

**PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT
DOC/NOAA/NMFS SURVEY CLEARANCE FORM
Economic Surveys for U.S. Commercial Fisheries
OMB CONTROL NUMBER 0648-0369**

This form should be used if you are submitting a collection of information for approval under the NOAA customer survey clearance assigned OMB control number 0648-0369. E-mail this form, full Supporting Statement (including Part B), the collection instrument, and any additional documentation to:

Rita.Curtis@noaa.gov

If the collection does not satisfy the requirements of the program clearance, you should follow the regular PRA clearance procedures described in 5 CFR 1320.

NOAA Subagency _____

Title (Please be specific) _____

Burden Hour Estimates

Number of respondents _____

Total Burden Hours _____

Hours per response _____

Cumulative Burden Hours
under Program Clearance _____

Agency Contact (*person who can best answer questions about the content of the submission*)

Name _____

Phone _____

Certification: The collection of information requested by this submission meets the requirement of the OMB approval for OMB Control Number 0648-0369.

Signature of Program Official

Date

Signature of NOAA Paperwork Clearance Officer

Date

OIRA

Date

**West Coast Limited Entry Groundfish Processor Cost Earnings Survey
Responses to Supplemental Questions for PRA Clearance
OMB Review of Individual Instruments**

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will submit each individual instrument for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review. Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) will inform the agency when each instrument is cleared, after which the agency may use OMB number 0648-0369. The information provided along with each instrument must address the following items:

1. The potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used and the expected response rate.

Potential Respondent Universe

The objective of the West Coast Limited Entry Groundfish Processor Cost Earnings Survey (hereafter “the survey”) is to obtain representative cost and earnings data on shoreside commercial fish processing plants that process groundfish caught by the West Coast limited entry fleet (hereafter “limited entry groundfish”). This survey will address only shoreside processing plants, and will not consider groundfish processing which is done at sea on motherships or catcher-processors. The survey population is all 50 shoreside limited entry groundfish processing plants located on the West Coast (Washington, Oregon, and California).

Sampling and Other Respondent Selection Methods

Because of the relatively small number of processing plants in the survey population, the survey will be performed on a census of the processing plants in the survey population. There will be no sampling to determine which processing plants in the survey population receive the survey.

Expected Response Rate

This survey will be the first cost and earnings survey of West Coast seafood processing plants (either groundfish or other seafood such as salmon or crab). As a result, it is not possible to base expected response rates on previous surveys of West Coast seafood processors. The data being collected by this survey bears some similarity (in topic and degree of confidentiality) to the two recently completed surveys of West Coast limited entry vessel owners (the West Coast Limited Entry Trawl Coast Earnings Survey and the West Coast Limited Entry Fixed Gear Cost Earnings Survey). Based on response rates received by these two surveys of the West Coast limited entry vessel owners, a response rate of 70% is expected for the coast earnings survey of West Coast groundfish processing plants. That is, responses are expected from 35 of the 50 West Coast shoreside limited entry groundfish processing plants.

2. Data collection procedures, including the statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection, the estimation procedure, the degree of accuracy needed for the intended purpose, expected dates of survey implementation, and any unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures.

Stratification and Sample Selection

The survey population is all shoreside commercial fish processing plants located on the West Coast that processed limited entry groundfish during the 2006 calendar year. Since a census of the 50 processing plants in the population of interest is being surveyed, there are no sample design and selection issues. All 50 limited entry groundfish processing plants in the population of interest will receive the survey.

Since all 50 shoreside groundfish processing plants in the survey population will receive the survey, stratification is not an issue that affects sample design. That is, the sample includes all members of the survey population. While future uses of the survey data may involve stratifying the data in different ways, such as by geographic location or by groundfish species, stratification does not affect the determination of who to sample in this survey design.

Desired Degree of Accuracy and Response Rate

The desired degree of accuracy, and corresponding desired response rate, depends upon the application for which the data is being used. A basic application of the survey data will be the inference of unobserved population mean values from the observed sample mean values. Obtaining a sample mean within 15% of the population mean at the 95% confidence level is a minimal objective for this survey regarding degree of accuracy.

Two reasons can be identified for desiring higher response rates than those needed to support inference of population means from sample means. First, data from this survey will be used to develop a variety of economic models covering applications such as the regional economic impact of processing plants. In these applications, error will arise not only from the representativeness of data used for model development, but also from model specification and estimation. Since it is not possible to completely avoid specification and estimation error in model development, there is good reason to desire a higher response rate and higher degree of accuracy in the data collection process. Second, future applications of the data may require further disaggregating the population into smaller groups according to factors such as state of operation or groundfish species processed. Identification of all such future disaggregated data needs is not possible at the present time. A higher response rate and higher degree of accuracy in the current data collection process will facilitate such future population disaggregation.

Survey Fielding

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) and its contractor(s) will field the survey. NOAA Fisheries will send a letter to all 50 shoreside limited entry groundfish processing plants in the survey population describing the survey and its purpose. Enclosed with the letter will be a copy of the questionnaire (also attached to this submission). About two weeks after the letter/questionnaire mailing, the NWFSC will begin making telephone calls to non-respondents. These follow-up telephone calls will (1) encourage members of the survey population to respond to the survey, (2) offer members of the survey population assistance in completing the survey form, and (3) offer to schedule an in-person interview to facilitate completion of the questionnaire. Up to eight attempts will be made to contact each non-respondent.

Expected Dates of Survey Implementation

The West Coast groundfish fishery is most active between May and September in each year. However, seasonal patterns of activity may vary somewhat from plant to plant, depending on

factors such as the particular groundfish species and products processed at the plant. The target period for survey fielding is October 2007 through December 2007. This target period avoids the summer period of peak groundfish landings, but is long enough to allow time for completion of the survey before the holiday season.

3. The methods used to maximize response rates and address non-response. The accuracy and reliability of the information collected must be shown to be adequate for the intended uses.

Methods Used To Maximize Response Rates

A number of methods have been used to maximize survey response rate. First, the survey is short. The questionnaire is only six pages long. Second, respondents are only asked to provide information about major cost and earnings categories, thus avoiding what may seem like unnecessary detail to survey respondents. Third, there will be extensive follow-up telephone calls to non-respondents to encourage survey response and offering assistance in completing the survey questionnaire over the phone and through in-person interviews. Up to eight follow-up telephone calls will be attempted with each non-respondent.

Addressing Non-Response

A considerable amount of information is currently available about the groundfish processed at each West Coast shoreside plant through the Pacific Coast Fisheries Information Network (PacFIN) data system. This information will be used to compare the survey population with survey respondents, and to make any adjustments for systematic bias in survey response.

