing to evaluate the practicality of implementing the kite design and confirming underwater performance. GoPro cameras would be mounted on the dredge facing the twine top to characterize the performance of the dredge with the kite panel attached. Video evidence would also enable the project team to assess whether any modifications are needed. Following video analysis, 3 days of field trials would be conducted at the best-verified kite location, based on evidence from the first two trips. As the vessels may only tow one dredge at a time, tows would alternate using an ABBA method, with A being the control dredge and B being the experimental dredge. Between 7 and 12 tows would be conducted each trip. The expected tow duration of 60–90 minutes would be standardized across all tows.

The participants would use a standard New Bedford-style dredge that is commonly used throughout the industry. The only modification would be the addition of the kite. The kite would be triangular in shape (with the front-facing corner removed), and approximately 12 x 20 inches (30.5 x 50.8 cm). The kite will be attached to the twine top using snap links, that allow it to stretch. The kite will not be snug against the twine; as such, it is not expected to restrict escapement of non-target species.

For each tow, the entire scallop catch would be placed into baskets. A random sub-sample of baskets would be selected to measure scallops. Legal catch would be landed for sale in accordance with the fishing permits held by the vessels. All incidental catch of interest would be identified to species and weighed, prior to being released back into the water.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

*Authority:* 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: March 4, 2026.

**David R. Blankinship,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 2026–04537 Filed 3–6–26; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

### Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for Review and Approval; Comment Request; Basic Requirements for Special Exception Permits and Authorizations To Take, Import, and Export Marine Mammals, Threatened and Endangered Species, and for Maintaining a Captive Marine Mammal Inventory Under Section 104 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Fur Seal Act, and/or Section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act

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

**ACTION:** Notice of information collection, request for comment.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Commerce, in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA), invites the general public and other Federal agencies to comment on proposed and continuing information collections, which helps us assess the impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public's reporting burden. The purpose of this

notice is to allow for 60 days of public comment preceding submission of the revision and renewal of this NOAA collection to OMB.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, comments regarding this proposed information collection must be received on or before May 8, 2026.

**ADDRESSES:** Interested persons are invited to submit written comments to Adrienne Thomas, NOAA PRA Officer, at *NOAA.PRA@noaa.gov.* Please reference OMB Control Number 0648–0084 in the subject line of your comments. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted on *https://www.regulations.gov* without change. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Requests for additional information or specific questions related to collection activities should be directed to Amy Hapeman, Biologist, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Office of Protected Resources, Permits and Conservation Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, (301) 427–8401, *amy.hapeman@noaa.gov.*

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

## I. Abstract

The NMFS, Office of Protected Resources, Permits and Conservation Division is requesting a revision and extension of the currently approved information collection OMB Control Number 0648–0084. The information collection request (ICR) is under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.;* MMPA), the Fur Seal Act (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.;* FSA), and the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.;* ESA). This information collection applies to certain protected species for which NMFS is responsible: cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) and pinnipeds (seals and sea lions); and, for ESA scientific research and enhancement permits: smalltooth sawfish, sea turtles (in water), sturgeon (Atlantic and shortnose), and certain foreign ESA-listed species. This revision incorporates endangered corals into the list of species. This information collection may be used for future ESA-listed species.

*MMPA Section 104 and ESA Section 10(a)(1)(A) Permit Applications*

The MMPA, FSA, and ESA prohibit ''take'' (*e.g.,* to harass or kill), import, and export of marine mammals and endangered and threatened species, with limited exceptions. Pursuant to Section 104 of the MMPA and Section 10(a)(1)(A) of the ESA, individuals, business or other for-profit organizations, not-for-profit institutions, and government agencies may obtain special exception permits to take, import, or export marine mammals or endangered or threatened species for scientific research or enhancement purposes. Section 104 of the MMPA also provides for Letters of Confirmation under a General Authorization for scientific research; permits for commercial and educational photography of marine mammals; and permits for capture and/or import of marine mammals for public display.

