

Southeast Coast Network

National Park Service
Inventory and Monitoring Division



Standard Operating Procedure 2.1.01

Revision of Southeast Coast Network Protocols and Standard Operating Procedures—Version 2.0

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Summary

This standard operating procedure (SOP) explains how to make and track changes to the narrative and standard operating procedures for monitoring protocols implemented by the Southeast Coast Inventory & Monitoring Network (SECN I&M). When editing the protocol narrative or any of the SOPs, follow these procedures. All staff conducting monitoring should be familiar with this SOP in order to identify and use the most current methods.

Revision Log

Previous Version #	Revision Date	Author	Changes Made	Reason for Change	New Version #
0.9	1/17/2013		Citation updated	Protocol publication	1.0
1.0	12/21/2016	Editor	Editorial Review	Protocol Publication	2.0

Introduction

This document explains how to make and track changes to SECN monitoring protocols, including their associated standard operating procedures (SOPs). Although current standardized methodology is used to develop approved protocols, all long-term monitoring programs need to be flexible to adapt to change. Update protocols as new technologies, methods, and equipment become available.

SECN protocols consist of four sections:

Protocol Narrative: This is the main body of the protocol, explaining the “who,” “what,” “when,” and “why” and an overview of “how” to implement a protocol at each intended park. The protocol narrative follows a standard outline as detailed in Oakley et al. (2003), and along with appendices and associated standard operating procedures, is subject to external peer review and approval by the regional or national I&M program coordinator prior to implementation. Protocol narratives are also published as protocol implementation plans, or “PIPs.”

Appendices: In-depth explanatory information related to each protocol narrative that is not expected to change over time. Depending on the content, appendices might require independent peer review and/or approval prior to review and approval of the overall protocol. Appendices may be published as part of the narrative, or they may be published separately as supplemental materials. Supplemental materials are not published online, and are a suitable format for materials that contain sensitive information (e.g., location of exploited plants or monitoring sites) or third party documents that cannot be made 508 compliant (e.g., equipment user manuals).

Standard Operating Procedures: Each protocol is accompanied by one or more (typically 10–15) standard operating procedures that detail “how” each protocol is to be implemented. Each protocol’s SOP package covers aspects of field implementation, data management, analysis, reporting, safety, and equipment maintenance to ensure consistent implementation of methods over time. Standard operating procedures are intended to be “living documents” that are updated over time; in general, all changes related to a protocol should be made at the SOP level rather than to the protocol narrative or supporting appendices.

Key References: In almost all cases, SECN protocols include one or more externally published document critical to their implementation. These documents include reference manuals, user guides, field identification guides, or monitoring protocols developed by partnering agencies (USGS, EPA, and NOAA).

Revision of network protocols and associated documents will be the responsibility of the program manager in consultation with the managing editor, SECN protocol leads (terrestrial ecologist, coastal ecologist, aquatic ecologist, and data manager) as well as statisticians and editorial staff. Make all changes in a timely manner with the appropriate level of review.

Procedures

The following procedures will ensure that both minor and major revisions to this document will align with the monitoring plan.

General Procedures

1. Prior to making changes, discuss proposed edits with the SECN program manager and managing editor. If the proposed edits affect the database or data management procedures, also consult with the data manager. Plan and execute changes properly to avoid jeopardizing data set integrity. Also, because certain changes may require altering the database structure or functionality, advance notice of changes is important to minimize disruptions to project operations.
2. Attempt to incorporate the changes by first modifying only the SOP(s), without making changes to the protocol narrative. However, revise the narrative as well if necessary. Narrative revision will require review by the program manager or peer review manager to determine if additional external peer review is necessary.
3. The SECN standard operating procedure is currently housed on the SharePoint site, where all current PDF versions are available (<http://share.inside.nps.gov/sites/nrss/div/imd/networks/secn/pubs/Pages/Home.aspx>). If you do not wish to edit a PDF version, obtain the current Word version of the SOP document from the managing editor. You MUST use the track changes feature for all revisions. Revisions are made to a master document, and changes not tracked will not be made.
4. Record the changes in the revision history log of the SOP and/or in the narrative, as appropriate. Include the date of revision, name and affiliation of author(s), description of and reasons for the changes, and the section of SOP or narrative where changes were made.
5. Record all changes to a protocol document (protocol narrative or SOP) in the document's revision history log, even minor edits (like fixing typos or formatting changes). It is not necessary to record the specific edits made, just the fact that changes were made. Version numbers increase incrementally by tenths (e.g. version 1.1, version 1.2, etc.) for minor changes. Designate major revisions with the next whole number (e.g., version 2.0, 3.0). For actual protocol changes (e.g., changes in methods, equipment), assign a new version number in the revision history log. Record the previous version number, date of revision, author of the revision, and the reason for the changes along with the new version number (if applicable).
6. Once all revisions are made and approved, the managing editor will upload the new version to IRMA and update the version on the SharePoint.
7. Distribute the revised version to all appropriate parties, including the members of the field crew and appropriate SECN staff.

8. Previous versions are archived on the SECN intranet server. Such historical information may be crucial for understanding, interpreting, and analyzing data.
9. All revisions require review and editing for clarity and technical soundness. Project cooperators and SECN staff may review small changes to existing documents (e.g., formatting, simple clarification of existing content, small changes in the task schedule or project budget, or general updates to information management handling SOPs) in-house. However, major changes to data collection, analysis techniques, sampling design, or response design necessitate an external peer review. **All updates to protocols or SOPs must go through the editing department and peer review manager!**
10. Narrative and SOP updates may occur independently. That is, a change in one SOP will not necessarily invoke changes in other SOPs; a narrative update may not require SOP modifications.

Additional Guidance for Updating Protocol Narratives and Appendices

1. In general, do not make substantive changes to the protocol narrative. The following are acceptable (and expected) reasons for updating the protocol narrative:
 - a. Changes to the sampling design or response design(s) following:
 - i. Revisions based on a formal protocol review at the network, regional, or national level, or
 - ii. Addition or subtraction of monitoring objectives.
 - b. Formal inclusion of assessment criteria in the network's analysis and reporting procedures. This will typically include a new monitoring objective to "determine the status and trends of the condition of resources."
2. Protocol narratives and protocol implementation plans are published to IRMA as "protocol" document types.
3. All changes to protocol narratives require approval by the regional or national I&M program coordinator prior to implementation.
4. Note: Expansion of the study area where a protocol is implemented (such as newly acquired lands) does not typically warrant a revision if the protocol is implemented in the new areas as prescribed in the protocol and associated SOPs.

Additional Guidance for Updating Standard Operating Procedures

1. Review and revise all SOPs as necessary prior to annual protocol implementation.
2. To ensure that within-park and within-year data are collected consistently, SOPs should not be updated or altered midway through a field season, except where required for safety purposes, or unless expanded to include relevance to other SECN protocols.
3. Field alterations to protocols should only occur with consultation and approval by the appropriate protocol lead.
4. The complete library of SECN SOPs is located on the SECN SharePoint at <http://share.inside.nps.gov/sites/nrss/div/imd/networks/secn/pubs/Pages/Home.aspx>. Each SOP has a permanent number based on topic that will not change over time.
5. Standard operating procedures are published to IRMA as “standard operating procedure” document types so they can be linked to multiple protocols.
6. All changes to protocol narratives require approval by the SECN program manager and responsible regional I&M chief.

Literature Cited

Oakley, K. L., L. P. Thomas, and S. G. Fancy. 2003. Guidelines for long-term monitoring protocols. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 31(4):1000–1003.