PacFIN provides trip level information on every commercial fishing trip, which ends in a landing on the West Coast (Washington, Oregon, and California). PacFIN provides the vessel landing the fish, the species landed, the price paid, the number of pounds landed, the landing date, the landing location, and the fish buyer. The Pacific Fisheries Management Council is currently developing a mapping from the buyer identification codes in PacFIN to the processing plants on the West Coast. For each processing plant it will be possible to calculate the vessels providing fish, the species taken as inputs by the processing plant, the ex vessel price paid, the amount of each species taken as inputs by the processing plant, and the distribution of fish purchases during the twelve months of the year. This landings data is available for both survey respondents and non-respondents. While this data differs from the cost and earnings data which this survey seeks to collect from shoreside groundfish processing plants, this data does provide a means of determining if plants, which responded to the survey, differ from plants, which did not respond to the survey. As a result, considerable data is available for determining whether non-response bias is present in the collected data.

The PacFIN data available for all members of the survey population is a valuable tool for comparing survey respondents and non-respondents. However, this data does not provide a complete economic picture of the processors operating in the groundfish fishery. Hence, the survey described in this document is still essential in order to meet NOAA Fisheries statutory requirements to consider the economic impact of fisheries management policy.

Adequacy of Accuracy and Reliability of Information for Intended Uses

NOAA Fisheries needs to measure the economic performance of west coast commercial fisheries in order to meet legal and regulatory requirements, support fisheries management decision making, and undertake economic research. Currently available cost and earnings data is very limited and does not meet these needs. The Northwest Fisheries Science Center's Cost Earnings Program will collect the additional data that is needed to construct key economic performance measures such as profitability, capacity utilization, efficiency, productivity, and economic impacts. The data gathered and performance measures constructed will be used to address a wide range of issues; these issues include (but are not limited to) the effect of the alternative Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) programs for the limited entry trawl fleet currently being evaluated by the Pacific Fisheries Management Council and estimating the regional economic impact of the groundfish fishery.

While the data will be used to comply with legal and regulatory requirements, these requirements do not specify a level of data accuracy. Minimum target response sizes for each population stratum are based on the objective of having a sample mean within 15% of the population mean at the 95% confidence level. It is believed that this provides a sufficient level of precision for inference of population means from sample means. As explained in the response to question 2, even greater precision is highly desirable for other anticipated applications of the data

4. How the survey instrument was developed, including the steps taken to validate the questionnaire design.

This survey is the fourth survey to be conducted as part of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center's comprehensive Cost Earnings Program Plan. Previous surveys include the Limited Entry Trawl Cost Earnings Survey, the recently completed Limited Entry Fixed Gear Cost Earnings Survey, and the Open Access Groundfish and Salmon Vessel Owner Cost Earnings Survey that will be fielded during the second half of calendar year 2007.

Survey development began with the formulation of the Cost Earnings Program Plan. This plan outlines the reasons for collecting cost earnings data, identifies the population(s) of interest among west coast vessel owners, and prioritizes data needs. Based on this long-term plan, objectives for this survey and survey content were developed through a series of meetings by representatives of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWC), Northwest Regional Office (NWR), and the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWC). These meetings identified key objectives as collecting data, which could be used to measure fisheries profitability, economic impacts, efficiency, and economic benefits of regulatory measures. The academic literature, both within and outside of fisheries, was reviewed in order to determine the data requirements of models, which would likely be used to measure fisheries profitability, economic impacts, efficiency, and economic benefits of regulatory measures.

After the development of the Cost Earnings Program Plan and identification of the need for a survey of commercial shoreside groundfish processors, work began to develop and review the survey instrument with members of the processing industry. This second stage included discussions with West Coast Seafood Processors Association (WCSPA), the largest association of West Coast groundfish processors. Members of the WCSPA process, transport, and sell the majority of groundfish landed on the West Coast. Discussions regarding the survey instrument

were also held with Pacific Seafood Corporation, the largest single processor of groundfish on the West Coast. The survey instrument attached to this submission reflects not only the priorities in the Cost Earnings Program Plan, but also the valuable comments provided by the WCSPA and Pacific Seafood Corporation.

5. The reporting and use of the results of the survey.

Use of Survey Results

NOAA Fisheries needs to measure the economic performance of west coast commercial fisheries in order to meet legal and regulatory requirements, support fisheries management decision making, and undertake economic research. This survey will provide the first comprehensive source of economic data on West Coast groundfish processors. Currently available cost earnings data is very limited and does not meet these needs. The Northwest Fisheries Science Center's Cost Earnings Program will collect the additional data that is needed to construct key economic performance measures such as profitability, capacity utilization, efficiency, productivity, and economic impacts. The data gathered and performance measures constructed will be used to address a wide range of issues.

Reporting of Survey Results

A descriptive summary of results from the survey will be prepared and posted on the Northwest Fisheries Science Center web site. This summary will include descriptive statistics (such as mean and standard deviation) of the various cost and earnings categories being collected. This descriptive summary will also be distributed to survey respondents via paper mail.

Survey results will be reported over time through a series of studies prepared for fisheries management. It is anticipated that results will also be reported through academic publications, presentations at conferences, and technical guides. All reporting of survey results will conform to data confidentiality requirements. These reports will also be posted on the Northwest Fisheries Science Center website.

Information Quality Guidelines and Confidentiality

It is anticipated that the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support publicly disseminated information. As explained in the previous paragraphs, the information gathered has utility. NOAA Fisheries will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. In particular, the data collected will be kept confidential as required by section 402(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens and NOAA Administrative Order 216-100, Confidentiality of Fisheries Statistics, and will not be voluntarily released for public use except in aggregate statistical form without identification as to its source.

The information collection is designed to yield data that meets all applicable information quality guidelines. Prior to dissemination, the information will be subjected to quality control measures and a pre-dissemination review pursuant to Section 515 of Public Law 106-554.

6. Contact information for agency coordinator and principle investigator.

Agency Coordinator:

Philip Watson

Northwest Fisheries Science Center

2725 Montlake Boulevard East

Seattle, WA 98112

206-302-1742 (voice)

206-860-6792 (fax)

philip.watson@noaa.gov (email)

7. Estimated burden and number of respondents.

Reviewing the survey, collecting requested data, and the in-person interview is expected to take two hours per respondent. With the expected 35 responses, the survey is expected to impose a total of 70 burden hours on the West Coast shoreside groundfish processors.



WEST COAST SHORE-SIDE PRIMARY PROCESSOR QUESTIONNAIRE

NOAA Fisheries – Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Please provide the following information about the person completing this questionnaire:

Name: _____
 Title/Position: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone: _____ Email: _____

I. Plant Characteristics and Ownership

1. Please provide the following information about the plant.

Plant Location	
Federal Plant ID	
Year Built	

2. Please provide the following information about the owner of this plant.

Name	
Business Address (Street, City, State, Zip Code)	
Business Telephone Number	

II. Expenditure Data

Input	Total Expenditure	Amount or % purchased in same or adjacent county	Amount or % purchased in same state but not same or adjacent county	Amount or % purchased on West Coast but not same state	Amount or % purchased outside of West Coast
Processing labor	\$				
Non-processing labor	\$				
Solid Waste	\$				
Electricity	\$				
Water	\$				
Sewer	\$				
Packing Materials	\$				
Shipping Expenses	\$				
Non-fish Ingredients	\$				
Financial Services and Insurance	\$				
Maintenance of Equipment	\$				
State property taxes	\$				
State income taxes	\$				
Lease of tidewater lands	\$				
Local property taxes	\$				
Local utility taxes	\$				
Landings taxes	\$				
Other local taxes	\$				
Other Operational Expenses	\$				

3. Please provide 2006 expenditures for each category listed below. The expenditures listed below should sum to the total operational expenditures (other than raw fish expenditures) for this plant.

