

Southeast Coast Network

National Park Service
Inventory and Monitoring Division



Standard Operating Procedure 2.1.02

Southeast Coast Network Reporting Guidelines—Version 2.0

Please cite this as:

Wright, W., and S. E. Curry. 2016. Southeast Coast Network reporting guidelines—Version 2.0. Southeast Coast Network Standard Operating Procedure NPS/SECN/SOP—2.1.02. Southeast Coast Network, Athens, Georgia.

Summary

The National Park Service (NPS) Natural Resources Publications Management (NRPM) has established two report series for publishing Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) program reports; Natural Resource Reports (NRR) and Natural Resource Data Series (NRDS). Additionally, the network produces several network-level products. This SOP provides guidance for publishing SECN reports, including report series selection, authorship, content, and peer review standards.

Revision Log

Previous Version #	Revision Date	Author	Changes Made	Reason for Change	New Version #
0.9	1/17/2013		Clarifications to SOP document type	Text corresponds to wording in protocols	1.0
1.0	12/2/2016	Wright	Editorial review	Protocol Publication	2.0

Templates

National guidance and the latest templates for each series are available at <http://www.nature.nps.gov/publications/NRPM/index.cfm>. The templates (and associated style format) for each of the report types presented below are evolving documents. Although major changes to the template will be rare, there are semi-annual updates and the SECN managing editor will notify SECN report authors when new templates become available. Using the most up-to-date template will facilitate the review process and ensure that the format of reports meets the national requirements.

Additionally, the Southeast Coast Network has published an SOP providing guidance and resources for Southeast Region (SER) I&M authors—*Southeast Region Inventory and Monitoring Publications: Guidelines for Authors* (Wright et al. 2015). Wright et al. (2015) covers additional SER-specific content not included in this SOP, such as formatting tips and instructions for document submission through the SER online system.

Style

All published reports follow approved templates and instructions to authors guidance provided in SOP 2.1.06 Reports written with this guidance require fewer edits.

All published reports follow the *Editorial Style Guide for “Park Science” and “Natural Resource Year in Review”* (Selleck and KellerLynn 2008), except where superseded by specific report series guidance. In cases where NPS style guides do not contain applicable guidance, authors should instead follow the style guidance contained in the SOP *Southeast Region Inventory and Monitoring publications: Guidelines for authors* (Wright et al. 2015), followed by the *Chicago Manual of Style* (2010) in order of preference.

It is the role and responsibility of the SECN managing editor to ensure that all published reports comply with the appropriate styles. In cases where multiple interpretations of style guidance exist, the managing editor makes the final determination on the standards used by the SECN and ensures that future reports are consistent with those decisions.

It is always a good idea to consult with the managing editor prior to beginning a new report cycle, or authoring a new NRR report, to make sure you are using the most up-to-date templates and styles. Using out-of-date methods will cause editing delays or report returns.

National Park Service Reports

Natural Resource Reports

Natural Resource Reports (NRRs) are used to disseminate high-priority, current natural resource management information with managerial application. The series targets a general, diverse audience, and may contain NPS policy considerations or address sensitive issues of management applicability. Reports organized into chapters, such as monitoring plans and protocols, are best suited for the NRR series, which has a more flexible "open format" layout. Examples of the diverse array of reports published in this series include: vital signs monitoring plans, data management plans, monitoring protocols, natural resource condition assessments, "how to" resource management papers, annual reports of resource programs or divisions of the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science offices, and resource action plans.

Use the NRR series guidelines for: (from NRR guidelines at <http://www.nature.nps.gov/publications/nrpm/?tab=0#reports>)

- Reports that present quantifiable data, data analysis, and interpretive discussion concerning those results, including reports on inventories, monitoring, and other research studies
- Procedural reports such as protocols or standard operating procedures
- Planning reports such as monitoring or data management plans
- Research study reports.
- Any report with a significant focus on NPS policy or land management issues such as natural resource condition assessments or land management reports.

Authors

Authorship guidelines should follow the established SECN authorship guidelines (SOP 2.1.03—Version 2.0; SECN 2016).

Peer Review

Peer review is determined on a case-by-case basis by the peer review manager. Generally, the peer-review manager is the network program manager, with the exception of reports that the program manager has authored and protocols, which are the responsibility of the regional program manager.

Natural Resource Technical Reports

The Natural Resource Technical Report (NRTR) series was merged with the NRR series. Reports are no longer published in the NRTR series.

Natural Resource Data Series

The intention of Natural Resource Data Series (NRDS) is the timely release of basic data sets and data summaries. The intent of this series is to provide data sets or data summaries for compilation, analysis, and interpretation once a sufficient amount of data is collected.

For the Southeast Coast Network, NRDS reports are primarily for routine reporting of data collected under approved monitoring protocols. Produce data reports in a single- or multi-park format (all parks for a fiscal year, for example). However, only produce multi-park in those cases where doing so does not hinder the timely publication of data for one or more parks.

