

first-time filers to be advanced out of turn for examination and reviewed earlier (accorded special status). The pilot program was originally scheduled to end on March 11, 2024. In view of the continued interest in the program, the USPTO is extending it until either March 11, 2025, or until the date on which the USPTO grants a total of 1,000 petitions since the start of the pilot program, whichever occurs first. All pilot parameters will remain the same as those for the original pilot.

DATES:

Applicable Date: March 11, 2024.

Duration: The First-Time Filer Expedited Examination Pilot Program will continue to run until either March 11, 2025, or until the date on which the USPTO grants a total of 1,000 petitions since the start of the pilot program, whichever occurs first. Therefore, petitions to make special under the First-Time Filer Expedited Examination Pilot Program must be filed on or before March 11, 2025. The USPTO may further extend the pilot program (with or without modifications) or terminate it depending on factors such as workload and resources needed to administer the program, feedback from the public, and the effectiveness of the program. If the program is terminated, the USPTO will notify the public. The USPTO will continue to indicate the number of applications accepted into the program on the First-Time Filer Expedited Examination Pilot Program web page (www.uspto.gov/FirstTimePatentFiler).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brannon Smith, Legal Advisor (571-270-1601 or Brannon.Smith@uspto.gov); or Susy Tsang-Foster, Senior Legal Advisor (571-272-7711 or susy.tsang-foster@uspto.gov), of the Office of Patent Legal Administration, Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Patent Examination Policy.

Questions regarding electronic application filing may be directed to the Patent Electronic Business Center at 866-217-9197 during its operating hours of 6 a.m. to midnight ET, Monday-Friday, or ebc@uspto.gov.

Questions regarding a filed petition to make special under this pilot may be directed to the Office of Petitions at 571-272-3282 during its operating hours of 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET, Monday-Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The USPTO published a notice of the implementation of the First-Time Filer Expedited Examination Pilot Program on March 9, 2023. See First-Time Filer Expedited Examination Pilot Program, 88 FR 14607 (March 9, 2023) (First-Time Filer Notice). The pilot program is one

of the initiatives under the USPTO's Council for Inclusive Innovation to increase access to the patent system for inventors who are new to the patent application process, including those in historically underserved geographic and economic areas. The First-Time Filer Notice established that micro entity first-time filers who meet the requirements specified in the notice may have their applications examined out of turn. The program was established under 37 CFR 1.102(d) without requiring either the 37 CFR 1.17(h) fee for a petition to make special or all conditions of the accelerated examination program set forth in section 708.02(a), subsection I, of the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (9th Edition, Rev. 07.2022, February 2023).

The First-Time Filer Notice established that the pilot program would run until March 11, 2024. In view of the continued interest in the pilot program, the USPTO is hereby extending the program through March 11, 2025, or until the date on which the USPTO grants a total of 1,000 petitions since the start of the pilot program, whichever occurs first. The extension will also allow the USPTO to continue its evaluation of the pilot program. The requirements of the pilot program have not been modified.

Various stakeholders from around the world have filed petitions to participate in the pilot program—they include prose inventors, middle school students, and small companies. To date, over 350 petitions requesting participation in the pilot program have been filed, over 130 applications have been accepted into the program, and more than 15 patents have been granted under the program. The USPTO may again extend the pilot program (with or without modifications) depending on the feedback from the participants, continued interest, and the effectiveness of the pilot program.

The USPTO maintains a web page for the First-Time Filer Expedited Examination Pilot Program (www.uspto.gov/FirstTimePatentFiler). The web page includes frequently asked questions, a recorded webinar about the program, and detailed information about how to apply. The web page further includes links to educational resources to help inventors become reasonably trained on the basics of the USPTO's patent application process. Interested parties are strongly encouraged to

review all the resources available on the program web page prior to applying.

Katherine K. Vidal,

Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

[FR Doc. 2024-05102 Filed 3-8-24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-16-P

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**Department of the Army**

[Docket ID: USA-2024-HQ-0004]

Proposed Collection; Comment Request

AGENCY: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Department of the Army, Department of Defense (DoD).

ACTION: 60-Day information collection notice.

SUMMARY: In compliance with the *Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995*, the USACE announces a proposed public information collection and seeks public comment on the provisions thereof. Comments are invited on: 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; the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed information collection; ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and ways to minimize the burden of the information collection on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

DATES: Consideration will be given to all comments received by May 10, 2024.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, identified by docket number and title, by any of the following methods:

Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.

Mail: Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Privacy, Civil Liberties, and Transparency, Regulatory Directorate, 4800 Mark Center Drive, Mailbox #24, Suite 08D09, Alexandria, VA 22350-1700.