For each type of raw fish listed in the first column, please provide the amount and location of fish purchased as an input to this processing facility in 2006.

Type of Fish	Total weight of raw fish purchases (LBS)	Total value of raw fish purchases (\$)	Value of Fish Purchased From Landings that Occurred in:				
			the State this plant is located in (\$)	West Coast states (CA, OR, or WA) other than state this plant is located in (\$)	Alaska (\$)	U.S., other than CA, OR, WA, or Alaska (\$)	Country other than the U.S. (\$)
Whiting							
LE Trawl							
LE Fixed Gear							
Open Access							
Other							
Dover sole							
LE Trawl							
LE Fixed Gear							
Open Access							
Other							
Thornyheads							
LE Trawl							
LE Fixed Gear							
Open Access							
Other							
Sablefish							
LE Trawl							
LE Fixed Gear							
Open Access							
Other							
Lingcod							
LE Trawl							
LE Fixed Gear							
Open Access							
Other							
Rockfish							
LE Trawl							
LE Fixed Gear							
Open Access							
Other							
English Sole							
LE Trawl							
LE Fixed Gear							
Open Access							
Other							

Rex sole							
LE Trawl							
LE Fixed Gear							
Open Access							
Other							
Petrals sole							
LE Trawl							
LE Fixed Gear							
Open Access							
Other							
Sharks, Skates, Rays							
LE Trawl							
LE Fixed Gear							
Open Access							
Other							
Tuna							
All Tuna							
Pacific Halibut							
All Pacific Halibut							
California Halibut							
All California Halibut							
Herring							
All Herring							
Coastal Pelagic							
All Other Coastal Pelagic							
Salmon							
All Salmon							
Crab							
All Crab							
Shrimp							
All Shrimp							
Squid							
All Squid							
Echinoderms							
All Echinoderms							
Other Shellfish							
All Other Shellfish							
Other Species (please list)							

4. Please provide the following information regarding from whom the fish processed at your facility was purchased in 2006. The sum of this row should equal total expenditures on fish and shellfish for this plant.

	Value purchased from vessels that are owned by This Company	Value purchased from buyer/broker that is owned by this company	Value purchased directly from harvester not owned by this company	Value purchased from buyer/ broker not owned by this company
Purchases	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

5. Please provide the most recent assessed value of this plant.

- a. Buildings \$ _____
- b. Processing equipment \$ _____
- c. Non-processing equipment \$ _____
- d. Office equipment \$ _____
- e. Vehicles \$ _____

What year was the most recent assessment? _____ (year)

6. During 2006, what was the maximum number of pounds of fish/seafood that this plant could process in a 7 day week (rounded to nearest 100 pounds)?

Assume:

- only machinery and equipment plant had **in place ready to operate**
- **normal** downtime
- the **same product mix** as in 2006 (assume you will produce the same proportion of the following categories as you produced in 2006)
- number of shifts and processing hours per day that can be sustained under normal conditions and a realistic work schedule
- availability of materials and raw fish **are not** limiting factors

	Fresh processed finfish	Frozen finfish	Canned/Smoked finfish	Surimi	Shrimp	Crab and other shellfish
Pounds per week	_____ Lbs.	_____ Lbs.	_____ Lbs.	_____ Lbs.	_____ Lbs.	_____ Lbs.

III. Revenue Data

7. Please provide the 2006 revenue associated with each category listed below. The sum of all the categories should equal total revenue for this plant.

Revenue from:							
Type of Fish	Direct sales to consumers in the state this plant is located	Sales to restaurants in the state this plant is located	Sales to retailers in the state this plant is located	Sales to distributors or for further processing in the state this plant is located	Sales in CA, OR, or WA, but outside the state this plant is located	Sales inside the U.S. but outside CA, OR, or WA	Sales outside the U.S.
	(\$)	(\$)	(\$)	(\$)	(\$)	(\$)	(\$)
Whiting							
surimi							
h&g							
fillets							
other							
Dover sole							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Thornyheads							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Sablefish							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Lingcod							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Rockfish							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
English Sole							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Rex sole							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Petrals sole							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Sharks, Skates, Rays							
fresh							
frozen							
other							

Tuna							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Herring							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Pacific Halibut							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
California Halibut							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Other Coastal Pelagic							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Salmon							
fresh							
frozen							
canned							
smoked							
other							
Crab							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Shrimp							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Squid							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Echinoderms							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Other Shellfish							
fresh							
frozen							
other							
Other Species (please list)							

Survey Conclusion and Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

Thank you for participating in this voluntary survey which requests information on costs and earnings from West Coast groundfish processing plants. This information will be used to assess the economic effects of fishery management regulations, such as the effect of regulations on processing costs and regional economies. Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.

NOAA Fisheries will use all available legal provisions to keep the information you provide strictly confidential. We will combine your responses with information provided by other participants, and report it in summary form so that responses for any individual vessel can not be identified.

Public reporting burden for this information collection, including time for gathering data needed and completing the survey, is estimated to average one hour per respondent. Please provide comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to:

Philip Watson

2725 Montlake Boulevard East

Seattle, WA, 98112

telephone: 206-302-1742

email: Philip.Watson@noaa.gov

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

SEC. 402. INFORMATION COLLECTION⁷ 16 U.S.C. 1881a

(a) **COUNCIL REQUESTS.**--If a Council determines that additional information (other than information that would disclose proprietary or confidential commercial or financial information regarding fishing operations or fish processing operations) would be beneficial for developing, implementing, or revising a fishery management plan or for determining whether a fishery is in need of management, the Council may request that the Secretary implement an information collection program for the fishery which would provide the types of information (other than information that would disclose proprietary or confidential commercial or financial information regarding fishing operations or fish processing operations) specified by the Council. The Secretary shall undertake such an information collection program if he determines that the need is justified, and shall promulgate regulations to implement the program within 60 days after such determination is made. If the Secretary determines that the need for an information collection program is not justified, the Secretary shall inform the Council of the reasons for such determination in writing. The determinations of the Secretary under this subsection regarding a Council request shall be made within a reasonable period of time after receipt of that request.

(b) **CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION.**--

(1) Any information submitted to the Secretary by any person in compliance with any requirement under this Act shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed, except--

(A) to Federal employees and Council employees who are responsible for fishery management plan development and monitoring;

(B) to State or Marine Fisheries Commission employees pursuant to an agreement with the Secretary that prevents public disclosure of the identity or business of any person;

(C) when required by court order;

(D) when such information is used to verify catch under an individual fishing quota program;

(E) that observer information collected in fisheries under the authority of the North Pacific Council may be released to the public as specified in a fishery management plan or regulation for weekly summary bycatch information identified by vessel, and for haul-specific bycatch information without vessel identification; or

(F) when the Secretary has obtained written authorization from the person submitting such information to release such information to persons for reasons not otherwise provided for in this subsection, and such release does not violate other requirements of this Act.

