Southeast Coast Network

National Park Service
Inventory and Monitoring Division

Standard Operating Procedure 3.1.07

Communicating Field Operations with SECN Parks—Version 3.1

Please cite this as:

Southeast Coast Network. 2021. Communicating field operations with SECN parks—Version 3.1. Southeast Coast Network Standard Operating Procedure NPS/SECN/SOP—3.1.07. Southeast Coast Network, Athens, Georgia.

Summary

The following standard operating procedure (SOP) outlines the procedure for communicating Southeast Coast Network (SECN) field activities with parks. The purpose of communications is to ensure that all appropriate park personnel are aware of the types and locations of SECN activities, and to ensure that SECN personnel are aware of park emergency response procedures.

Revision Log

Revision Date	Author	Changes Made	Reason for Change	New Version #
1/17/2013		Citation updated	Publication of estuarine water quality monitoring protocol	1.0
9/23/2014		Updated contact and employee Information	Maintain current park contacts for field communications	2.0
12/23/2016	Editor	Editorial review	Protocol publication	3.0
3/1/2021	SECN	Minor edits, template update	Annual review	3.1

Designated Communication Leads

The Southeast Coast Network has identified one person to serve as the primary communication lead for each primary activity that occurs within network parks (Table 1). It is the responsibility of the communication lead to ensure that the procedures outlined below occur as a part of field efforts. The communication lead may delegate this responsibility to others.

For activities other than those listed in Table 1, the appropriate protocol lead should serve as the communication lead.

Table 1. Communication leads for primary areas of Southeast Coast Network operations.

Activity	Communication Lead	Position
Vegetation Monitoring	Forbes Boyle	Botanist
Wildlife Monitoring	Michael Parrish	Wildlife Biologist
Estuarine Water Quality Monitoring	Eric Starkey	Aquatic Ecologist
Stream Habitat Monitoring	Stephen Cooper	Physical Scientist
Coastal Wetland Monitoring	Vacant	Coastal Ecologist
Shoreline Monitoring	Vacant	Coastal Ecologist
Wetland Water-Level Monitoring	Eric Starkey	Aquatic Ecologist

Voice Communications

Field staff are required to have appropriate voice or text communication equipment with them at all times. Each field crew is equipped with a cell phone, and in some cases radios are available from the parks (but are not always monitored). The Southeast Coast Network also has multiple InReach devices available to field crews for emergency use and standard park notification and check in. The InReach has universal coverage via satellite. Please be aware that cellular coverage is not available in all locations where SECN fieldwork will occur. Make sure that you have means of communication at your field site, as well as a backup plan.

Planning

At the beginning of each fiscal year, the network identifies the parks in which each of the protocols will be implemented and includes this as a part of the annual work plan and should be communicated to park staff at annual steering committee meeting .

For field efforts with multi-year or intermittent return intervals (terrestrial monitoring, coastal assessments), the communication lead should contact the park steering committee member and other designated park personnel at least **one month** prior to field work, with the following information and requests (not all of the following will be applicable):

- The planned/proposed dates during which SECN staff will be present at the park.
- A description of the activity in which SECN staff will be engaged.
- Information on how to recognize SECN staff and their vehicles (cars, boats, coastal shoreline monitoring vehicle).
- Locations where SECN staff plan to be working.
- Any other information requested by the park in the completed park safety and contact form.
- Request for the following information:
    - Confirmation that the dates of field work are approved and do not conflict with any other park activities.
    - Availability of park housing, if needed and logistically feasible.
    - Availability of park staff, if needed to complete field work.
    - Any other information that would affect logistics (closures, events, rocket launches, etc.).
    - Names and contact information for any emergency contacts at the park for the designated time period.

Advanced Notification

For all field work, including recurring field efforts such as fixed-station water quality monitoring and salt marsh monitoring, the communication lead should contact the park steering committee member prior to field work, with the dates during which SECN staff will be present at the park and what staff will be doing there. At that time, verify the following:

- Presence of conditions that would affect planned activities (e.g., closures).
- Contacts and times for acquiring keys for park housing.
- Availability and/or interest of park staff to participate in field activities, if not already arranged.