Instructions: All submissions received must include the agency name, docket number and title for this **Federal Register** document. The general policy for comments and other submissions from members of the public is to make these submissions available for public viewing on the internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> as they are

received without change, including any personal identifiers or contact information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: To request more information on this proposed information collection or to obtain a copy of the proposal and associated collection instruments, please write to Headquarters, USACE, 441 G Street NW, Washington, DC 20314-1000, ATTN: Mr. Matt Wilson, or call 202-761-5856.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title; Associated Form; and OMB Number: USACE Regulatory Program General Forms; ENG Forms 4336, 4345, 6082, 6233, 6284-6287, 6294, and 6295; OMB Control Number 0710-0003.

Needs and Uses: The USACE (Corps), through its Regulatory Program, regulates certain activities in waters of the United States (WOTUS), pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). WOTUS are defined under 33 CFR part 328. The Corps also regulates certain activities in “navigable waters of the United States” pursuant to Sections 9 and 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (RHA). The information collected is used to evaluate, as required by law, proposed construction or filling in WOTUS that result in impacts to the aquatic environment and nearby properties, and to determine which type of permit would be required if one was needed. Respondents are private landowners, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. Respondents also include sponsors of proposed and approved mitigation banks and in-lieu fee programs.

The USACE is required by three Federal laws, passed by Congress, to regulate construction-related activities in waters of the United States. This is accomplished through the review of applications for permits to do this work. There are five types of permits that may be used. The ENG 4345 form used for standard permit applications has been in use since the 1970s and the request to extend the expiration date is being provided in this notice. The ENG 6082 used for Nationwide Permits (NWP) pre-construction notifications has been in use for several years. NWPs are one type of permit authorization that involves a streamlined review process to ensure that no more than minimal individual or cumulative adverse environmental effect result from construction of the proposed activity. NWPs authorize discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States pursuant to section 404 of the CWA and structures or work in navigable waters under section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. With the exception

of the ENG 4345, use of the forms is optional, but allows the Corps to collect the information needed to evaluate the applicants’ proposal to determine eligibility for authorization. The Corps will provide outreach materials to guide the public in which of the forms should be used and how using the form and providing the information requested can reduce the time it takes to review whether an application is complete. The information collected is used to evaluate, as required by law, proposed construction or filling in WOTUS that result in impacts to the aquatic environment and nearby properties, and to determine which type of permit would be required if one was needed.

In addition to the renewal of the ENG 4345 and ENG 6082, the Corps is also proposing seven new enterprise-level collections for (1) Notice of USACE Permit (ENG 4336), (2) Regulatory Violation Complaint (ENG 6284), (3) Certification of Compliance with Department of the Army Permit (ENG 6285), (4) Request for Pre-Application Meeting (ENG 6286), (5) Notification of Administrative Appeal Options and Process and Request for Appeal (ENG 6287), (6) Right of Entry (ENG 6294), and (7) Authorization to Act as an Agent (ENG 6295). The Corps is proposing to add these seven new forms to the collection to facilitate common requests from the public in a streamlined and standardized fashion that will be common across Corps districts. This collection would include new forms to certify compliance with Corps permits, request a pre-application meeting, request an administrative appeal, and/or report a violation. The Corps also proposes to incorporate its Customer Service Survey (ENG 6233) into this collection.

Affected Public: Individuals or households; business or other for-profit; not-for-profit institutions; farms; Federal Government; State; local or Tribal government.

Annual Burden Hours: 490,506.

Number of Respondents: 240,444.

Responses per Respondent: 1.

Annual Responses: 240,444.

Average Burden per Response: 2.04 hours.

Frequency: On occasion.

Dated: February 28, 2024.

Aaron T. Siegel,

Alternate OSD Federal Register Liaison Officer, Department of Defense.

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Office of the Secretary

[Docket ID: DoD-2022-OS-0113]

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

AGENCY: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OUSD(P&R)), Department of Defense (DoD).

ACTION: 30-Day information collection notice.

SUMMARY: The DoD has submitted 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.

DATES: Consideration will be given to all comments received by April 10, 2024.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain. Find this particular information collection by selecting “Currently under 30-day Review—Open for Public Comments” or by using the search function.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Reginald Lucas, (571) 372-7574, whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dd-dod-information-collections@mail.mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title; Associated Form; and OMB Number: Qualitative Research to Better Understand the Experiences of Racial/Ethnic Minority Service Members; DoD-wide Data Collection and Analysis for the Department of Defense Qualitative and Quantitative Data Collection in Support of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault Recommendations; OMB Control Number 0704-0644.

Type of Request: New.

Number of Respondents: 314.

Responses per Respondent: 1.

Annual Responses: 314.

Average Burden per Response: 1.42 hours.

Annual Burden Hours: 446.

Needs and Uses: In 2021, at the direction of President Biden, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin ordered an Independent Review Commission (IRC) to review sexual assault in the military and provide recommendations to remedy the issue within the DoD. In issuing their report, among other recommendations, the IRC advised “the Department should commission qualitative research to better understand the experiences of racial/ethnic