



# Developing, Reviewing, and Publishing Reports in the Natural Resource Data Series

## Background

The Natural Resource Data Series (NRDS) is intended for the timely release of basic data sets and data summaries. Data reported in the NRDS are to be collected, processed (undergone quality assurance and quality control procedures), and analyzed following methods prescribed in peer-reviewed and approved Inventory & Monitoring Division (IMD) vital sign protocols, or those published and used by other monitoring programs. In most cases, data reported in the NRDS are a subset of larger-scale or longer-term periods of record and have not undergone complete trend or spatial analyses. Examples of NRDS reports include:

- Periodic/annual data summary reports of certified or approved data collected under long-term monitoring efforts.
- Preliminary data summary reports used to release and document provisional data for use by NPS or partners prior to completion of all QA/QC as specified in a protocol's Quality Assurance Plan.

The NRDS is deliberately restrictive in scope to facilitate rapid publication of data. This is done by ensuring that any material published complies with the NPS peer review exemption covering “*routine statistical data used to compute standard indicators and trends that are gathered using methods based on well-established, peer-reviewed protocols and are analyzed and interpreted within the guidelines of the protocols.*”

## Required Elements

All NRDS reports must contain the following “peer review statement” on the official publication policy page (page ii).

*Data in this report were collected and analyzed using methods based on well-established, peer-reviewed protocols and were analyzed and interpreted within the guidelines of the protocols.*

All NRDS reports summarizing vital signs monitoring data must contain the following:

- Citation for the approved IMD protocol or protocol published and used by another agency that governed data collection, processing and analysis.
- Citations for any peer-reviewed and published procedures used for data analysis, reporting, or interpretation not included in the protocol.
- Link to the Data Store record where the data (and associated metadata) upon which the report is based can be found. Note that the data may be restricted to internal-only audiences for a period of up to two years to allow IMD staff time to professionally publish on the data before their public release.<sup>1</sup> However, once a report is published based on the data (including through visualizer tools), or used to support a management decision, it should be made available to the public as quickly as possible.
- An evaluation of data quality.

## Allowable Elements

NRDS reports may contain information beyond what is prescribed in protocols. Examples of allowable material are the following:

- New species records, expanded distribution ranges, or other findings of note.
- Comparison of data to pre-established benchmarks, reference criteria, or regulatory standards.
- Environmental covariate data that may be relevant in interpreting or understanding the data, including climate data, disturbance data, resource management actions that took place contemporaneously with monitoring data, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> This is subject to change—we are still determining an appropriate holding time. Note, however, that any data used as the basis for published reports or park management decisions are subject to FOIA even if not yet publicly released.

## Prohibited Elements

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Any material outside the scope in the disclaimer statement cannot be included in a NRDS report. This precludes the inclusion of the following:

- Data collected or analyzed using non-approved or non-peer-reviewed protocols.
- Analysis of data using methods not included in published peer-reviewed protocols or appropriate methods papers.
- Interpretation of the significance of data in the context of environmental covariate data, resource management activities, or policy.
- Inference or speculation of causality among data.
- Management recommendations based on findings.

## Other Notes Related to Scientific Integrity

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NRDS publications are not considered scholarly scientific documents—it is expected that reports will be largely automated and/or rely on recycled text from other documents that have been peer reviewed and approved for publication (such as protocols and SOPs). These documents should be properly cited, but authors should not feel compelled to rewrite or paraphrase sections that have been recycled from other iterations of like reports.

Lead authorship on NRDS publications should (in most cases) be the person who compiled the data report with secondary authors as warranted following the [IMD Authorship guidelines](#). Authors of prior NRDS reports from which text is recycled (or the protocol upon which the NRDS data were collected and analyzed) should not be included as authors unless they contributed to the NRDS report being published.

## Peer Review Requirements

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Routine statistical data used to compute standard indicators and trends that are gathered using methods based on well-established, peer-reviewed protocols and are analyzed and interpreted within the guidelines of the protocols are exempt from peer review as per Director's Order #11B ([2002](#); [2008](#)). Because this language describes NRDS reports, they should in general be exempt from peer review.

Peer review managers are responsible for determining and documenting that reports meet these criteria prior to submission to the series manager for publication. Reports that do not meet these criteria should be published in the NRR series and should undergo the appropriate peer review as determined by the peer review manager. Peer review managers are also responsible for determining whether high-influence or management reviews are necessary.

## Records Management

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NPS staff are required to maintain records of the review process. Peer review records are produced by multiple individuals during the review and publication process, but the program manager has the responsibility to ensure that all appropriate records for any products released by his/her program are retained by his/her program in accordance with NPS records management policies ([DO #11D](#)). Documentation must be sufficient for an uninvolved person to understand the process used, comments received, and any changes made as a result of the peer review process. Because NRDS reports are exempt from peer review, the required records are minimal:

- The manuscript submittal form documenting the Peer Review Manager's determination that the document is suitable as a NRDS publication.
- If data are collected under an approved IMD protocol, the cited protocol must be posted to the Data Store.
- The data upon which the NRDS report is based—or a link to the data services from which the data can be obtained—must be posted to the Data Store.

## More Information

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