Please remember that for all field efforts, it is the desire of both network and park staff to include park personnel in field activities whenever possible. The earlier parks are notified of activities, the greater the likelihood of participation.

Additionally, if watercraft (including kayaks or canoes) are to be used as a part of the field operations, a float plan must be filed with the program manager, the park steering committee member, and any other identified designees no later than 48 hours prior to field work as per SECN boat safety SOP 3.1.02—Version 2.0 (SECN 2021).

Note that the steering committee member may delegate this duty to a subordinate staff member, or there may be personnel changes at the park. Stay in contact with park staff when changes occur.

On-Site Communications

Park Check-In

All efforts should be made to check in with the park steering committee member or superintendent on the first day of field activities to provide information on the activities being conducted and to answer any questions related to the monitoring activities or other efforts of the Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) program.

Due to the timing of field efforts (often before park hours) or the location of sites to be sampled, this is not always feasible. In such cases, it is the responsibility of the SECN communication lead to make alternate arrangements with the steering committee representative or other designee.

Daily Requirements

Each day, the communication lead (or someone else participating in the field work) must do the following:

- Notify the program manager and appropriate protocol lead when beginning and ending field operations for the day. Provide information on where in the park you will be conducting work. This information should be included on a trip plan. Also note your expected return time (this is important).

- If using boats, send a text message to or call the designated persons noting the start and completion of that day's boating operations in accordance with boat safety SOP 3.1.02—Version 2.1 (SECN 2021) using InReach device or phone.

- If parking on private property or public right-of-ways, place a sign on the driver's side dash of any government vehicles indicating ownership, operator, and points of contact in case of emergency. If access to park property requires private property access prior approval from landowner is required. Written approval is preferred. See Appendix A (field forms) in SECN SOP 3.1.02: *Safe Operation of Southeast Coast Network Watercraft—Version 2.1* (SECN 2021) for the proper sign

Responsibilities of Protocol Leads and Program Manager

- If the park has identified personnel that they wish notified of daily activities, it is the responsibility of the protocol lead to ensure that this notification occurs (unless notified directly by the field crew).

- In the event that the protocol lead is unavailable or unable to do so, the program manager or designee will notify personnel as appropriate.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, please notify the appropriate people: In all cases 911 should be called **first** to ensure that response is provided as quickly as possible. After calling 911, contact the previously designated park emergency contact, call the program manager, and contact the protocol lead. In areas with no cellular or radio coverage, use the InReach unit to call for help.

Literature Cited

Southeast Coast Network (SECN). 2021. Safe operation of Southeast Coast Network Watercraft—Version 2.1. Southeast Coast Network Standard Operating Procedure NPS/SECN/SOP—3.12. Southeast Coast Network, Athens, Georgia. Available at:https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2284674

EMPLOYEE ACCOUNTABILITY FORM

I certify that I read and am familiar with SECN Standard Operating Procedure 3.1.07 *Communicating Field Operations with SECN Parks—Version 3.1*.

I understand that lack of compliance with this SOP may result in disciplinary action.