Persons or institutions seeking to take, import, or export protected species must apply for a permit or authorization and demonstrate that statutory and regulatory requirements are met. The regulations pertaining to permits and associated reporting under the MMPA and FSA are at 50 CFR part 216; the regulations for permit requirements under the ESA are at 50 CFR part 222. The required information in this collection is used by NMFS to make the determinations required by the MMPA, FSA, ESA, and their implementing regulations prior to issuing a permit or authorization; to establish appropriate permit conditions; to evaluate the impacts on protected species; and to ensure compliance with the Acts.

Information currently required includes the name, affiliation, contact information and qualifications of the applicant and others listed on the application; the purpose and justification for the request; the species, age, sex, and number of animals; the locations of the activities; the proposed methods and mitigation to minimize impacts to the species; a description of the impacts to the species and environment; and the requested time frame of the permit. Permit and authorization holders must submit reports on the activities they carry out.

To be consistent with NMFS' final rule (89 FR 100393; December 12, 2024) effective on January 13, 2025, we are revising all MMPA Section 104 permit and authorization application instructions to remove the 5-year limit on MMPA permit and authorization durations. The revised instructions provide guidance to applicants about what to consider when requesting their permit duration and require applicants to justify their requested permit duration. This revision applies to MMPA Section 104 permit and authorization applications. For consistency, we are also revising the ESA Section 10(a)(1)(A) scientific research and enhancement permit application instructions to clarify applicants must provide a justification for the requested permit duration (there is no duration limit on ESA permits, and guidance on duration is already provided in these application instructions).

We also propose to create a separate set of ESA Section 10(a)(1)(A) scientific research and enhancement permit application instructions for corals because pillar corals (*Dendrogyra cylindrus*) have been listed as endangered under the ESA (89 FR 101993; December 17, 2024). Creating a separate set of instructions is designed to tailor and streamline the application process for pillar coral applicants. These revisions may be applied to other species of coral requiring an ESA Section 10(a)(1)(A) scientific research or enhancement permit in the future.

In addition, we propose to change the estimating and reporting of takes during uncrewed aircraft system (UAS) operations in MMPA Section 104 permit applications to follow the guidance for vessel or ground-based activities (within 100 yards for baleen and sperm whales and 50 yards for other cetaceans and pinnipeds), rather than the current 1,000 feet guidance used for crewed aircraft. This change will include additional guidance in MMPA Section 104 permit application instructions that will improve take number estimates and reporting. The intent is to reduce burden on applicants, improve the reasonableness of take estimates, and increase the accuracy of their subsequent reporting. These proposed changes will be included in all instructions involving Level B harassment of marine mammals in the wild, including MMPA permit applications for scientific research and enhancement, commercial and educational photography, and public display (those authorizing capture in the wild); and MMPA Letters of Intent under the General Authorization for scientific research.

We propose to revise the MMPA Letter of Intent under the General Authorization for scientific research application instructions to be consistent with the implementing regulations at 50 CFR 216.45. The proposed changes include reducing the amount of information requested from applicants when describing the purpose of the project (*e.g.,* take number rationale), anticipated effects and mitigation. As described above for MMPA Section 104 permit applications, we propose to provide additional guidance in the application instructions to improve take number estimates and reporting for UAS

operations and revise the application instructions to remove the 5-year limit on the requested duration. These changes will better align our guidance with the statutory definition of Level B harassment under the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1362(18)) and allow us to accurately quantify and assess the impacts of the takes that are likely to occur.

We are also streamlining the amount of information required in the instructions for importing marine mammals for public display to better align with the statutory requirements. This will ensure we can make a determination that the manner of taking or importation is humane, as required by the MMPA, and is consistent with the Animal Welfare Act.

Last, we are in the process of revising the current online application system known as APPS (Authorizations and Permits for Protected Species; *https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov/*), which dates back to 2008, for MMPA Section 104 and ESA Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit applications. The revision of the online application system is necessary for many reasons, including to improve information security and ease of use. As part of the redesign, we have split the information fields of the application instructions into small text boxes in APPS that ask briefer and more specific questions. This allows applicants to provide less information overall while still adequately addressing the required application criteria and providing better alignment with the Word and PDF application instructions included in this instrument collection. The overall user experience and functionality of the online application system will be improved and streamlined from the currently available APPS system, although the specific information requested remains limited to what is described in our application instructions.