(2) The Secretary shall, by regulation, prescribe such procedures as may be necessary to preserve the confidentiality of information submitted in compliance with any requirement or regulation under this Act, except that the Secretary may release or make public any such information in any aggregate or summary form which does not directly or indirectly disclose the identity or business of any person who submits such information. Nothing in this subsection shall be interpreted or construed to prevent the use for conservation and management purposes by the Secretary, or with the approval of the Secretary, the Council, of any information submitted in compliance with any requirement or regulation under this Act or the use, release, or publication of bycatch information pursuant to paragraph (1)(E).

Administrative Management and Executive Secretariat

NAO 216-100

PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIAL FISHERIES STATISTICS Eff: 7/18/94; Iss: 7/26/94

SECTION 1. PURPOSE.

. 01 This Order:

a. prescribes policies and procedures for protecting the confidentiality of data submitted to and collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)/National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) as authorized or required by law;

b. informs authorized users of their obligations for maintaining the confidentiality of data received by NMFS;

c. provides for operational safeguards to maintain the security of data; and

d. states the penalties provided by law for disclosure of confidential data.

SECTION 2. SCOPE.

This Order covers all confidential data received, collected, maintained, or used by NMFS.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS.

. 01 **Access to data** means the freedom or ability to use data, conditioned by a statement of nondisclosure and penalties for unauthorized use.

. 02 **Aggregate or summary form** means data structured so that the identity of the submitter cannot be determined either from the present release of the data or in combination with other releases.

. 03 **Agreement** refers to all binding forms of mutual commitment under a stated set of conditions to achieve a specific objective.

. 04 **Assistant Administrator** means the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, or a designee authorized to have access to confidential data.

. 05 **Authorized Use/User.**

a. **Authorized use** is that specific use authorized under the governing statute, regulation, order, contract or agreement.

b. An **authorized user** is any person who, having the need to collect or use confidential data in the performance of an official activity, has read this Order and has signed a statement of nondisclosure affirming the user's understanding of NMFS obligations with

respect to confidential data and the penalties for unauthorized use and disclosure.

. 06 **Confidential data** means data that are identifiable with any person, accepted by the Secretary, and prohibited by law from being disclosed to the public. The term "as used" does not convey data sensitivity for national security purposes [See Executive Order (E.O.) 12356 dated April 2, 1982].

. 07 **Data** refers to information used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation that a person may submit, either voluntarily or as required by statute or regulation.

. 08 **GC** means the Office of General Counsel, NOAA.

. 09 **Person** means any individual (whether or not a citizen or national of the United States), any corporation, partnership, association, or other entity (whether or not organized or existing under the laws of any State), and any Federal, State, local, or foreign government or any entity of such governments, including Regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils).

. 10 **Public** means any person who is not an authorized user.

. 11 **Region** means NMFS Regional field offices, Fisheries Science Centers, and associated laboratories.

. 12 **Source document** means the document, paper, or electronic format on which data are originally recorded.

. 13 **State employee** means any member of a State agency responsible for developing and monitoring the State's program for fisheries or Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) program.

. 14 **Submitter** means any person or the agent of any person who provides data to NMFS either voluntarily or as required by statute or regulation.

SECTION 4. POLICY.

For data subject to this Order, it is NMFS policy that:

a. confidential data shall only be disclosed to the public if required by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, or by court order. Disclosure of data pursuant to a subpoena issued by an agency of competent jurisdiction is a lawful disclosure. Disclosure pursuant to a subpoena must be approved by GC;

b. individual identifiers shall be retained with data, unless the permanent deletion is consistent with the needs of NMFS and good scientific practice [See Section 6.02c]; and

c. a notice is required on all report forms requesting data and must comply with 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(3) and Paperwork Reduction Act requirements in NAO 216-8, Information Collections and Requirements Needing Office of Management and Budget Clearance. [See E.O. 12600 of June 23, 1987, for additional information regarding the rights of submitters to designate commercial confidential data at the time of submission.]

SECTION 5. OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

. 01 The Regional Director of each region (or, in the case of headquarters, each Office

Director) has the responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of all data collected, maintained, and disclosed by the respective region.

. 02 Each region shall submit to the Assistant Administrator specific procedures governing the collection, maintenance, and disclosure of confidential data. These documents shall be compiled as regional handbooks following the guidelines and standards:

a. handbooks are to be developed in detail to ensure the maintenance of confidential data on a functional basis in each region; and

b. handbooks shall be coordinated through the National Data Management Committee (a NMFS group established by the Assistant Administrator to develop data management policies and procedures) and reviewed annually. The regional handbooks will address, at minimum, the contents of Sections 6-7.

SECTION 6. PROCEDURES.

. 01 **Data Collection.** To collect data, the Secretary may use Federal employees, contractor employees, or, pursuant to an agreement, State employees.

a. General Requirements.

1. Personnel authorized to collect Federal data must maintain all documents containing confidential data in secure facilities; and

2. may not disclose confidential data, whether recorded or not, to anyone not authorized to receive and handle such data.

b. Specific Requirements.

1. Each Federal or contractor employee collecting or processing confidential data will be required to read, date, and sign a statement of nondisclosure, that affirms the employee's understanding of NMFS obligations with respect to confidential data and the penalties for unauthorized use and disclosure of the data. Upon signature, the employee's name will be placed on record as an "authorized user," and the employee will be issued certification.

2. Data collected by a contractor must be transferred timely to authorized Federal employees; no copies of these data may be retained by the contractor. NMFS may permit contractors to retain aggregated data. A data return clause shall be included in the agreement. All procedures applicable to Federal employees must be followed by contractor employees collecting data with Federal authority.

3. Under agreements with the State, each State data collector collecting confidential data will sign a statement at least as protective as the one signed by Federal employees, which affirms that the signer understands the applicable procedures and regulations and the penalties for unauthorized disclosure.

.02 Maintenance.

a. Maintenance is defined as the procedures required to keep confidential data secure from the time the source documents are received by NMFS to their ultimate disposition, regardless of format. [See National Institute of Standards and Technology "Computer Security Publications, List 91" for guidance.]

b. Specific procedures in regional handbooks must deal with the following minimum security requirements, as well as any others that may be necessary because of the specific data, equipment, or physical facilities:

1. the establishment of an office or person responsible for evaluating requests for access to data;
2. the identifications of all persons certified as authorized users. These lists shall be kept current and reviewed on an annual basis;
3. the issuance of employee security rules that emphasize the confidential status of certain data and the consequences of unauthorized removal or disclosure;
4. the description of the security procedures used to prevent unauthorized access to and/or removal of confidential data;
5. the development of a catalog/inventory system of all confidential data received including: the type of source document; the authority under which each item of data was collected; any statutory or regulatory restriction(s) which may apply; and routing from the time of receipt until final disposition; and
6. The development of an appropriate coding system for each set of confidential data so that access to data that identifies, or could be used to identify, the person or business of the submitter is controlled by the use of one or more coding system(s). Lists that contain the codes shall be kept secure.

c. The permanent deletion of individual identifiers from a database shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Identifiers may only be deleted after:

1. future uses of data have thoroughly been evaluated, e.g., the need for individual landings records for allocating shares under an individual transferable quota program;
2. consultation with the agency(s) collecting data (if other than NMFS), the relevant Council(s), and NMFS Senior Scientist; and
3. concurrence by the Assistant Administrator has been received prior to deletion.