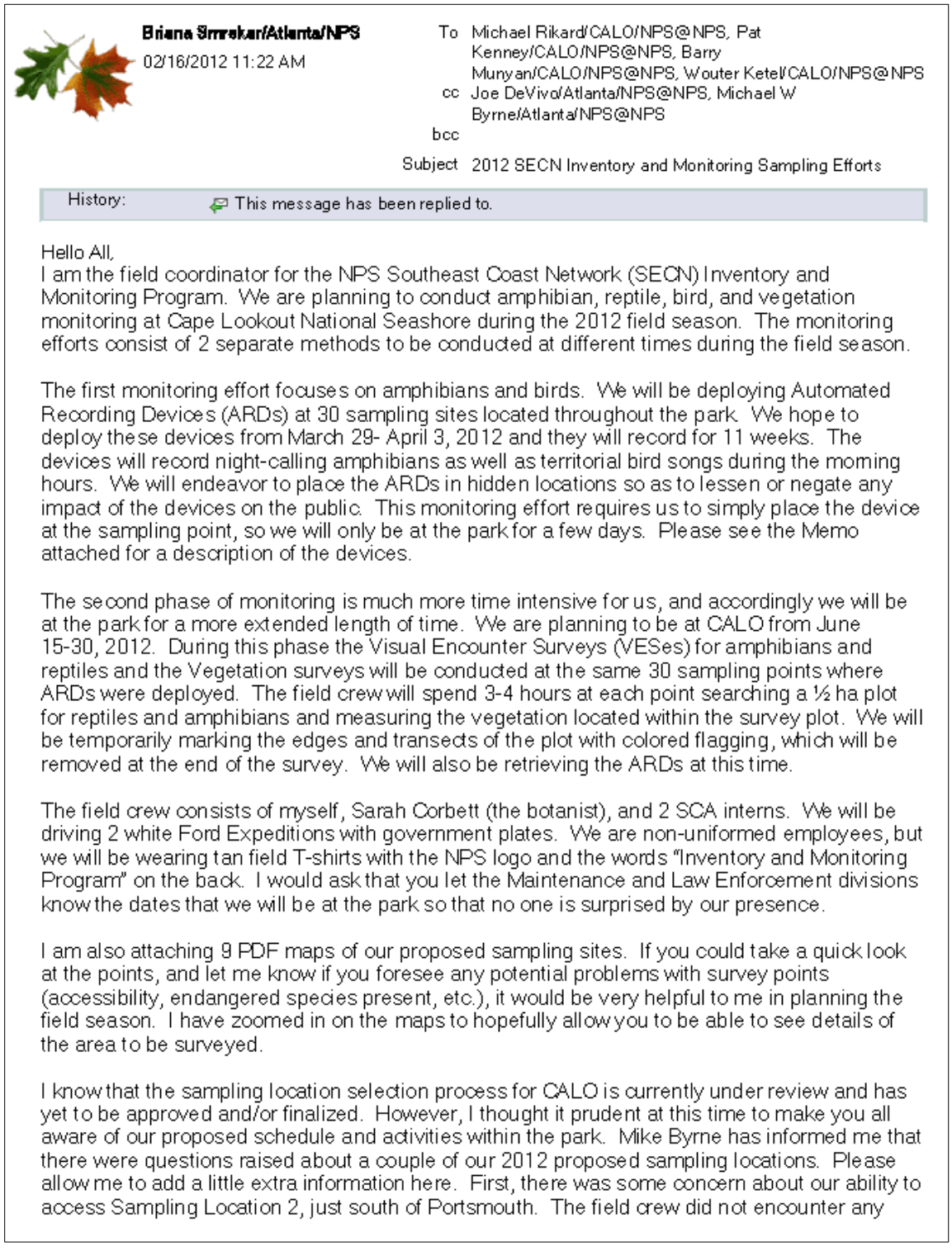
_____

Name

_____

Date

Appendix 1. Example Park Notification Letter



Briana Smrekar/Atlanta/NPS
02/16/2012 11:22 AM

To Michael Rikard/CALO/NPS@NPS, Pat Kenney/CALO/NPS@NPS, Barry Munyan/CALO/NPS@NPS, Wouter Ketel/CALO/NPS@NPS
cc Joe DeVivo/Atlanta/NPS@NPS, Michael W Byrne/Atlanta/NPS@NPS
bcc

Subject 2012 SECN Inventory and Monitoring Sampling Efforts

History: This message has been replied to.

Hello All,
I am the field coordinator for the NPS Southeast Coast Network (SECN) Inventory and Monitoring Program. We are planning to conduct amphibian, reptile, bird, and vegetation monitoring at Cape Lookout National Seashore during the 2012 field season. The monitoring efforts consist of 2 separate methods to be conducted at different times during the field season.

The first monitoring effort focuses on amphibians and birds. We will be deploying Automated Recording Devices (ARDs) at 30 sampling sites located throughout the park. We hope to deploy these devices from March 29- April 3, 2012 and they will record for 11 weeks. The devices will record night-calling amphibians as well as territorial bird songs during the morning hours. We will endeavor to place the ARDs in hidden locations so as to lessen or negate any impact of the devices on the public. This monitoring effort requires us to simply place the device at the sampling point, so we will only be at the park for a few days. Please see the Memo attached for a description of the devices.

