

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Institute of Standards and Technology****Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request**

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35).

*Agency:* National Institute of Standards and Technology.

*Title:* Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Client Impact Survey.

*OMB Control Number:* 0693-0021.

*Form Number(s):* None.

*Type of Request:* Regular.

*Number of Respondents:* 10,000.

*Average Hours per Response:* 12 minutes.

*Burden Hours:* 2,000.

*Needs and Uses:* The objective of the NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program (MEP) is to enhance productivity, technological performance, and strengthen the global competitiveness of small-and medium-sized U.S.-based manufacturing firms. Through this client impact survey, the MEP will collect data necessary for program accountability; analysis and research into the effectiveness of the MEP program; reports to stakeholders; GPRA; continuous improvement efforts; knowledge sharing across the MEP system; and identification of best practices. Collection of this data is needed in order to comply with the MEP charter, as mandated by Congress.

*Affected Public:* Business or other for profit institutions.

*Frequency:* Annually.

*Respondent's Obligation:* Voluntary.

This information collection request may be viewed at [reginfo.gov](http://reginfo.gov). Follow the instructions to view Department of Commerce collections currently under review by OMB.

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to [OIRA\\_Submission@omb.eop.gov](mailto:OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov) or fax to (202) 395-5806.

**Sheleen Dumas,**

*Departmental PRA Lead, Office of the Chief Information Officer.*

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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**RIN 0648-XF600**

**Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Establishment of Annual Catch Limits for the Subsistence Harvest of Bowhead Whales by Alaska Natives**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent; announcement of public scoping period; request for written comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces its intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), in order to assess the impacts of issuing annual catch limits for the subsistence harvest of bowhead whales by Alaska Natives from 2019 onward. Publication of this document begins the official scoping period that will help identify issues and alternatives to be considered in the EIS.

**DATES:** Written comments on this scoping process must be received no later than September 14, 2017.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit your comments on this scoping notice, by including NOAA-NMFS-2017-0098 by either of the following methods:

- *Federal e-Rulemaking Portal:* Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2017-0098>. Click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

- *Mail:* Carolyn Doherty, Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection, NOAA Fisheries, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

*Instructions:* NMFS may not consider comments if they are sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the comment period ends at 11:59 p.m. eastern time on the date of comment period closure. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change.

For posted comments, all personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender is publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish

to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe portable document file (PDF) formats only.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Carolyn Doherty, Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection, NOAA Fisheries (phone: 301-427-8385 or email: [Carolyn.Doherty@noaa.gov](mailto:Carolyn.Doherty@noaa.gov)).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS is initiating this EIS process in order to comprehensively assess impacts of the subsistence harvest of Western Arctic bowhead whales by Alaska Natives from 2019 onward.

**Background**

Alaska Natives have hunted bowhead whales for over 2,000 years as the whales migrate in the spring and fall along the coast of Alaska. Their traditional subsistence hunts for these whales have been regulated by catch limits and other limitations under the authority of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) since 1977. Alaska Native subsistence hunters from 11 northern Alaskan communities take less than 1 percent of the stock of bowhead whales per year. Since 1977, the number of whales struck by harpoons has ranged between 14 and 72 animals per year, depending in part on changes in IWC management strategy due to higher estimates of both bowhead whale abundance and increased hunter efficiency in recent years. The IWC sets an overall aboriginal subsistence catch limit for this stock, based on the request of IWC member countries on behalf of the aboriginal hunters. The IWC's catch limit for bowhead whales includes a limit on the number of landed whales and a limit on the number of whales that may be struck. In the case of Alaska and Russian Native subsistence hunts, the United States and the Russian Federation make a joint request to the IWC for subsistence catch limits for bowhead whales.

NMFS must annually publish a notice of aboriginal subsistence whale hunting catch limits and any other limitations on such hunting in the **Federal Register** (50 CFR 230.6). The subsistence hunt is directly managed by the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) and the catch limits are issued through annual amendments to a cooperative agreement between the AEWC and NOAA, consistent with the mandates codified in the Whaling Convention Act, 16 U.S.C. 916-916l.

In order to comprehensively assess the effects of these annual removals, this proposed action would extend from 2019 onward, subject to IWC-set catch