.03 Access to Data Subject to This Order.

a. **General Requirements.** In determining whether to grant a request for access to confidential data, the following information shall be taken into consideration:

1. the specific types of data required;
2. the relevance of the data to the intended uses;
3. whether access will be continuous, infrequent, or one-time;
4. an evaluation of the requester's statement of why aggregate or nonconfidential summaries of data would not satisfy the requested needs; and
5. the legal framework for the disclosure, in accordance with GC and this Order.

b. **Within NMFS.** NMFS employees requesting confidential data must have certification as being authorized users for the particular type of data requested.

c. **Councils.** Upon written request by the Council Executive Director:

1. "authorized user" status for confidential data collected under the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act) may be granted to a Council for use by the Council for conservation and management purposes consistent with the approval of the Assistant Administrator as described in 50 CFR 603.5;
2. "authorized user" status for confidential data, collected under the Magnuson Act and MMPA, will be granted to Council employees who are responsible for Fishery Management Plan development and monitoring; and
3. Councils that request access to confidential data must submit, on an annual basis, a copy of their procedures for ensuring the confidentiality of data to the region, or in the case of intercouncil fisheries, regions. The procedures will be evaluated for their effectiveness and, if necessary, changes may be recommended. As part of this procedure, an updated statement of nondisclosure will be included for each employee and member who requires access to confidential data.

d. **States.**

1. Requests from States for confidential data shall be directed in writing to the NMFS office that maintains the source data.
2. Each request will be processed in accordance with any agreement NMFS may have with the State:
 - (a) confidential data collected **solely** under Federal authority will be provided to a State by NMFS only if the Assistant Administrator finds that the State has authority to protect the confidentiality of the data comparable to, or more stringent than, NMFS' requirements; and
 - (b) the State will exercise its authority to limit subsequent access and use of the data to those uses allowed by authorities under which the data was collected.
3. If the State has no agreement with NMFS for the collection and exchange of confidential data, the request shall be treated as a public request and disclosure may be denied subject to FOIA or the Privacy Act.
4. Where a State has entered into a cooperative exchange agreement with another State(s), NMFS will facilitate transfer or exchange of State collected data in its possession if:
 - (a) NMFS has written authorization for data transfer from the head of the collecting State agency; and
 - (b) the collecting State has provided NMFS a list of authorized users in the recipient State(s); and
 - (c) the collecting State agrees to hold the United States Government harmless for any suit that may arise from the misuse of the data.

e. **Contractors.**

1. Pursuant to an agreement with NMFS, a NMFS contractor (including universities, Sea Grant investigators, etc.) may be granted "authorized user" status consistent with this Order if the use furthers the mission of NMFS.

2. The region will notify the contractor of its decision on access in writing within 30 calendar days after receipt of the request.

3. Contingent upon approval, the contractor will be provided with details regarding conditions of data access, any costs involved, formats, timing, and security procedures. If the request is denied, the reason(s) for denial will be given by the NMFS office involved. The denial will not preclude NMFS consideration of future requests from the contractor.

4. If access is granted, language in the agreement specifically dealing with confidentiality of data will be required. The language shall include all of the relevant portions of this Order and shall prohibit the further disclosure of the data. No data may be retained beyond the termination date of the agreement; and any disclosure of data derived from the accessed confidential data must be approved by NMFS.

5. Each agreement shall be reviewed by GC prior to its execution, and shall, to the extent possible, be consistent with the model agreement contained in Appendix D (Not included --WebEd).

f. **Submitters.** The Privacy Act allows for data to be released back to the submitter upon receipt and verification of a written request stating the data required.

04. Requests for Confidential Data. NMFS is authorized to collect data under various statutes [See Appendix A (Not include --WebEd)]. Two types of statutes govern the disclosure of confidential data collected by the Federal Government, those that contain specific and non-discretionary language within the Act, and those that provide overall guidance to the Federal Government. Sections of these Acts that deal with exceptions to disclosure may be found in Appendix B (Not included -- WebEd).

a. Magnuson Act and MMPA.

1. Data collected under 16 U.S.C. 1853 (a) or (b), and 16 U.S.C. 1383a (c),(d),(e),(f),or (h) will be handled in the following manner:

(a) data will only be disclosed to Federal employees and Council employees who are responsible for management plan development and monitoring; State employees pursuant to an agreement with the Secretary that prevents public disclosure of the identity or business of any person; a Council for conservation and management purposes [not applicable for MMPA data] or when required by court order. [See 50 CFR 229.10 and part 603];

(b) Council advisory groups are not permitted access to such confidential data [See 50 CFR 601.27(b)];

(c) requests from States that do not have an agreement with the Secretary will be processed in accordance with the Privacy Act or FOIA; and

(d) data collected by an observer under 16 U.S.C. 1853 (a) or (b) are not considered to have been "submitted to the Secretary by any person," and therefore are not confidential under Section 6.04.a of this Order. Data collected by an observer may be withheld from disclosure under the Privacy Act, or subsections (b)(3),(4),(5),(6), or (7) of FOIA.

2. Confidential data submitted to the Secretary under other Sections of the Magnuson Act or MMPA may only be disclosed in accordance with the Privacy Act or FOIA. Types of data and the collection authority may include among others:

(a) Processed Product Data -- 16 U.S.C. 1854(e);

(b) Fish Meal and Oil, Monthly -- 16 U.S.C. 1854(e);

(c) Data Collected Under State Authority and Provided to NMFS -- 16 U.S.C. 1854(e); and

(d) Tuna-Dolphin Observer Program -- 16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.

b. **South Pacific Tuna Act.** Data collected under South Pacific Tuna Act 16 U.S.C. 973j is protected from disclosure to the public in accordance with section 973j(b).

c. **Other Statutes.** Confidential data collected under other NMFS programs as authorized by statutes other than South Pacific Tuna Act (16 U.S.C 973j), MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.), and Magnuson Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), may only be disclosed to the public in accordance with the Privacy Act and FOIA. Types of data and the collection authority may include among others:

(1) Monthly Cold Storage Fish Report -- 16 U.S.C. 742(a);

(2) Market News Data -- 16 U.S.C. 742(a); and

(3) Seafood Inspection Data -- 7 U.S.C. 1621 et seq.

d. **Special Procedures.**

1. **Cold Storage Summary Reports.** NMFS publishes monthly cold storage holdings of fishery products. Advance knowledge of the content of these reports could give those who trade in the products an opportunity to gain competitive advantage. Therefore, in addition to the confidential protection provided to individual reports, the monthly summary report will not be disclosed to the public until 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time of the official release date. Release dates for these data are published 1 year in advance in November, and can be obtained from the NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division.