The second phase of monitoring is much more time intensive for us, and accordingly we will be at the park for a more extended length of time. We are planning to be at CALO from June 15-30, 2012. During this phase the Visual Encounter Surveys (VESes) for amphibians and reptiles and the Vegetation surveys will be conducted at the same 30 sampling points where ARDs were deployed. The field crew will spend 3-4 hours at each point searching a ½ ha plot for reptiles and amphibians and measuring the vegetation located within the survey plot. We will be temporarily marking the edges and transects of the plot with colored flagging, which will be removed at the end of the survey. We will also be retrieving the ARDs at this time.

The field crew consists of myself, Sarah Corbett (the botanist), and 2 SCA interns. We will be driving 2 white Ford Expeditions with government plates. We are non-uniformed employees, but we will be wearing tan field T-shirts with the NPS logo and the words "Inventory and Monitoring Program" on the back. I would ask that you let the Maintenance and Law Enforcement divisions know the dates that we will be at the park so that no one is surprised by our presence.

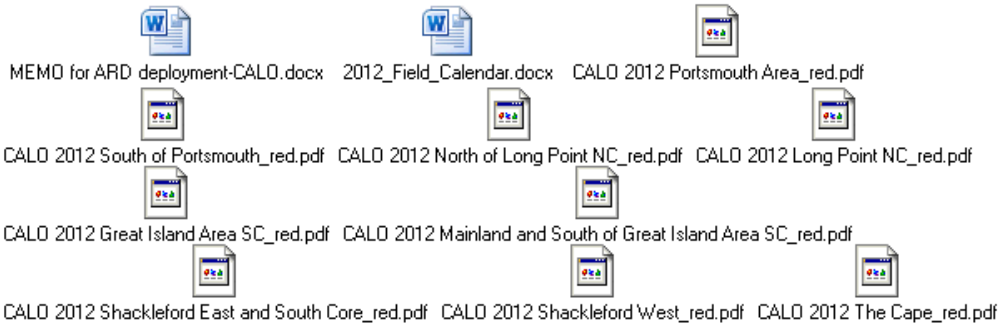
I am also attaching 9 PDF maps of our proposed sampling sites. If you could take a quick look at the points, and let me know if you foresee any potential problems with survey points (accessibility, endangered species present, etc.), it would be very helpful to me in planning the field season. I have zoomed in on the maps to hopefully allow you to be able to see details of the area to be surveyed.

I know that the sampling location selection process for CALO is currently under review and has yet to be approved and/or finalized. However, I thought it prudent at this time to make you all aware of our proposed schedule and activities within the park. Mike Byrne has informed me that there were questions raised about a couple of our 2012 proposed sampling locations. Please allow me to add a little extra information here. First, there was some concern about our ability to access Sampling Location 2, just south of Portsmouth. The field crew did not encounter any

Figure 1. Sample park notifiation letter, page 1.

difficulties when we surveyed that location in 2010, but please let me know if there has been sufficient storm damage in that area to prohibit us from hiking to that point this summer. Otherwise, we will attempt to access the site and choose an alternative sampling location if we cannot. Secondly, the point has been raised that we do not have any sampling locations located within Portsmouth Village during the 2012 sampling effort. We have chosen to utilize a random method to determine sampling locations within the park boundaries (as described in the SECN document *Appendix 1: Southeast Coast Network Sampling Design for Vegetation, Landbird, Amphibian Communities, and fire Fuels Vital Signs*) with the goal of better understanding of park-wide resources. While we may want to survey specific habitats and locations within a park, we still need to maintain adherence to our sampling design protocol and ensure that all subsequent statistical analyses are sound and inferential to the park as a whole, rather than to a few sites only.

I am also attaching our 2012 field calendar, as was requested by CALO staff. On it you can find when we will be sampling at each separate Island of CALO.



Thanks for your help and we are looking forward to visiting CALO this coming spring and summer!

Sincerely,

Briana Smrekar

Briana D. Smrekar
Wildlife Biologist/Field Crew Coordinator
National Park Service, Inventory and Monitoring Program
Southeast Coast Network
101 Wheeler St.
St. Marys, GA 31558
Phone (912) 882-9131
Fax (912) 882-9274

Figure 2. Sample park notifiation letter, page 2.