Data summary reports include information about the methods and study area as well as several summary figures and tables prescribed in each vital sign's approved protocol. These figures and tables are usually generated automatically with little additional input from SECN staff, park staff, or cooperating agency personnel that have access permissions to the SECN intranet SharePoint site. As per the monitoring plan, publish data summary reports within one year of collecting vital sign monitoring data. However, the goal is to publish NRDS reports within 30 days of validating and certifying data for any vital sign.

The model for these reports was the USGS water data report, which include basic metadata-level information related to the purpose of monitoring efforts, combined with automated database outputs of tables, figures, and summary statistics.

Authors

The person who creates the report should be the primary author. Do not include the author of the protocol unless that person also authors the data report; this most likely will occur with the first report written after a publication of a specific protocol. Detailed instructions for authorship are available in SOP 2.1.03, *Southeast Coast Network Authorship Guidelines—Version 2.0*.

Peer Review

The goal of SECN NRDS reports is to ensure they qualify for the following statement: *"Data in this report were collected and analyzed using methods based on established, peer-reviewed protocols and were analyzed and interpreted within the guidelines of the protocols."* As long as the reports fall into this category, the SECN program manager has authority to approve the report for rapid publication.

In the event that there is no NPS protocol to cite, we should always cite (a) the protocols the monitoring is based upon and (b) the monitoring plan (which has the justifications for why we are monitoring and an overview of the sampling design). Never cite draft protocols, as they have not yet been peer reviewed. If for some reason the combination above is not appropriate, the SECN program manager will determine and obtain the appropriate level of peer review prior to publishing the report. However, because of the volume of NRDS reports the network produces, the goal is to minimize the reviewing needs for this series.

Additionally, allow natural resource personnel at each park to review reports; the managing editor or program manager are tasked with submitting the report to park personnel 10 days before publication on IRMA.

Recommended Outline

The following is a recommended outline for NRDS reports. Chapter headings marked with an (*) are required for all data summary reports.

1. * Contents
2. List of Figures
3. List of Tables
4. List of Terms
5. * Executive Summary, which should include the following in bullet form:
 - a. Overview of the program, vital sign, and methods used (cite them explicitly)
 - b. Number of sites monitored and any notes related to the level of inference
 - c. Dates and/or time of monitoring
 - d. Additions to the park species list, if appropriate
 - e. Observations of non-native species and a note as to whether they are invasive
 - f. Observations of any species of management concern
 - g. Any notable summary bullets from the automated figures and tables.
 - h. A link to the main IRMA portal page to find more information.
 - i. Any significant deviations from approved monitoring activities that may have a long-term effect on the dataset.
6. *Introduction, including information on the vital sign, and the full list of approved monitoring objectives as listed in the monitoring plan, climate plan, and/or approved protocol.
7. Methods
 - a. * Study area. You can find descriptions of the study area within the monitoring plan, watershed condition assessments, resource condition assessments, and resource stewardship strategies.
 - b. * Sampling design/locations and map.
 - c. Sampling methods. A brief summary is appropriate if the introduction cites an approved protocol.
 - d. Data analysis methods. A brief summary is appropriate if the introduction cites an approved protocol.
 - e. Assessment criteria. Only include for vital signs where approved criteria have been identified and approved by other agencies (such as the EPA Coastal Assessment criteria), or through NPS planning processes (Resource Condition Assessments, Resource Stewardship Strategies, or State of the Park reports).

8. Findings. Format for this section will vary, but the report should include all data outputs prescribed in the monitoring protocol. Additional analyses or interpretations should not be included in the data summary unless the protocol's reporting SOP has been updated and approved to include the new outputs. Any significant deviations from approved monitoring activities that may have a long-term effect on the dataset should also be included. Data analysis and interpretation should be peer reviewed and published in the NRR series.
9. Literature Cited.
10. One or more of the following appendices
 - a. Distribution maps for birds and amphibians.
 - b. Tables that list found species for birds, amphibians, and plants, comparing the certified species list to the current-report list.
 - c. Other ancillary data collected as a part of the report.

Network-Level Reports

The Southeast Coast Network maintains additional report types to provide information to parks, partners, or internal staff. The SECN program manager ensures that all documents published in each report series receive the appropriate level of peer review.

Resource Briefs

The network frequently produces resource briefs as short-format versions of longer reports, including both types of NPS reports (NRR and NRDS). These are usually two to four pages.

In general, resource briefs should be park-specific summaries of NRDS reports (required for all vital signs data reports), including an overview, list of significant findings, and description of sampling methods. Produce resource briefs whenever feasible for NRR reports. Because of the limited amount of space, resource briefs are typically only appropriate to present information that is relatively limited in scope and time. If it is inappropriate to summarize the longer NRR reports without oversimplifying (or changing) the interpretation of findings in the longer reports, authors should consider using the program summary template instead.