2. **Surplus commodity purchases by USDA.** NMFS and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) have an interagency agreement relating to the purchase of surplus fishery products. NMFS is responsible for providing confidential data and recommendations to the USDA regarding these purchases. Advance knowledge of these data could cause a competitive advantage or disadvantage to the general public, fishing industry, and the program. Therefore, all NMFS personnel engaged in the surplus commodity purchase program will be required to sign a specific "USDA Responsibility Statement." A copy will be maintained in the Office of Trade Services.

3. **Agreements for Disclosure of Confidential Data.** A letter of agreement may authorize the disclosure of confidential data when both the Government and the submitter agree to disclosure of the data. The need to provide security for the data will vary depending on the type of data collected and the form of the disclosure. Disclosure can be undertaken if all the following conditions are met:

(a) the person has agreed in writing to the disclosure and is aware that disclosure is irrevocable;

(b) the recipient has been informed in writing of the sensitivity of the data; and

(c) the wording of the agreement has been approved by GC.

. 05 Disposal. NAO 205-1, NOAA Records Management Program, shall govern the disposition of records covered under this Order.

SECTION 7. PENALTIES.

. 01 **Civil and Criminal.** Persons who make unauthorized disclosure of confidential data may be subject to civil penalties or criminal prosecution under:

- a. Trade Secrets Act (18 U.S.C. 1905);
- b. Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a(i)(1));
- c. Magnuson Act (16 U.S.C. 1858); and
- d. MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1375).

. 02 **Conflict of Interest.** Employees are prohibited by Department of Commerce employee conduct regulations [15 CFR part 0] and by ethics regulations applicable to the Executive Branch [5 CFR 2635.703] from using nonpublic information subject to this Order for personal gain, whether or not there is a disclosure to a third party.

. 03 **Disciplinary Action.** Persons may be subject to disciplinary action, including removal, for failure to comply with this Order. Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to, unlawful disclosure or use of the data, and failure to comply with implementing regulations or statutory prohibitions relating to the collection, maintenance, use and disclosure of data covered by this Order.

SECTION 8. EFFECT ON OTHER ISSUANCES. None.

SECTION 515 PRE-DISSEMINATION REVIEW & DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

Background

Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106-554, aka the Data Quality Act or Information Quality Act) directed the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to issue government-wide guidelines that “provide policy and procedural guidance to federal agencies for ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information (including statistical information) disseminated by federal agencies.” OMB complied by issuing guidelines which direct each federal agency to 1) issue its own guidelines; 2) establish administrative mechanisms allowing affected persons to seek and obtain correction of information that does not comply with the OMB 515 Guidelines or the agency guidelines; and 3) report periodically to OMB on the number and nature of complaints received by the agency and how the complaints were handled. The OMB Guidelines can be found at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg/reproducible2.pdf>

The Department of Commerce Guidelines can be found at: <http://www.osec.doc.gov/cio/oipr/iqg.htm>

The NOAA Section 515 Information Quality Guidelines, created with input and reviews from each of the components of NOAA Fisheries, went into effect on October 1, 2002. **The NOAA Information Quality Guidelines are posted on the NOAA home page under “Information Quality.”** <http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories/iq.htm>

The guidelines apply to a wide variety of government information products and all types of media, including printed, electronic, broadcast or other. The guidelines define “Information” as, “any communication or representation of knowledge such as facts or data, in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual forms.” For example, this definition includes information that an agency disseminates from a web page. The guidelines define “Dissemination” as, “agency initiated or sponsored distribution of information to the public.” Explicitly **not** included within this term is distribution limited to “government employees or agency contractors or grantees; intra- or inter-agency use or sharing of government information; and responses to requests for agency records under the Freedom of Information Act, the Privacy Act, the Federal Advisory Committee Act or other similar law.” It also does not include distribution limited to correspondence with individuals or persons, press releases, archival records, public filings, subpoenas or adjudicative processes. (See the NOAA IQ Guidelines, pgs 5-6).

To assist in Data Quality Act compliance, NOAA Fisheries has established a series of actions that should be completed for each new information product subject to the Data Quality Act. (See “Information Generation and Compliance Documentation” and “Pre-Dissemination Review” below.) **In addition to the information contained in this document, familiarity with the NOAA Section 515 Information Quality Guidelines (<http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories/iq.htm>) is crucial for NOAA Fisheries employees who engage in the generation and dissemination of information.**

Information Generation and Compliance Documentation

- The fundamental step in the process is to create a Sec. 515 Information Quality file for each new information product. To aid in this process, a Section 515 Pre-Dissemination Review and Documentation form has been created. These guidelines are intended to serve as a supplement to the Pre-Dissemination Review and Documentation Form. The basic steps to the documentation process are outlined below.
- Complete general information (e.g., author/responsible office, title/description) section of the form.
- Determine the information category (i.e., original data; synthesized products; interpreted products; hydrometeorological, hazardous chemical spill, and space weather warnings, forecasts, and advisories; experimental products; natural resource plans; corporate and general information). **For most information products, you will only need to check one box.** More complex documents may be an “aggregate” of different categories of information products.
- Generate the information in a way that meets each of the applicable standards for the appropriate information category. See the NOAA Information Quality Guidelines.
- Document how the standards for **utility, integrity and objectivity** are met for each information product, describing what measures were taken to meet each of the applicable standards. Use the 2 page Pre-Dissemination Review & Documentation Form to document compliance with the Utility and Integrity standards contained in NOAA’s Information Quality Guidelines. The Utility and Integrity standards pertain to all categories of information disseminated by NOAA. Use these guidelines (pgs 4-11) to document compliance with the applicable objectivity standards for your information product and attach that documentation to the Pre-Dissemination Review & Documentation Form.
- Maintain the Sec. 515 Information Quality file in a readily accessible place. [Pre-Dissemination Review](#)
- Before information is disseminated, it must be reviewed for compliance with the NOAA Sec. 515 Information Quality Guidelines. This is accomplished by reviewing the information and the Sec. 515 Information Quality file.
- The Pre-Dissemination Review should be conducted during the normal course of clearing the information product for release. The person conducting the Pre-Dissemination Review will sign and date the Pre-Dissemination Review & Documentation Form. The reviewing official must be at least one level above the person generating the information product.
- The Pre-Dissemination Review form and the supporting information quality documentation must accompany the information product through the clearance process and be maintained on file.