*MMPA Section 104 National Inventory of Marine Mammals*

The MMPA requires NMFS to maintain an inventory of captive marine mammals held in permanent care facilities and for those facilities to report certain information to NMFS (via the National Inventory of Marine Mammals [NIMM]). The NIMM forms include an institutional contact form, a marine mammal data sheet (MMDS), and a transfer/transport notification form. Inventory information required by the MMPA includes the animal's name or other identification; sex; birth date; date animal enters and leaves a collection; source of the animal (*e.g.,* stranding); where an animal is transferred or transported; and date and cause of death (when determined). Exporting facilities must provide documentation to NMFS that the recipient facility meets standards comparable to those required in the United States. The NIMM forms facilitate compliance with MMPA reporting requirements and allow NMFS to keep NIMM up to date. We are not proposing any changes to the MMDS or the other NIMM forms at this time.

NMFS previously published a **Federal Register** notice (84 FR 4443; February 15, 2019) and extension (84 FR 15593; April 16, 2019) seeking comments on implementing NIMM, including clarification on reporting requirements and levels of constituent access to the database. We are not proposing any access changes to NIMM at this time and will seek public comment on proposed final policies and procedures for NIMM through a separate process in the future.

The proposed revisions to the instructions are available for review as downloadable PDF versions online at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/permits/proposed-revisions-application-instructions-permits-and-authorizations-directed*. When the revised online application system is launched, the URL for the online system will change. The revised system will be able to accept all application types, whereas the current APPS system cannot accept photography and public display permit applications.

## II. Method of Collection

Current permit applications and permit report form information, are available as downloadable Word or PDF versions online at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permits-and-forms#protected-resources* or via email. Respondents may submit applications, forms, and reports by email, mail, or APPS (Authorizations and Permits for Protected Species; *https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov*). Reports for most permits can also be submitted online via APPS. NIMM inventory forms may be downloaded as fillable Word documents at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/national-inventory-marine-mammals* or requested via email. Inventory forms can be submitted via email or mail.

## III. Data

*OMB Control Number:* 0648–0084.

*Form Number(s):* NOAA Forms 89–880, 89–881, and 89–882.

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

*Affected Public:* Individuals; Business or other for-profit organizations; Not-for-profit institutions; State, Local, or Tribal government; Federal government.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 427.

*Estimated Time per Response:* The estimated *average* amount of time it takes to complete each information collection instrument is as follows. Scientific research and enhancement permit applications, 50 hours; public display permit applications, 50 hours; protected species parts applications, 20 hours; photography permit applications, 10 hours; General Authorization Letters of Intent, 10 hours; major permit modification requests, 35 hours; minor permit modification requests, 3 hours; scientific research permit reports, 12 hours; scientific research parts only permit reports, 8 hours; General Authorization reports, 8 hours; public display permit reports, 2 hours; photography permit reports, 2 hours; public display inventory reporting, 2 hours; and general record keeping, 2 hours per each type.

*Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours:* 6,568.

*Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public:* $80.00 in recordkeeping/reporting costs. This represents costs for mailing in applications, forms, and reports.

*Respondent's Obligation:* Mandatory.

*Legal Authority:* MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), FSA (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*), and ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

## IV. Request for Comments

We are soliciting public comments to permit the Department/Bureau to: (a) Evaluate whether the proposed information collection is necessary for the proper functions of the Department, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the time and cost burden for this proposed collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) Evaluate ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) Minimize the reporting burden on those who are to respond, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments that you submit in response to this notice are a matter of public record. We will include or summarize each comment in our request to OMB to approve this information collection request. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made

publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

**Sheleen Dumas,**

*Departmental PRA Compliance Officer, Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, Commerce Department.*

[FR Doc. 2026–04530 Filed 3–6–26; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Patent and Trademark Office

### Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget for Review and Approval; Comment Request; Deposit of Biological Materials