The SECN has produced several resource briefs for a variety of topics. Download samples from the network's web page or from IRMA:

[Fixed-station water-quality monitoring at Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve: 2013–2014 data summary.](#)

[Anuran community monitoring at Canaveral National Seashore: 2014 data summary.](#)

[Assessment of estuarine water quality at Fort Pulaski National Monument, 2014.](#)

Program Summaries and Briefs

Program summaries are typically two- to four-page documents that provide summaries of programmatic areas, inventory and monitoring findings, etc. Program summaries typically go beyond resource briefs in that they summarize information from multiple parks, programs, or years. For example, some describe all inventory and monitoring activities at one park in one year, and others summarize all network-wide activities related to one inventory and monitoring protocol. In general, the audience for program summaries is non-technical; but it assumes that the reader has a basic level of knowledge or interest that would prompt them to be reading the product. Examples are protocol briefs that summarize monitoring activities, park briefs that summarize annual monitoring activities and results, and science product briefs, which outline science products published each year.

Standard Operating Procedures

To ensure consistent procedures network-wide as standard operating procedures (SOPs) are revised, updated, and re-published, the Southeast Coast Network maintains a single shared library of SOPs, maintained by editing staff. Publish approved SOPs as network-level reports (not in a national series). All versions of operational SOPs are available for download at the NPS Integrated Resource Management Applications portal at <http://irma.nps.gov>. Finalized PDF versions of all SOPs are also

available on the SECN SharePoint at <http://share.inside.nps.gov/sites/nrss/div/imd/networks/secn/pubs/Pages/Home.aspx>. See SOP 2.1.01 *Revision of Southeast Coast Network Protocols and Standard Operating Procedures—Version 2.0* (Wright and Curry 2016) for procedures on authoring or revising standard operating procedures.

All SECN SOPs conform to a standard three-part numbering system to aid in the identification of the portion(s) of the program to which the procedures apply (Table 1).

Table 1. Numbering system and categories for standard operating procedures (SOPs) used by the Southeast Coast Network. Within each category, number SOPs sequentially by date of initial production.

Level 1	Level 2	Topic
1	1.1.xx	General field methods shared by multiple branches of the Southeast Coast Network. Typically, those related to GIS, GPS location, photopoints, or use of shared instrumentation.
	1.2.xx	Field methods for water resource monitoring
	1.3.xx	Field methods for coastal resource monitoring
	1.4.xx	Field methods for terrestrial resource monitoring (plants and animals)
2	2.1.xx	Data management procedures shared by multiple branches of the SECN, such as those pertaining to reporting, file management,
	2.2.xx	Data management procedures related to water resource monitoring
	2.3.xx	Data management procedures related to coastal resource monitoring
	2.4.xx	Data management procedures related to terrestrial resource monitoring (plants and animals)
3	3.1.xx	Field Safety
	3.2.xx	Equipment use and maintenance
4	4.1.xx	Network administration
5	5.1.xx	User Manuals

Other Considerations

Acknowledgments

It is never a bad idea to thank people, and while not required, an acknowledgments section is often appropriate. If a contractor authors the report, they are often required to include part of the contract language in this section, and they can thank whomever they want. If the National Park Service authors the report, the primary author determines inclusion with the following considerations:

- If there is someone who you feel needs special acknowledgment, a line in a report is the least personal way to do it. Write a thank you note, or work with the SECN program manager to write a note, laud praises to said person's supervisor, give them an award, or find a more-personal and direct way to thank them for their contributions.
- Although it is in the template, it is not usually appropriate for acknowledgments to be included in NRDS reports, especially since these are largely automated and/or cut-and paste efforts.
- While not required, Natural Resource Reports should have an acknowledgments section. The recommendation is that the greater the amount of time or investment for producing the report, the more likely (and lengthier) an acknowledgments section should be.
- Do not acknowledge report authors.
- Do not acknowledge paid reviewers.
- Do not acknowledge meeting participants or planners. If it is important enough for the document, they should be coauthors of the report or cited authors of a separate meeting report.
- Acknowledgments are not required for routine efforts (especially of NPS staff) such as providing access to sites, lodging, advice, or compliance assistance. Volunteering time, improving logistics, or assisting with emergencies are generally outside the norm and warrant acknowledgment, but not always in the report.

More information on acknowledgements is available in SOP 2.1.03 *Southeast Coast Network Authorship Guidelines—Version 2.0* (SECN 2016).

Literature Cited

University of Chicago Press. 2010. The Chicago manual of style. Sixteenth Edition. Chicago.

Selleck, J., and K KellerLynn. 2008. Editorial style guide for *Park Science* and *Natural Resource Year in Review*. Natural Resource Report NPS/NRPC/NRR-2006/004. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.

http://www.nature.nps.gov/parkscience/archive/PDF_Downloads/Editorial%20Style%20Guide%20Revised%208-4-2008/Editorial_Style_Guide_Revised_8-4-2008.pdf

Southeast Coast Network. 2016. Southeast Coast Network authorship guidelines—Version 2.0. Southeast Coast Network Standard Operating Procedure NPS/SECN/SOP—2.1.03. Southeast Coast Network, Athens, Georgia.

Wright, W., M. Cline, and S. Curry. 2015. Southeast Region Inventory and Monitoring publications: Guidelines for authors. Southeast Coast Network Standard Operating Procedure NPS/SECN/SOP—2.1.06. Southeast Coast Network, Athens, Georgia