Completing the Section 515 Pre-Dissemination Review & Documentation Form

Using the Section 515 Pre-Dissemination Review & Documentation Form and these guidelines, document how the information product meets the

following standards for **Utility, Integrity and Objectivity**. **Please note:** Use the Pre-Dissemination Review & Documentation Form to document how the information product complies with the Utility and Integrity standards that pertain to all categories of information products. The Utility and Integrity standards are presented here for your convenience. Use these guidelines to explain how the information product meets the applicable Objectivity standards for the information product and attach that documentation to the Pre-Dissemination Review & Documentation Form.

I. Utility of Information Product

Utility means that disseminated information is useful to its intended users. "Useful" means that the content of the information is helpful, beneficial, or serviceable to its intended users, or that the information supports the usefulness of other disseminated information by making it more accessible or easier to read, see, understand, obtain or use.

- A. Is the information helpful, beneficial or serviceable to the intended user? Explain.
- B. Who are the intended users of the data or information product? (e.g., the American public; other federal agencies; state and local governments; recreational concerns; national and international organizations). Is this data or information product an improvement over previously available information? Is it more detailed or current? Is it more useful or accessible to the public? Has it been improved based on comments or interactions with users?
- C. What media are used in the dissemination of the information? Printed publications? CD-ROM? Internet?
Is the product made available in a standard data format?
Does it use consistent attribute naming and unit conventions to ensure that the information is accessible to a broad range of users with a variety of operating systems and data needs?

II. Integrity of Information Product

Integrity refers to security - the protection of information from unauthorized access or revision, to ensure that the information is not compromised through corruption or falsification. Prior to dissemination, NOAA information, independent of the specific intended distribution mechanism, is safeguarded from improper access, modification, or destruction, to a degree commensurate with the risk and magnitude of harm that could result from the loss, misuse, or unauthorized access to or modification of such information. **Please note: all electronic information disseminated by NOAA adheres to the standards set forth in paragraph A below. If the information product is disseminated electronically, simply circle paragraph II(A) on the form.** You may also contact your IT Manager for further information.

Explain (circle) how the information product meets the following standards for integrity:

- A. All electronic information disseminated by NOAA adheres to the standards set out in Appendix III, "Security of Automated Information Resources," OMB Circular A-130; the Computer Security Act; and the Government Information Security Reform Act.
- B. If information is confidential, it is safeguarded pursuant to the Privacy Act and Titles 13, 15, and 22 of the U. S. Code (confidentiality of census, business and financial information).
- C. Other/Discussion
(e.g., 50 CFR 600, Subpart E, Confidentiality of Statistics of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; NOAA Administrative Order 216-100, Protection of Confidential Fisheries Statistics; 50 CFR 229.11, Confidentiality of information collected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.)

III. Objectivity of Information Product

(1) Indicate which one of the following categories of information products apply for this product (check one):

- Original Data - go to Section A
- Synthesized Products - go to Section B
- Interpreted Products - go to Section C
- Hydrometeorological, Hazardous Chemical Spill, and Space Weather Warnings, Forecasts, and Advisories - go to Section D
- Experimental Products - go to Section E
- Natural Resource Plans - go to Section F
- Corporate and General Information - go to Section G

(2) Describe how this information product meets the applicable objectivity standards.

General Standard: Information is presented in an accurate, clear, complete, and unbiased manner, and in proper context. The substance of the information is accurate, reliable, and unbiased; in the scientific, financial or statistical context, original and supporting data are generated and the analytical results are developed using sound, commonly accepted scientific and research methods. "Accurate" means that information is within an acceptable degree of imprecision or error appropriate to the particular kind of information at issue and otherwise meets commonly accepted scientific, financial and statistical standards.

If the information is "influential," that is, it is expected to have a genuinely clear and substantial impact on major public policy and private sector decisions, it is noted as such and it is presented with the highest degree of transparency. If influential information constitutes an assessment of risks to human health, safety or the environment, indicate whether the risk assessment was qualitative or quantitative, and describe which SDWA-adapted quality standards at page 9 of NOAA's Section 515 Information Quality Guidelines were applied to the information product.

Use of third party information in the product (information not collected or generated by NOAA) is only done when the information is of known quality and consistent with NOAA's Section 515 Guidelines; any limitations, assumptions, collection methods, or uncertainties concerning the information are taken into account and disclosed.

Specific Standards: Specific objectivity standards for categories of information products disseminated by NOAA are listed below. Document how the general and specific objectivity standards for the particular information product were met.

A. Original Data

Original Data are data in their most basic useful form. These are data from individual times and locations that have not been summarized or processed to higher levels of analysis. While these data are often derived from other direct measurements (e.g., spectral signatures from a chemical analyzer, electronic signals from current meters), they represent properties of the environment. These data can be disseminated in both real time and retrospectively. Examples of original data include buoy data, survey data (e.g., living marine resource and hydrographic surveys), biological and chemical properties, weather observations, and satellite data.

Objectivity of original data is achieved using sound quality control techniques.

Detail how the data collection methods, systems, instruments, training, and/or tools are appropriate to meet the requirements of the intended users.

Were the methods, systems, instruments, etc., validated before use?

Were standard operating procedures (SOPs) followed for time series data collections? If not, document the valid scientific reasons for the deviation.

Document the quality control techniques used, for example:

- Gross error checks for data that fall outside of physically realistic ranges (e.g., a minimum, maximum or maximum change)
- Comparisons made with other independent sources of the same measurement
- Examination of individual time series and statistical summaries
- Application of sensor drift coefficients determined by a comparison of pre- and post-deployment calibrations
- Visual inspection of data

Describe any evolution and/or improvements in survey techniques, instrument performance and/or data processing.

Have metadata record descriptions and explanations of the methods and quality controls to which original data are subjected been included in the disseminated product? If not, they must be made available upon request.

B. Synthesized Products

Synthesized Products are those that have been developed through analysis of original data. This includes analysis through statistical methods; model interpolations, extrapolations, and simulations; and combinations of multiple sets of original data.

While some scientific evaluation and judgment is needed, the methods of analysis are well documented and relatively routine.

Examples of synthesized products include summaries of fisheries landings statistics, weather statistics, model outputs, data display through Geographical Information System techniques, and satellite-derived maps.

The objectivity of synthesized products is achieved by using data of known quality, applying sound analytical techniques, and reviewing the products or processes used to create them before dissemination. For synthesized products, please document the following:

Identify data sources (preferred option) or be prepared to make them available upon request.

Are the data used of known quality or from sources acceptable to the relevant scientific and technical communities?

Are the methods used to create the synthesized product published in standard methods manuals or generally accepted by the relevant scientific and technical communities? Are the methods documented in readily accessible formats by the disseminating office?

Describe the review process used to ensure the validity of the synthesized product or the procedures used to create them, e.g., statistical procedures, models, or other analysis tools.

If the synthesized product is unique or not regularly produced, was this product reviewed by internal and/or external experts?

If this is a routinely produced synthesized product, was the process for developing the product reviewed by internal and/or external experts?

Does the synthesized product include information about the methods used to create the product? If not, the methods must be made available upon request.