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

**ACTION:** Notice of information collection; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) will submit the following information collection request to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and clearance in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, on or after the date of publication of this notice. The USPTO invites comments on the information collection renewal of 0651–0022, which helps the USPTO assess the impact of its information collection requirements and minimize the reporting burden to the public. Public comments were previously requested via the **Federal Register** on November 19, 2025 during a 60-day comment period (90 FR 52038). This notice allows for an additional 30 days for public comments.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, you must submit comments regarding this information collection on or before April 8, 2026.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments and recommendations for this information collection should be submitted within 30 days of the publication of this notice on the following website, *http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain.* You may find this particular information collection by selecting ''Currently under 30-day Review–Open for Public Comments'' or by using the search function and entering either the title of the information collection or the OMB Control Number, 0651–0022. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

- This information collection request may be viewed at *http://www.reginfo.gov.* Follow the instructions to view the Department of Commerce, USPTO information collections currently under review by OMB.
- *Email: InformationCollection@uspto.gov.* Include ''0651–0022 information request'' in the subject line of the message.
- *Mail:* Justin Isaac, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, United States Patent and Trademark Office, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313–1450.
- *Telephone:* Raul Tamayo, Senior Legal Advisor, 571–272–7728.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

*Title:* Deposit of Biological Materials.

*OMB Control Number:* 0651–0022.

*Abstract:* This information collection covers information from patent applicants who seek to deposit biological material in connection with a patent application according to 37 CFR 1.801–1.809. The information collected from such patent applicants consists of information and documentation demonstrating the applicant's compliance with regulatory requirements, as well as information regarding the biological sample after it is deposited. This collection also covers communications from institutions that wish to be recognized by the USPTO as a suitable depository to receive deposits for patent application purposes. The information collection requirements for these actions are separate, as discussed below.

#### A. Deposits of Biological Materials

The deposit of biological material as part of a patent application is authorized by 35 U.S.C. 2(b)(2) and 112. The term ''biological material'' is defined in 37 CFR 1.801 as including material that is capable of self-replication, either directly or indirectly. When an invention involves a biological material, words and figures may not sufficiently describe how to make and use the invention in a reproducible material as required by 35 U.S.C. 112. In such cases, the inventive biological material must be known and readily available to the public or can be made or isolated without undue experimentation (see 37 CFR 1.802). In order to satisfy the ''known and readily available'' requirement, the biological material may be deposited in a suitable depository that has been recognized as an International Depository Authority (IDA) established under the Budapest Treaty per 37 CFR 1.803(a)(1), or any other depository recognized to be suitable by the USPTO per 37 CFR 1.803(a)(2). Under the authority of 35 U.S.C. 2(b)(2), the deposit rules (37 CFR 1.801–1.809) set forth examination procedures and conditions of deposit which must be satisfied in the event a deposit is required.

In cases where a deposit of biological material that is capable of self-replication either directly or indirectly is made, and the deposit is not made under the Budapest Treaty, the USPTO collects information to determine whether the deposit meets the viability requirements of 37 CFR 1.807. This information includes a viability statement under 37 CFR 1.807, such statement identifying:

(1) The name and address of the depository where the deposit was made;

(2) The name and address of the depositor;

(3) The date of the deposit;

(4) The identity of the deposit and the accession number given by the depository;

(5) The date of the viability test;

(6) The procedure used to obtain a sample if the test was not done by the depository; and

(7) A statement that the deposit is capable of reproduction.

A viability statement is not required when a deposit is made and accepted under the Budapest Treaty.

This information collection also covers additional information that may be gathered by the USPTO after a biological material is deposited into the recognized depository. For example, depositors may be required to submit verification statements for biological material deposited after the effective filing date of a patent application, or written notification that an acceptable deposit will be made. Occasionally a deposit may be lost, contaminated, or is not able to self-replicate, and a replacement or supplemental deposit needs to be made. This information collection includes a required written notification that the depositor must submit to the USPTO disclosing the particulars of such situation and, in the case of an issued patent, requesting a certificate of correction.

There are no forms associated with the information collected by the USPTO in connection with the deposit of biological material. However, there are forms available under the Budapest Treat for use with international depositories.