

1. *Be market-based and results driven.* An EDA investment will capitalize on a region's competitive strengths and will positively move a regional economic indicator measured on EDA's Balanced Scorecard, such as: An increased number of higher-skill, higher-wage jobs; increased tax revenue; or increased private sector investment.

2. *Have strong organizational leadership.* An EDA investment will have strong leadership, relevant project management experience, and a significant commitment of human resources talent to ensure a project's successful execution.

3. *Advance productivity, innovation, and entrepreneurship.* An EDA investment will embrace the principles of entrepreneurship, enhance regional clusters, and leverage and link technology innovators and local universities to the private sector to create the conditions for greater productivity, innovation, and job creation.

4. *Look beyond the immediate economic horizon, anticipate economic changes, and diversify the local and regional economy.* An EDA investment will be part of an overarching, long-term comprehensive economic development strategy that enhances a region's success in achieving a rising standard of living by supporting existing industry clusters, developing emerging new clusters, or attracting new regional economic drivers.

5. *Demonstrate a high degree of local commitment by exhibiting:*

- High levels of local government or non-profit matching funds and private sector leverage;
- Clear and unified leadership and support by local elected officials; and
- Strong cooperation between the business sector, relevant regional partners and local, State and Federal governments.

Funding Priorities

Successful applications for EDA's investment programs will be regionally-driven initiatives in areas of the Nation that are underperforming and eligible for EDA programs that meet one or more of the following core criteria (investment proposals that meet more than one core criterion will be given more favorable consideration):

1. *Investments in support of long-term, coordinated and collaborative regional economic development approaches:*

- Establish comprehensive regional economic development strategies that identify promising opportunities for long-term economic growth.

• Exhibit demonstrable, committed multi-jurisdictional support from leaders across all sectors:

- i. Public (*e.g.*, mayors, city councils, county executives, senior state leadership);
 - ii. Institutional (*e.g.*, institutions of higher learning);
 - iii. Non-profit (*e.g.*, chambers of commerce, development organizations); and
 - iv. Private (*e.g.*, leading regional businesses, significant regional industry associations).
- Generate quantifiable positive economic outcomes.

2. *Investments that support innovation and competitiveness:*

- Develop and enhance the functioning and competitiveness of leading and emerging industry clusters in an economic region.
- Advance technology transfer from research institutions to the commercial marketplace.
- Bolster critical infrastructure (*e.g.*, transportation, communications, specialized training) to prepare economic regions to compete in the world-wide marketplace.

3. *Investments that encourage entrepreneurship:*

- Cultivate a favorable entrepreneurial environment consistent with regional strategies.
- Enable economic regions to identify innovative opportunities among growth-oriented small and medium-size enterprises.
- Promote community and faith-based entrepreneurship programs aimed at improving economic performance in an economic region.

Additional consideration will be given to investment proposals which also accomplish the following:

- Respond to sudden and severe economic dislocations (*e.g.*, major layoffs and/or plant closures, disasters).
- Enable BRAC-impacted communities to transition from a military to civilian economy.
- Advance the goals of linking historic preservation and economic development as outlined by Executive Order 13287, "Preserve America."

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements, published in the **Federal Register** on December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389). This notice may be accessed by entering the **Federal**

Register volume and page number provided in the previous sentence at the following Internet Web site: <http://gpoaccess.gov/fr/retrieve.html>.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This document contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). The use of Form ED-900P has been approved by OMB under Control Number 0610-0094. Notwithstanding any other provision of 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 PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.

Executive Order 12866

This notice has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism)

It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comments are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act or any other law for this rule concerning grants, benefits and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)). Because notice and opportunity for comment are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

Sandy K. Baruah,

Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development.

[FR Doc. E6-2545 Filed 2-22-06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-24-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Institute of Standards and Technology

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Management Information Reporting

AGENCY: National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing

effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13 (44 U.S.C. 3506 (2)(A)).

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before April 24, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Diana Hynek, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6625, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at dHynek@doc.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument(s) and instructions should be directed to Joe Giannamore, Economist, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Manufacturing Extension Partnership, 100 Bureau Drive, Stop 4800, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-4800, 301-975-4614 (phone) and 301-926-3787 (fax). In addition, written comments may be sent via e-mail to joseph.giannamore@nist.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

Sponsored by NIST, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is a national network of locally based manufacturing extension centers working with small manufacturers to help them improve their productivity, improve profitability and enhance their economic competitiveness.

The information is collected to provide the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) with information regarding MEP Center performance in the delivery of technology, and business solutions to U.S.-based manufacturers. The information obtained will assist in determining the performance of the MEP Centers at both a local and national level, as well as, the impact on the national economy. Responses to the collection of information are mandatory per the regulations governing the operation of the MEP Program (15 CFR parts 290, 291, 292, and H.R. 1274—section 2). No confidentiality for information submitted is promised or provided.

This collection under the Paperwork Reduction Act received prior Office of Management and Budget clearance in May 2003, and this clearance expires on May 31, 2006.

II. Method of Collection

Web forms will be used to collect and analyze a wide range of information from the MEP centers, which includes customer satisfaction, center activities, center staff, quarterly expenses and revenues, partners and affiliates strategic plan, operating plans, and client success stories.

III. Data

OMB Number: 0693-0032.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Regular submission.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 59.

Estimated Time per Response: 127 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Burden

Hours: 7,493.

Estimated Total Annual Cost: \$374,650.

IV. Request for Comments

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

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

Dated: February 16, 2006.

Gwellnar Banks,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

[FR Doc. E6-2524 Filed 2-22-06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-13-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Vessel Monitoring Program for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

ACTION: Notice.

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

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before April 24, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Diana Hynek, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6625, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at dHynek@doc.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Becky Renko, (206) 526-6110 or Becky.Renko@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

NOAA has established large-scale depth-based management areas, referred to as Groundfish Conservation Areas (GCAs), where groundfish fishing is prohibited or restricted. These areas were specifically designed to reduce the catch of species while allowing healthy fisheries to continue in areas and with gears where little incidental catch of overfished species is likely to occur. Because NOAA needs methods to effectively enforce area restrictions, certain commercial fishing vessels are required to install and use a vessel monitoring system (VMS) that automatically send hourly position reports. Exemptions from the reporting requirement are available for inactive vessels or vessels fishing outside the monitored area. The vessels are also required to declare what gear will be used.

To ensure the integrity of the GCAs and Rockfish Conservation Areas, a pilot VMS program was implemented on January 1, 2004. The pilot program required vessels registered to Pacific Coast groundfish fishery limited entry permits to carry and use VMS transceiver units while fishing off the coasts of Washington, Oregon and California. The VMS program coverage is being expanded on January 1, 2007, to include all open access fisheries in addition to the limited entry fisheries.

A separate notice will be published regarding the proposed rule RIN 0648-AU08.