

# Information Management Policy for the Virginia Coast Reserve Long-Term Ecological Research Project

The information management policy for the Virginia Coast Reserve Long-Term Ecological Research (VCR/LTER) Project is based on the following three principles:

- Scientific information is a resource that provides maximum benefits when it is shared.
- Producers of data and other information products have a right to first use of the data they produce.
- Users of scientific data and other information products have an obligation to properly acknowledge the producers of the data they use.

The specific policies are crafted to maintain an appropriate balance between the needs of the larger scientific community, the collectors of data and the users of data. In the event that researchers do not agree to adhere to the policies of the VCR/LTER, they may be excluded from access to the resources of the VCR/LTER.

Researchers using the facilities of the VCR/LTER have the obligation to provide in a timely fashion (no more than 2 years after collection or creation) the following information resources to the VCR/LTER Information Manager:

- Copies of publications for posting in the NSF Public Access Repository
- Copies of student theses and dissertations (preferably in digital form)
- Datasets (with appropriate documentation)
- Physical specimens collected. This may be either the specimen itself, with appropriate documentation, or information on where a specimen has been accessioned in a collection elsewhere.

The Information Manager of the VCR/LTER shall assure that:

- The integrity of electronic datasets is maintained through off-site backups
- Metadata and other documentation are freely available
- Datasets remain secure and will not be distributed without the permission of the researcher responsible for data collection until:
  - The researcher responsible for the collection of a dataset has had the opportunity to publish papers based on the dataset. This is a 2-year period following the collection of the data unless a longer period is justified in writing by the researcher.
  - Students collecting data for a thesis or dissertation have either graduated or withdrawn from graduate school. In no case should this period extend beyond 5 years.

Users of data resources provided through the VCR/LTER are required to:

- Agree to a “data license” that dictates appropriate citation or acknowledgement of the data collector in publications and derivative information products.

- Agree that the University of Virginia, the VCR/LTER and the data collector shall not be liable for any damages suffered through the use of data and documentation.
- If requested, provide a accurate name, address, phone number and email address, along with a brief description of the intended use of the data. This information will be used by the VCR/LTER to track dataset use and, when feasible, will be provided to the researcher responsible for data collection.
- Data users planning on using data in a publication are strongly encouraged to contact the data provider(s) to discuss the data and to, if appropriate, serve as a co-author.