C. Interpreted Products

Interpreted Products are those that have been developed through interpretation of original data and synthesized products. In many cases, this information incorporates additional contextual and/or normative data, standards, or information that puts original data and synthesized products into larger spatial, temporal, or issue contexts. This information is subject to scientific interpretation, evaluation, and judgment. Examples of interpreted products include journal articles, scientific papers, technical reports, and production of and contributions to integrated assessments.

Objectivity of interpreted products is achieved by using data of known quality or from sources acceptable to the relevant scientific and technical communities and reliable supporting products, applying sound analytical techniques, presenting the information in the proper context, and reviewing the products before dissemination.

Are all data and information sources identified or properly referenced?

Are the methods used to create the interpreted product generally accepted by the relevant scientific and technical communities?

Is information concerning the quality and limitations of the interpreted product provided to help the user assess the suitability of the product for the user's application?

Describe the review process used to ensure that the product is valid, complete, unbiased, objective and relevant. For example, peer reviews, ranging from internal peer review by staff who were not involved in the development of the product to formal, independent, external peer review. The review should be conducted at a level commensurate with the importance of the interpreted product.

Does the interpreted product include a description of the methods used to create the product? If not, they must be made available upon

request.

D. Hydrometeorological, Hazardous Chemical Spill, and Space Weather

Warnings, Forecasts, and Advisories

Hydrometeorological, Hazardous Chemical Spill, and Space Weather Warnings, Forecasts, and Advisories are time-critical interpretations of original data and synthesized products, prepared under tight time constraints and covering relatively short, discrete time periods. As such, these warnings, forecasts, and advisories represent the best possible information in given circumstances. They are subject to scientific interpretation, evaluation, and judgment. Some products in this category, such as weather forecasts, are routinely prepared. Other products, such as tornado warnings, hazardous chemical spill trajectories, and solar flare alerts, are of an urgent nature and are prepared for unique circumstances.

Objectivity of information in this category is achieved by using reliable data collection methods and sound analytical techniques and systems to ensure the highest possible level of accuracy given the time critical nature of the products.

What is the source of the data or information used in the product? Are the data used of known quality or from sources acceptable to the relevant scientific and technical communities? Are the sources included in the information product? If not, they must be made available upon request. Are the methods used to create the product generally accepted by the relevant scientific and technical communities?

Please note if individual best judgment was used due to the time-critical nature of the product.

What mechanisms were used to evaluate the accuracy of the information product? Statistical analysis may be carried out for a subset of products for verification purposes.

E. Experimental Products

Experimental products are products that are experimental (in the sense that their quality has not yet been fully determined) in nature, or are products that are based in part on experimental capabilities or algorithms. Experimental products fall into two classes.

They are either (1) disseminated for experimental use, evaluation or feedback, or (2) used in cases where, in the view of qualified scientists who are operating in an urgent situation in which the timely flow of vital information is crucial to human health, safety, or the environment, the danger to human health, safety, or the environment will be lessened if every tool available is used. Examples of experimental products include imagery or data from non-NOAA sources, algorithms currently being tested and evaluated, experimental climate forecasts, and satellite imagery processed with developmental algorithms for urgent needs (e.g., wildfire detection).

Objectivity of experimental products is achieved by using the best science and supporting studies available, in accordance with sound and objective scientific practices, evaluated in the relevant scientific and technical communities, and peer-reviewed where feasible.

Describe the science and/or supporting studies used, the evaluation techniques used, and note any peer-review of the experimental product. Were the results of initial tests or evaluations made available where possible? Describe the review, by the appropriate NOAA unit, of the experimental products and capabilities documentation, along with any tests or evaluations.

Are explicit limitations provided concerning the quality of the experimental product? Is the degree of uncertainty indicated?

Describe the testing process used, e.g., the experimental product or capabilities are used only after careful testing, evaluation, and review by NOAA experts, and then are approved for provisional use only by selected field offices or other NOAA components. This process is repeated as needed to ensure an acceptable and reliable level of quality.

F. Natural Resource Plans

Natural Resource Plans are information products that are prescribed by law and have content, structure, and public review processes (where applicable) that will be based upon published standards, e.g., statutory or regulatory guidelines. Examples of such published standards include the National Standard Guidelines (50 CFR Part 600, Subpart D), Essential Fish Habitat Guidelines, and Operational Guidelines - Fishery Management Plan Process, all under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; and the National Marine Sanctuary Management Plan Handbook (16 U.S.C. section 1434) under the National Marine Sanctuary Act. These Natural Resource Plans are a composite of several types of information (e.g., scientific, management, stakeholder input, and agency policy) from a variety of internal and external sources. Examples of Natural Resources Plans include fishery, protected resource, and sanctuary management plans and regulations, and natural resource restoration plans.

Objectivity of Natural Resource Plans will be achieved by adhering to published standards, using information of known quality or from sources acceptable to the relevant scientific and technical communities, presenting the information in the proper context, and reviewing the products before dissemination.

What published standard(s) governs the creation of the Natural Resource Plan? Does the Plan adhere to the published standards? (See the NOAA Sec. 515 Information Quality Guidelines, Section II(F) for links to the published standards for the Plans disseminated by NOAA.)

Was the Plan developed using the best information available? Please explain.

Have clear distinctions been drawn between policy choices and the supporting science upon which they are based? Have all supporting materials, information, data and analyses used within the Plan been properly referenced to ensure transparency?

Describe the review process of the Plan by technically qualified individuals to ensure that the Plan is valid, complete, unbiased, objective and relevant. For example, internal review by staff who were not involved in the development of the Plan to formal, independent, external peer review. The level of review should be commensurate with the importance of the Plan and the constraints imposed by legally enforceable deadlines.

G. Corporate and General Information

Corporate or general information includes all non-scientific, non-financial, non-statistical information. Examples include program and organizational descriptions, brochures, pamphlets, education and outreach materials, newsletters, and other general descriptions of NOAA operations and capabilities.

Corporate and general information disseminated by NOAA must be presented in a clear, complete, and unbiased manner, and in a context that enhances usability to the intended audience. To the extent possible, identify the sources of the disseminated information, consistent with confidentiality, privacy and security considerations and protections, and taking into account timely presentation, the medium of dissemination, and the importance of the information, balanced against the resources required and the time available.

Information disseminated by NOAA is reliable and accurate to an acceptable degree of error as determined by factors such as the importance of the information, the intended use, time sensitivity, expected degree of permanence, relation to the primary mission(s) of the disseminating office, and the context of the dissemination, balanced against the resources required and the time available.

For non-scientific, non-statistical information, has the information product been reasonably determined to be factually correct in the view of the disseminating office as of the time of dissemination?

Describe the review process for the information product. Review can be accomplished in a number of ways, including but not limited to combinations of the following:

- Active personal review of information by supervisory and management layers, either by reviewing each individual dissemination, or selected samples, or by any other reasonable method.
- Use of quality check lists, charts, statistics, or other means of tracking quality, completeness, and usefulness.
- Process design and monitoring to ensure that the process itself imposes checks on information quality .
- Review during information preparation.
- Use of management controls.
- Any other method, which serves to enhance the accuracy, reliability and objectivity of the information.