

Procedures

The *South Florida/Caribbean Network Forest Vegetation Monitoring: Protocol Implementation Plan* (Whelan et al. 2020) and associated Standard Operating Procedures can only be modified through the use of a versioning system with the following guidance. Changes will be designated as minor (e.g., software update or change) or major (e.g., modification of sampling frequency).

1. Protocol edits and versioning are tracked in the Revision History Log attached to the narrative and each SOP. Major changes result in an update by whole numbers (e.g., version 1.0, version 2.0, etc.) and minor changes by tenths (e.g., version 1.1, version 1.2). Record the new version number, date of revision, author of the revision, description of the change, and reason for the change. The version number used for the narrative and the SOPs will not stay synchronized. As some SOPs and/or the narrative and not others are updated, the version numbers will diverge.
2. All major changes must first be approved by appropriate network and park staff, including the network program manager and data manager. They are then sent to the regional program manager with a summary of changes and recommendation for whether additional scientific review is needed. The regional program manager will determine if additional external scientific review is necessary. In general, minor changes to the protocol will only require in-house review by network staff (e.g., editing, formatting, switch to new software or comparable technology changes that do not affect sampling design, data quality, or data interpretation) followed by submission to the regional program manager for approval. Major changes in the protocol may require external review by subject matter experts (e.g., fundamental changes in sampling design or field methods).
3. Once approved for publication, the narrative, if revised, is submitted first to the regional editor and then to the national I&M publication manager for formatting review and, finally, a new report number. The SOPs also go through the regional editor before they can be published to IRMA. The SOPs can be published without obtaining a report number.
4. The data manager is informed about the changes to the protocol so the new version numbers can be incorporated in the project database metadata, reports, etc. The data manager may need to edit the database if the changes affect the database structure.
5. The new protocol version is posted on the SFCN website and NPS Data Store, the National Inventory and Monitoring Program protocol database is updated, and copies are forwarded to the parks and all people or organizations known to be working with the previous version of the protocol.

Literature Cited

Whelan, K. R. T., R. B. Shamblin, M. Prats, J. M. Patterson, M. Londoño, and R. Muxo 2020. South Florida/Caribbean Network forest vegetation monitoring: Protocol implementation plan. Natural Resource Report NPS/SFCN/NRR—2020/2064. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado. Available at: <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2271719> (last accessed February 2020).