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Reporting Errors in NFSv4.2 via LAYOUTRETURN

Abstract

The Parallel Network File System (pNFS) allows for a file's metadata and data to be on different servers (i.e., the metadata server (MDS) and the data server (DS)). When the MDS is restarted, the client can still modify the data file component. During the recovery phase of startup, the MDS and the DSs work together to recover state. If the client has not encountered errors with the data files, then the state can be recovered and the resilvering of the data files can be avoided. With any errors, there is no means by which the client can report errors to the MDS. As such, the MDS has to assume that a file needs resilvering. This document presents an extension to RFC 8435 to allow the client to update the metadata via LAYOUTRETURN and avoid the resilvering.

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This is an Internet Standards Track document.

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1. Introduction

In the Network File System version 4 (NFSv4) with a Parallel NFS (pNFS) flexible file layout [RFC8435] server, during recovery after a restart, there is no mechanism for the client to inform the metadata server (MDS) about an error that occurred during a WRITE operation (see Section 18.32 of [RFC8881]) to the data servers (DSs) in the period of the outage.

Using the process detailed in [RFC8178], the revisions in this document become an extension of NFSv4.2 [RFC7862]. They are built on top of the External Data Representation (XDR) [RFC4506] generated from [RFC7863].

1.1. Definitions

See Section 1.1 of [RFC8435] for a set of definitions.

1.2. Requirements Language

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in BCP 14 [RFC2119] [RFC8174] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

2. Layout State Recovery

When an MDS restarts, clients are provided a grace recovery period where they are allowed to recover any state that they had established. With open files, the client can send an OPEN operation (see Section 18.16 of [RFC8881]) with a claim type of CLAIM_PREVIOUS (see Section 9.11 of [RFC8881]). The client uses the RECLAIM_COMPLETE operation (see Section 18.51 of [RFC8881]) to notify the MDS that it is done reclaiming state.

The NFSv4 flexible file layout type allows for the client to mirror files (see Section 8 of [RFC8435]). With client-side mirroring, it is important for the client to inform the MDS of any I/O errors encountered with one of the mirrors. This is the only way for the MDS to determine if one or more of the mirrors are corrupt and then repair the mirrors via resilvering (see Section 1.1 of [RFC8435]). The client can use LAYOUTRETURN (see Section 18.44 of [RFC8881]) and the `ff_ioerr4` structure (see Section 9.1.1 of [RFC8435]) to inform the MDS of I/O errors.

A problem arises when the MDS restarts and the client has errors it needs to report but cannot do so. Section 12.7.4 of [RFC8881] requires that the client **MUST** stop using layouts. While the intent there is that the client **MUST** stop doing I/O to the storage devices, it is also true that the layout stateids are no longer valid. The LAYOUTRETURN needs a layout stateid to proceed, and the client cannot get a layout during grace recovery (see Section 12.7.4 of [RFC8881]) to recover layout state. As such, clients have no choice but to not recover files with I/O errors. In turn, the MDS **MUST** assume that the mirrors are inconsistent and pick one for resilvering. It is a **MUST** because even if the MDS can determine that the client did modify data during the outage, it **MUST NOT** assume those modifications were consistent.

To fix this issue, the MDS **MUST** accept the anonymous stateid of all zeros (see Section 8.2.3 of [RFC8881]) for the `lrf_stateid` in LAYOUTRETURN (see Section 18.44.1 of [RFC8881]). The client can use this anonymous stateid to inform the MDS of errors encountered. The MDS can then accurately resilver the file by picking the mirror(s) that does not have any associated errors.

During the grace period, if the client sends an `lrf_stateid` in the LAYOUTRETURN with any value other than the anonymous stateid of all zeros, then the MDS **MUST** respond with an error of NFS4ERR_GRACE (see Section 15.1.9.2 of [RFC8881]). After the grace period, if the client sends an `lrf_stateid` in the LAYOUTRETURN with a value of the anonymous stateid of all zeros, then the MDS **MUST** respond with an error of NFS4ERR_NO_GRACE (see Section 15.1.9.3 of [RFC8881]).

Also, when the MDS builds the reply to the LAYOUTRETURN with an `lrf_stateid` with the value of the anonymous stateid of all zeros, it **MUST NOT** bump the `seqid` of the `lorr_stateid`.

If the MDS detects that the layout being returned in the LAYOUTRETURN does not match the current mirror instances found for the file, then it **MUST** ignore the LAYOUTRETURN and resilver the file in question.

The MDS **MUST** resilver any files that are neither explicitly recovered with a CLAIM_PREVIOUS nor have a reported error via a LAYOUTRETURN. The client has most likely restarted and lost any state.

2.1. When to Resilver

A write intent occurs when a client opens a file and gets a LAYOUTIOMODE4_RW from the MDS. The MDS **MUST** track outstanding write intents, and when it restarts, it **MUST** track recovery of those write intents. The method that the MDS uses to track write intents is implementation specific, i.e., outside the scope of this document.

The decision to resilver a file depends on how the client recovers the file before the grace period ends. If the client reclaims the file and reports no errors, the MDS **MUST NOT** resilver the file. If the client reports an error on the file, then the file **MUST** be resilvered. If the client does not reclaim or report an error before the grace period ends, then under the old behavior, the MDS **MUST** resilver the file.

The resilvering process is broadly to:

1. fence the file (see [Section 2.2](#) of [RFC8435]),
2. record the need to resilver,
3. release the write intent, and
4. once there are no write intents on the file, start the resilvering process.

The MDS **MUST NOT** resilver a file if there are clients with outstanding write intents, i.e., multiple clients might have the file open with write intents. As the MDS **MUST** track write intents, it **MUST** also track the need to resilver, i.e., if the MDS restarts during the grace period, it **MUST** restart the file recovery if it replays the write intent, or else it **MUST** start the resilvering if it replays the resilvering intent.

Whether the MDS prevents all I/O to the file until the resilvering is done, forces all I/O to go through the MDS, or allows a proxy server to update the new data file as it is being resilvered is all an implementation choice. The constraint is that the MDS is responsible for the reconstruction of the data file and for the consistency of the mirrors.

If the MDS does allow the client access to the file during the resilvering, then the client **MUST** have the same layout (set of mirror instances) after the MDS as before. One way that such a resilvering can occur is for a proxy server to be inserted into the layout. That server will be copying a good mirror instance to a new instance. As it gets I/O via the layout, it will be responsible for updating the copy it is performing. This requirement is that the proxy server **MUST** stay in the layout until the grace period is finished.

2.2. Version Mismatch Considerations

The MDS has no expectations for the client to use this new functionality. Therefore, if the client does not use it, the MDS will function normally.

If the client does use the new functionality and the MDS does not support it, then the MDS **MUST** reply with a NFS4ERR_BAD_STATEID to the LAYOUTRETURN. If the client detects a NFS4ERR_BAD_STATEID error in this scenario, it should fall back to the old behavior of not reporting errors.

3. Security Considerations

There are no new security considerations beyond those in [RFC7862].

4. IANA Considerations

This document has no IANA actions.

5. Normative References

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